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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Quarterly report of Council of Europe Offices

January-March 2024

A. LIAISON OFFICES

Introduction

The Council of Europe Offices in charge of liaison with one or more international organisations or institutions:

- represent the Secretary General vis-à-vis international organisation(s) or institution(s);
- follow the activities carried out by the relevant international organisation(s) or institution(s) and report on developments relevant to the Council of Europe activities and policies;
- provide support for the organisation of and follow-up to high-level co-ordination and other meetings or events between the Council of Europe and the relevant international organisation(s) or institution(s);
- promote effective co-operation between the Council of Europe and the relevant international organisation(s) or institution(s);
- identify opportunities for joint activities and provide advice and support in planning, negotiation, implementation and reporting on these activities;
- conduct a proactive media policy in order to raise the visibility of the Organisation.

The present document covers the reporting period January-March 2024. Following decision [CM/Del/Dec\(2013\)1175/1.6E](#) of 3 July 2013, activity reports have been published every three months, starting with July-September 2013.

Brussels - Council of Europe Office in charge of liaison with the European Union

Highlights

The Office welcomed several high-level CoE representatives over the reporting period, such as the Secretary General, the Secretary General of the Congress and several PACE Rapporteurs.

The Secretary General paid a visit to Brussels on 4 March. She delivered a keynote opening speech at the annual "Ideas Lab" event organised by the CEPS think tank in Brussels. She also met bilaterally with Belgian Foreign Minister Lahbib, Belgium holding the Presidency of the EU Council.

The Congress Secretary General visited Brussels for high-level exchanges with the European Commission and with the Committee of the Regions.

The Office facilitated the organisation of meetings for the PACE rapporteurs on, respectively, the situation in Bulgaria, migration and asylum policies, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the request for accession by Kosovo*.

Several contacts and meetings with representatives of other international organisations, including various UN agencies, took place in the framework of these meetings, as well as on other occasions. The Head of Office welcomed a UN Political Affairs Officer in charge of Tunisia, in co-operation with the Executive Director of the North South Centre (online from Lisbon). He also had contacts with, *inter alia*, the Permanent Observer of Canada to the Council of Europe, as well as with Ambassador Ingrid Schulerud, Norwegian Special Representative for Democracy and Rule of Law, accompanied by a representative of DPC. He had additional diplomatic contacts during other events organised, for instance, by the diplomatic missions of Liechtenstein (during the Liechtenstein Chairmanship of the CoE), Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria.

The Head of Office met representatives from the Human Rights House Foundation and welcomed a delegation of high-level judicial authorities from Mongolia, headed by the Mongolian Ambassador to Belgium. He also attended a dinner debate with MEP Gahler (standing Rapporteur on Ukraine) and MEP Lagodinsky (Vice-Chair of the JURI Committee). He received the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Bar of England and Wales.

The Office facilitated the organisation of various CoE-EU meetings, such as:

- the participation of a director from DGI in a panel debate on the challenges caused by AI.
- meetings for the DGI coordinator for the abolition of the death penalty with officials from the various EU institutions.
- the regular consultations between the European Commission and the CoE Secretariat in the context of the preparation of the Commission's annual report on the situation of the rule of law in the EU.
- the meeting with a head of department from DGII with the Commission Director in charge of youth policies.

*All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

- DGI's participation in an informal meeting of members of the EU Council configuration responsible for consular protection (COCON), with a focus on the CoE Convention on the transfer of sentenced persons in view of its promotion, by the EU, in non-European states.
- the participation of a representative of GRECO in the EP's working group on "democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights".
- the participation of a representative of the CCJE in a public hearing organised by the EP LIBE Committee.
- the participation by the Office/Secretariat of the Pompidou Group in the EU Council working group competent in anti-drugs policies.
- the contribution by DGII to a conference organised by the European Social and Economic Committee on hate speech.

The Office met a delegation from the anti-discrimination division of DGII during several bilateral meetings in Brussels (19-21 February).

The Office promoted within the EU institutions some of the major CoE achievements, such as the finalisation of the AI framework convention, developments on the protection of the environment through criminal law, important opinions from the Venice Commission and new initiatives that follow the Reykjavik declaration.

On 22 March, the first ever consultations between the CoE and EEAS human resources directorates at director level were held at the initiative of the Office.

The Head of Office participated in the meeting of the CoE Heads of Office in Strasbourg (29 January - 1 February). The Office also welcomed its new Policy Advisor on Programmatic Co-operation, who took office on 1 January.

The Office hosted a meeting of the executive board of the European Platform of Media Regulatory Authorities. It also welcomed various delegations, including a group of study visitors from the Flemish Government, and groups of visitors and (including law students from Greece).

The Office closely followed and reported on developments of direct interest to the headquarters, focusing in particular on developments that were discussed in view of the European Council meeting in Brussels on 21-22 March, such as assistance to Ukraine, the enlargement policy (decisions as regards Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine and Moldova), the situation in Russia after the death of Alexei Navalny and defence policy.

The Brussels-based Spokesperson/Media Officer carried out media, online and social media work on issues including the Secretary General's visit to Brussels, various Human Rights Commissioner's statements and country-specific reports, the quarterly CM-DH meeting and Strasbourg events linked to the Court on the execution of its judgments. Media work also covered meetings, findings and conclusions of various CoE bodies, such as the European Committee of Social Rights, the Venice Commission and the Safety of Journalists Platform, as well as specific days, such as International Women's Day and developments with regard to the election of the next Secretary General.

He carried out preparatory and communication work as regards the January and the April PACE sessions, the annual report on the execution of judgments and the Brussels presentation of the CPT annual report. He represented the Council of Europe at the monthly meetings of the

C-10 network of communications staff from different international organisations and networks working on human rights and continued to manage the ongoing communications project highlighting the impact of the ECHR system.

Geneva - Council of Europe Office/Permanent Delegation to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in Geneva

Highlights

The Council of Europe Liaison Office in Geneva continued to reach out to permanent representatives and officials from international organisations to inform them about the Organisation's re-established presence in Geneva and to introduce CoE priorities, as well as to establish and ease new contacts and ensure liaison with pertinent departments and divisions in Strasbourg. During the reporting period, the Head of Office followed closely the relevant meetings and activities which took place during the Human Rights Council's 55th Session, including its High-Level Segment (where the Secretary General intervened with video remarks) and the adoption of the Universal Periodic Reviews, notably concerning the Russian Federation. Bilateral meetings were also held with UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus Anais Marin, Human Rights Council President Omar Zniber, the UNOG Cabinet, ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric, IOM Director General Amy Pope, ITU Secretary General Doreen Bogdan-Martin and UN Representative to the Geneva International Discussions Ayşe Cihan Sultanoğlu.

The Office prepared and facilitated the visit of the DPAER Director to Geneva and arranged and participated in meetings with relevant officials and partners.

The Head of Office represented the Council of Europe in a number of events, such as the UNECE Regional Forum, where she opened the Digital Segment, and a side event on Accountability for Ukraine organised by the Missions of UK, Ukraine and the Netherlands. The Office also reached out to delegations to promote and facilitated a side event on the Lanzarote Convention and Barnahus, co-organised with the Mission of Iceland.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Head of Office was invited to participate in several events: a lunch hosted by Austria where she presented the Istanbul Convention, an event on women in multilateralism hosted by Spain and the Geneva Annual Gender Debate. Contacts have been established in order to promote the organisation of a side event on the Istanbul Convention, to be hosted in Geneva.

She also participated as a speaker in a side event organised by Norway and Ghana entitled "Developing discrimination machines? Best Practices in Ensuring Gender Inclusive Artificial Intelligence" and in the Global Digital Forum, organised by the UK Mission.

In addition, the CoE delegation attended the Commission of Enquiry on Ukraine's report to the HRC and the oral update on Ukraine by High Commissioner Türk.

Vienna - Council of Europe Office in charge of liaison with the OSCE, United Nations Office and other international organisations in Vienna

The Council of Europe Office continued to attend the OSCE Permanent Council meetings, including the reinforced meeting of 23 February to mark two years of the Russian Federation's ongoing aggression against Ukraine.

The Office also facilitated the mission of the Secretary General to Vienna on 11 March: to attend the FRA Fundamental Rights Forum 2024 entitled "Rights in motion: Embracing human rights for Europe's future" and to hold bilateral meetings.

Warsaw - Council of Europe Office in charge of liaison with international organisations or institutions in Warsaw, in particular with OSCE/ODIHR and the Community of Democracies

High level visits/meetings

19 - 20 February - visit to Warsaw of CoE SRSG on Migration and Refugees, Mr David Best, on the occasion of the Frontex Consultative Forum; meeting with First Deputy Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE ODIHR), Ms Tea Jaliashvili.

1 March - meeting between the Secretary General of the CoE and the Director of OSCE/ODIHR, Mr Matteo Mecacci.

Activities of the Office

a) Enhancing the co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR – The HoO remained in regular contact with OSCE/ODIHR staff in order to report on the Human Dimension agenda and events planned for 2024 and to discuss possible joint activities in the framework of the wider co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR.

In particular, the HoO discussed a possible visit of the new First Deputy Director of ODIHR, Ms Tea Jaliashvili, to Strasbourg, tentatively scheduled for the end of the second quarter of 2024. To prepare the visit and set the agenda, regular contacts were maintained with the Director's Office and in particular with the ODIHR Director's political advisors, Mr Francesco Marrella and Mr Jacopo Leone.

Apart from high-level meetings mentioned above, the HoO and CoE experts attended numerous meetings and consultations convened by ODIHR. These included i.a. (i) the co-ordination meeting of the joint ODIHR-CoE-UNHCR-OECD Interagency Initiative: the Academy on migrant and refugee integration devoted to discussing the prospects of the project beyond 2024; (ii) the ODIHR expert meeting on judicial independence and the rule of law in Poland, which included the CoE briefing on the execution of ECtHR judgments in cases concerning the rule of law in Poland and (iii) the Youth Progress Index Presentation and the State of Young People in Poland report, elaborated by ODIHR in co-operation with the European Youth Forum. The HoO continued to maintain close working relations with ODIHR experts on a regular basis. These discussions included in particular i.a. meetings with Ms Carolyn Hammer, Adviser in the Rule of Law Unit in the ODIHR Democratisation Department, Ms Alice Szczepanikova, Migration and Freedom of Movement Adviser in the ODIHR Democratisation Department, Ms Andrea Huber, Head of the ODIHR Human Rights Department, and Mr Konstantine Vardzelashvili, Head of the ODIHR Democratisation Department.

b) Continuation of the co-operation with the Community of Democracies (CoD) – The Office maintained regular working relations with the Permanent Secretariat of the CoD and reported on the relevant developments and activities, in particular as regards the CoD's engagement within the framework of the 3rd Summit for Democracy, held in Seoul, and the launch of the recruitment process for the post of the Secretary General.

c) Establishment of closer co-operation with Frontex – In addition to the participation of the SRSG on migration and refugees in the Frontex Consultative Forum, the HoO maintained regular working contacts with Mr Jonas Grimheden, Frontex Fundamental Rights Officer, in order to establish concrete co-operation proposals for 2024 concerning the protection and promotion of fundamental rights in the context of border management. The

Office followed and reported on developments at Frontex as relevant from the perspective of the CoE. In particular, it reported on the strengthening of Frontex's institutional framework for co-operation with external partners, including the agreements signed with FRA, the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine and Europol.

B. CoE OFFICES AND PROGRAMME OFFICES

List of abbreviations used for the naming of projects

| | |
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| AP | Action-Plan- level funding |
| HF | European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye |
| NP | Neighbourhood Partnership |
| JP | Joint Programme |
| PGG | European Union/Council of Europe Partnership for Good Governance for Eastern Partnership countries |
| VC | Voluntary Contribution |

Programme Office in Ankara

Situation of the office

The Council of Europe Programme Office in Ankara has 39 (10 men, 29 women) staff members, out of which eight (four men, four women) are core staff and 31 (six men, 25 women) are project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Programme Office has implemented 11 projects, four in the framework of Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye III, five EU/CoE Joint Programmes, one funded through a voluntary contribution (HRTF of the Council of Europe, Norway, Belgium, Türkiye and the Netherlands) and two regional programmes, ROMACTED phase II and Roma Integration III.

State of implementation of projects

- **EU/CoE JP, "Supporting the Effective Implementation of Turkish Constitutional Court Judgements in the Field of Fundamental Rights":** On 6 February, a workshop on Combating Violence against Women in the Light of the Turkish Constitutional Court (TCC) Judgments was conducted in co-operation with the Human Rights and Equality Institution (HREIT). During 21-24 February, two Trainings of Trainers (ToTs) were organised for prosecutors and judges on "Right to a Fair Trial" in criminal and civil matters. On 22 February, a university lecture was organised in Akdeniz University on "Individual Application to TCC". Three cascade trainings were organised for lawyers on "Individual Application Procedures", on 1-2 March in Muş, on 8-9 March in Aksaray and on 15-16 March in Ankara. On 29 March, a roundtable was held with the participation of two lawyers of the European Court of Human Rights on the consistency of its case-law and TCC's case-law.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Turkey":** A round-table discussion on the "Mediation Practices in Property and Lease Ownership" was held in Ankara with 100 lawyers, academicians and mediators on 10 January. Two information seminars for 320 lawyers on mediation and arbitration were held in Ankara. While a desk-based research on evaluation of mediation systems in European countries was completed, another research on family mediation has been initiated. An awareness raising seminar on conciliation practices took place in Trabzon for judges, prosecutors and conciliators during 29 February-1 March. The desk work for the preparation of refresher conciliation training programme has been initiated by the national consultants.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Improving the Effectiveness of Family Courts: Better Protection of the Rights of Family Members":** The production of awareness raising brochures and handbooks on the functioning of family justice was completed. A ToT seminar with 57 trainer judges and prosecutors was held in Antalya on 12-15 February. A law clinic was established in March within İzmir Economy University, to be operationalised in co-operation with İzmir Bar Association and other judiciary bodies. Scenarios of five different training modules for the Distance Learning Training Programme and the Family Law Training Platform were drafted. Structure and working procedures of the Family Justice Council, as a new co-ordination mechanism planned to be established, were examined and shared with the stakeholders.

- **EU/CoE JP, “Improving International Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters in Turkey”:** In the last quarter, six cascade trainings were held in Ankara, Istanbul and Adana for 50 judges and prosecutors in each. Two workshops were held in Istanbul in February to discuss the pre-MLA (Mutual Legal Assistance) co-operation with participants from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Directorate General of Security, Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK), judges and prosecutors. On 16 February, an inauguration ceremony was organised at the MoJ for the formal delivery of 152 books supplied under the project. The project ensured the delivery of IT equipment to the MoJ, to support the development of a Central Monitoring System for the electronic transmission of MLA requests.

- **5 donors¹ VC, “Enhancing the Disciplinary and Reward Procedures for Prisoners in Türkiye”:** The draft policy paper on maintaining good order in prisons through rewards and disciplinary sanctions was discussed in the 2nd Working Group (WG) meeting on 15-16 January. The draft amendments on the regulatory framework were presented to the stakeholders and agreed in a round table meeting held on 18-19 January. The process drafting the curriculum, modules and training plans for ToTs and cascade trainings to increase the knowledge and skills of prison managers and staff, started by the WG meeting on 26-27 February. The analytical report for baseline study to identify the effectiveness of the current discipline and reward practices was prepared by the international consultant and shared with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

- **EU/CoE HF III, “Strengthening the Human Rights Protections in the Context of Migration in Türkiye”:** The Guideline on Child Protection Legislation was disseminated to the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management across Türkiye. The first cascade training for lawyers on “Detention in the Context of Migration” was held in İstanbul during 22-23 March, with 20 lawyers on non-refoulement, right to liberty and security, alternatives to immigration detention, and protection of persons in vulnerable situation. The “Report on Gender Mainstreaming in the Context of Migration in Türkiye” was completed. A guide on monitoring of places of detention was drafted and shared with Human Rights and Equality Institution (HREIT). The translation of the Council of Europe “Guide for Practitioners – Administrative Detention of Migrants and Asylum Seekers” was initiated.

- **EU/CoE HF III, “Action against Money Laundering in Türkiye”:** In February, 44 representatives of the Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK) and relevant institutions in Ankara were provided with enhanced knowledge on the assessment of money laundering/terrorist financing risks associated with virtual assets. Participation of MASAK representatives in the Egmont Group Training of Trainers on “Strategic Analysis Based on the Egmont Group’s Centre of FIU Excellence and Leadership Course” on 11-13 March in Strasbourg, and in the Conference “Enhancing the Strategic Analysis Function of the FIU Experiences, Needs and Challenges”, on 20-21 March in Warsaw was ensured under the action.

- **EU/CoE HF III, “Fostering Women’s Access to Justice in Türkiye”:** The action continued to promote legal aid and services to be more accessible, gender-sensitive, and victim-centered through the grant scheme launched with the Union of Turkish Bar Association, from which 286 women benefitted so far. The action also contributed to increasing the awareness and knowledge among future legal professionals through the online HELP course on “Access to Justice for Women” launched for 385 students (317 women and 72 men) from 43 universities. The action contributed to the “Conference on Women’s Human Rights” organised on 7-8 March in Ankara University, on the occasion of International Women’s Day.

¹ Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands, Türkiye, Human Rights Trust Fund

Throughout the conference, the information about the Council of Europe's work on gender equality was disseminated in co-operation with the European Union. The conference also included a presentation on "Gender analysis in earthquake areas: Women's access to justice and legal aid", previously conducted within the scope of the action.

The action took part in an event titled "Women in times of disaster and women's access to justice", organised by Çankaya University on 19 March, and delivered a presentation on the findings and recommendations of its gender analysis.

Finally, the action prepared the call for grants for three grants aiming to enhance the capacity of CSOs for promoting women's access to justice.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Pilot Project on Digital Citizenship Education in Türkiye":**

Following the finalization of the needs assessment report, a road map was prepared for the development of materials targeting children and child participation. In parallel, 14 sessions with children from pilot schools and two online follow-up meetings with teachers took place to enhance the capacities of teachers and students (aged between 10-14) on the digital citizenship education. A podcast contest was launched to encourage students in pilot schools to brainstorm and advocate for digital citizenship competences. This contest will raise the awareness of 10 pilot domains of the action. Additionally, an international call for tender on the provision of the services to develop a web-based game was launched.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED phase II)":**

The implementation of 10 grant projects has been ongoing since 1 January. A monitoring/courtesy visit was conducted on 26 January to Şişli Municipality. An online information meeting on the implementation procedures of grants was organised on 15 February. A courtesy visit was conducted on 12 March to TİHEK to discuss possible collaboration opportunities.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Roma Integration phase III":**

The project work plan was finalized in January in co-operation with the Ministry of Family and Social Services. Introductory visits to stakeholders were organised in Istanbul on 25-26 January. A meeting with Human Rights and Equality Institution (HREIT) took place in Ankara on 12 March. During the meeting, it has been agreed to organize the ROMA Summit 2025 in close collaboration with HREIT. The preparations of the first activity in Türkiye, a central workshop on how to reduce informality among Roma (planned for May) are ongoing. The inception report of the project is approved in March.

Follow up actions

- **EU/CoE JP, "Supporting the Effective Implementation of Turkish Constitutional Court Judgements in the Field of Fundamental Rights":**

- ✓ Draft project addendum for budget revision concerning the IT software delivery will be submitted to the EUD in April.
- ✓ Seven cascade trainings for lawyers and four trainings for judges and prosecutors are planned for April-May.
- ✓ Two roundtable meetings for the Regional Courts of Appeals in the region of south coast of the country will be organised in the next quarter.
- ✓ A workshop in April or May to raise awareness in public and civil society organisations on selected areas of TCC case-law will be organised.
- ✓ Placements of the TCC rapporteurs in the European Court of Human Rights will continue as of May.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Turkey":**

- ✓ The third progress report of the project is pending approval of CFCU, contracting body.
- ✓ A large volume of content related posters and leaflets will be disseminated to increase the awareness of the public on existing ADR mechanisms.
- ✓ An awareness seminar on conciliation will be held with judges and prosecutors in Fethiye on 26 April.
- ✓ A high level international conference will take place in İstanbul on 9 May, to discuss the conciliation practices in Türkiye and other European countries.
- ✓ The Project closing conference is planned for 3 July in Ankara.
- **EU/CoE JP, "Improving the Effectiveness of Family Courts: Better Protection of the Rights of Family Members":**
 - ✓ The pilot implementation of the tools and guidelines in three selected courthouses will start as of mid-May.
 - ✓ Cascade trainings will continue to be held in İzmir, Antalya and İstanbul during April and May.
 - ✓ A working group meeting to discuss the structure and working procedures of the Family Justice Council will be held in the next quarter.
 - ✓ An open court day event in Izmir courthouse will be organised on 25 April.
- **EU/CoE JP, "Improving International Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters in Turkey":**
 - ✓ The third progress report of the project is pending approval of CFCU, contracting body.
 - ✓ Next two cascade trainings are planned to be held in Antalya on 16-18 April.
 - ✓ On 27-28 May, the project will contribute to the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Council of Europe and the 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Council of Europe's Programme Office in Ankara by organising an international conference on organised crime and mutual legal assistance.
 - ✓ In May, a study visit to Spain is planned with the participation of the Ministry of Justice.
- **5 donors VC, "Enhancing the Disciplinary and Reward Procedures for Prisoners in Türkiye and update on achievements during the reporting period":**
 - ✓ The adoption of the legislative amendments will be closely followed in co-operation with the MoJ.
 - ✓ Templates for standard complaint and request forms and development of the new IT interface structure/design will be discussed in April.
 - ✓ The standard operational procedures for the implementation of the policy paper will be discussed with the MoJ in May, upon which a final policy paper will be drafted.
 - ✓ The training plans for four modules of the ToTs will be completed by July.
 - ✓ A study visit to observe the best practices will be organised to Spain in June.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening the Human Rights Protections in the Context of Migration in Türkiye":**
 - ✓ Additional guidelines and translations will be published for the use of public institutions and professionals working in the field of migration.
 - ✓ Next trainings are planned with various local bars in May and June, in coordination with the Union of Turkish Bar Associations.
 - ✓ Trainings on monitoring of detention places will be organised for the HREIT following the completion of the relevant guideline.
 - ✓ An international event on "Human Rights and Migration in the Context of Emergency Situations and Natural Disasters" will be organised in June.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Action against Money Laundering in Türkiye":**
 - ✓ A training course for competent supervisory authorities on risk-based anti-money laundering supervision by financial institutions and two technical papers on the subjects related to anti money laundering will be conducted.
 - ✓ Two workshops, one on comparative practices on exchange between EU member states on setting-up/functions of asset recovery offices and asset sharing, and the other on the effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctioning policy and amendments to Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Rec. 8 will be organised in the next quarter.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Fostering Women's Access to Justice in Türkiye":**
 - ✓ The gender analysis and other project outputs will be further disseminated to relevant authorities, through bilateral meetings with the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye-Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men, the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, and the Ombudsman Institution.
 - ✓ The action is currently facing a challenging situation concerning its budget due to the high inflationary economy, and therefore continues to take measures through necessary budget revision.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Pilot Project on Digital Citizenship Education in Türkiye":**
 - ✓ Contents of training and awareness raising materials targeting teachers, students and parents will be reviewed by the end of May and finalised during the following quarter.
 - ✓ The tender for the web-based game will be finalised and contractor will be identified by the end of June. The game will be developed and tested by December.
- **EU/CoE JP, "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED phase II)":**
 - ✓ Monitoring/Courtesy visits will be conducted to 10 ROMACTED municipalities after local election results are final.
 - ✓ An Advisory Group Meeting will be organised jointly with the Roma Integration project on 25 April in Ankara. Discussions on future cooperation through Roma Projects in Türkiye will continue in the next quarter.
- **EU/CoE JP, "Roma Integration phase III":**
 - ✓ A media training will be carried out in Serbia in May, including representatives from Türkiye.
 - ✓ Preparations will be completed for the Roma International day statement on 8 April and ROMACTED and Roma Integration joint advisory event in Ankara on 25 April.
 - ✓ An introductory visit to Ombudsman will be organised in the next quarter.

Other relevant activities

- **EU/CoE JP, "Supporting the Effective Implementation of Turkish Constitutional Court Judgements in the Field of Fundamental Rights":**
 - ✓ On 31 May, the project will contribute to the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Council of Europe and the 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Council of Europe Programme Office in Ankara by organising an international conference in Medipol University on "Artificial Intelligence and Justice".
- **EU/CoE JP, "Improving International Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters in Turkey":**

- ✓ The publication of Ministerial Circular No 183, supported by the project, contributed to the establishment of Bureaux for International Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters in seven provinces.
- **5 donors VC, "Enhancing the Disciplinary and Reward Procedures for Prisoners in Türkiye and update on achievements during the reporting period":**
 - ✓ The submission of the legislative package, prepared under the project, to the Turkish Grand National Assembly is expected in April according to the information received from the MoJ.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Action against Money Laundering in Türkiye":**
 - ✓ Inclusion of additional activities related to FATF Rec. 8, agreed in consultation with MASAK and the Ministry of Interior, would be communicated to the European Commission to facilitate the finalisation of the revision of the Action's Logframe.

Council of Europe high level visits and other official delegations

- Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, participated in Antalya Diplomacy Forum on 1 March.
- Bjørn Berge, Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General, participated in Antalya Diplomacy Forum on 2 March.
- The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities carried out a local election mission during 29 March - 1 April.

Office in Baku

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Baku has 17 (four men, 13 women) staff members, out of which six (two men, four women) are core staff and 11 (two men, nine women) are project staff.

As of 31 March, the Office has implemented six projects, four in the framework of the EU/CoE regional Joint Programme "Partnership for Good Governance", one project funded through voluntary contributions from Germany, one project funded through the Human Rights Trust Fund (HRTF) and voluntary contributions from Belgium.

State of implementation of projects

- **Germany VC, "Promoting media professionalism and freedom of information in Azerbaijan (PRO-M-FEX)":** The project facilitated the integration of the conflict-sensitive journalism curriculum, developed as part of the project, into the journalism programmes of Azerbaijani universities. This was achieved through refining the Azerbaijani translation of the curriculum and providing expert support to four universities for smooth integration of conflict sensitive journalism into their existing teaching processes.
- **HRTF/Belgium VC, "Support for the improvement of the execution of the European Court judgments by Azerbaijan":** The final version of the National Execution Strategy and Action Plan for Execution of Judgments and Decisions of the European Court of Human Rights have been shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be further transmitted to 10 partner institutions during reporting period. Self-learning HELP course on "Ethics for judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers" in Azerbaijani was published on the HELP online platform which will reach a broader audience amongst legal professionals. Recommendations on compatibility of legislation on criminal proceedings prepared within previous Council of Europe Project², have been revised to further support the process of aligning national legislation in accordance with the standards set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and its protocols.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Preventing and fighting economic crime in Azerbaijan":** The Supreme Court of Azerbaijan was provided with suggestions for good practices in the area of the prosecution and adjudication of money laundering and asset recovery cases. The observations and suggestions provided by the project will be important to address the shortcomings in this field and to apply a consistent approach for the prosecution of money laundering cases as well as to target the proceeds of crime, particularly with regard to standalone money laundering.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in Azerbaijan":** During the reporting period, the project finalised adaptation of the HELP course on VAW/DV for law enforcement officials to Azerbaijan and the course is now available online in Azerbaijani. The project also focused on creating raising

² For more information about the previous CoE Project, please refer to: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/national-implementation/azerbaijan-support-to-justice-sector-reform-initiatives-in-azerbaijan>

awareness resources on preventing and VAW/DV in Azerbaijani through translation of publications on Council of Europe standards in the relevant fields.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Fostering mediation in Azerbaijan":** On 9 January, the project conducted a meeting via video conference with the representatives of the Mediation Council, Ministry of Justice, and Academy of Justice. During the meeting "The Assessment report on data collection and digitalisation of the mediation system in Azerbaijan" prepared by CEPEJ experts were presented and future activities to support the implementation of key recommendations on mediation in line with CEPEJ guidelines were discussed with the main national partners.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Promoting equality in Azerbaijan":** With a view to the engagement of youth in awareness raising activities under the project Component 3, the project convened a meeting with six Azerbaijani Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) on 12 March. The YEAs are students, young professionals and civil society members who had been trained under the YEAs programme of the EU, as well as participated in online and in-person training sessions on promoting equality, non-discrimination and countering hate speech which were held as a part of the PGG III programme. During the meeting the participants exchanged updates on the current status of operations and challenges encountered and discussed ideas for building synergies and enhancing coordination in the area of promoting equality and non-discrimination among their peers and in local communities in Azerbaijan.

Other relevant activities

- On 16 January and 12 February, the Head of Office and the Deputy Head of Office met with Aysel Yagubova, Head of Department for Cooperation with International Human Rights Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Azerbaijan.
- On 19 January, the Head of Office and the Deputy Head of Office met with EUD Ambassador Peter Michalko and Maryam Hajismayilova, International Aid and Cooperation Officer of the EUD.
- On 8 February, the Head of Office met with Swiss Ambassador Thomas Stähli and Ambassador Muriel Peneveyre, Assistant State Secretary for Eurasian Affairs.
- On 7 March, the Deputy Head of Office attended a panel discussion on "Gender and Climate Action: Solutions for Women, by Women" organized by ADA University in cooperation with the Ministry of Family, UN and media.
- On 8 March, the Head of Office attended the international conference on "Embracing Diversity: Tackling Islamophobia in 2024" co-organized by the Baku International Multiculturalism Centre, the Center of Analysis of International Relations, and the Baku Initiative Group, in partnership with the G20 Interfaith Dialogue Forum.
- On 12 March, the Head of Office and the Deputy Head of Office met with six Azerbaijani Young European Ambassadors
- On 14 March, the Head of Office attended XI Global Baku Forum organized by Nizami Ganjavi International Center.
- The Council of Europe Office in Baku attended the press conferences conducted by the Central Election Commission and the OSCE ODIHR/EOM following the early presidential election on 7 February. Following an invitation from the Azerbaijani authorities, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) had established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) that consisted of an 11-member core team based in Baku and deployed 26 long-term and 280 short-term observers to observe election proceedings across the country.

Office in Belgrade

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Belgrade has 34 staff members (24 women, 10 men), out of which seven are core staff (three women, four men) and 27 are project staff (21 women, six men).

The newly appointed Head of Office assumed his duties on 5 February.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 14 (country specific and regional) projects, out of which 10 are jointly funded with the EU (seven in the framework of the Horizontal Facility Phase III, Support for the implementation of judicial reform in Serbia, ROMACTED phase II and Roma Integration Programme) and four projects funded through Voluntary Contributions: two on Anti-Money-Laundering and Countering Terrorist Financing funded by Sweden through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), one on HELP in the Western Balkans funded by the Human Rights Trust Fund (HRTF) and one on Prevention of bullying and peer violence in schools funded by Germany.

State of implementation of projects / programmes / Action Plans / co-operation documents

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Quality Education for All - Serbia":** The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) was [included in Rulebook on performing socially useful work](#) in educational institutions (Official Gazette of the RS, 9 February). An expert [meeting with six European universities](#) focusing on introducing RFCDC into the Serbian higher education took place. The 2nd meeting of the curricula task force concluded the work on connection of the formal curricula with RFCDC descriptors. Mentor schools continued dissemination and training across Serbia, including minority languages i.e. Hungarian. Serbian best practices were presented at the regional conference in Montenegro. The Ministry of Education [continued to fund CSOs](#) regarding the RFCDC.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Combating discrimination and promoting diversity in Serbia":** The capacity of the Commissioner for protection of equality (CPE) was strengthened through supporting data collection for the [national discrimination surveys](#), in line with ECRI standards. The action organized regional peer exchange to foster equality reforms with focus on the LGBTI community and supported organization of the Belgrade Pride Annual Conference. The action commissioned gender analysis encompassing a broad approach beyond the binary definition of gender, to include LGBTI people, as well as comparative analysis on combating racism aiming at reviewing existing antiracism policy and legal framework.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Protecting Freedom of Expression and of the Media in Serbia (PRO-FREX-S)":** The action continued to support Data Commissioner³ with provision of the FRA⁴/CoE Handbook on European law on data protection in Serbian language. The action supported REM⁵ in revision of Rulebooks that regulate media in areas of protection of human rights, minors, pre-election campaigns, accessibility of content for people with disabilities and video sharing platforms. The draft Rulebooks will be subjected to public debate before being

³ Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection

⁴ EU Agency for Fundamental Human Rights

⁵ Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media in Serbia

adopted. A report on safety of journalists was published in cooperation with two largest journalists' associations in Serbia, offering insight into invisible pressures on journalists.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening anti-trafficking action in Serbia":** A workshop on combating technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings gathered 27 participants (14 women, 13 men), representatives of various partner institutions. GRETA's report "Online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings" was presented. A workshop on conducting forensic interviews with presumed victims of trafficking in human beings for the 12 staff (nine women, three men) of the Centre for Human Trafficking Victims' Protection was implemented. A grant was awarded to NGO Astra to update the guide for lawyers on the rights of trafficking victims in criminal proceedings and expand Serbian network of lawyers through capacity building.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening human rights protection in Serbia":** The action supported execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights through organising a meeting of national stakeholders relevant for the execution of judgment *Stanimirović v. Serbia* with representatives of the Execution Department and the Committee for Prevention of Torture. Within efforts to raise capacities of Serbian judiciary to implement the European Convention of Human Rights, the action supported the placement of an advisor of the Supreme Court in the European Court of Human Rights, the participation of high representatives of the Constitutional Court in a judicial seminar organised by the European Court of Human Rights and of a judge and advisors of the Constitutional Court in the regional meeting of constitutional courts in Montenegro.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Enhancing human rights protection for detained and sentenced persons":** The action supported the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior. The aim is to standardise the conduct of police officers and medical workers for medical screening of detainees in police custody. Moreover, a task force for putting into practice the Interviewing Manual for police officers was supported. Recommendations for reviving the Training Centre for Prison Staff were made available to and discussed with authorities. The rafting of five new offender treatment programmes is on track.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Enhancing co-operation in the Western Balkans in managing violent extremism in prisons and preventing further radicalisation after release":** On 28-29 February, the 1st session of the project's Working Group for Serbia took place. The session was dedicated to discussion on adjustment and optimisation of the tools and rehabilitation methodology aimed at working with violent extremist prisoners and discussion on preconditions to making VEP-specific tools⁶ and rehabilitation methodology fully resourceful, applicable within Serbian penitentiary system and responsive to the needs of prisoners.

- **EU/CoE Regional JP, "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED phase II)":** Thematic consultants were engaged to provide support to partner cities and municipalities on the development of Local Action Plans for Roma Inclusion. In the municipality of Apatin 40 workshops for Roma pupils were organised and support to local Roma folklore society provided through purchase of costumes and improvement of the Cultural Centre in Roma settlement in Sonta. Implementation of small grants-scheme projects continued in municipalities, addressing the needs in various areas such as education, infrastructure, health, post-COVID recovery, etc.

⁶ Violent Extremist Prisoners-specific tools (Screening Tool to Signs of Radicalisation, Risk and Needs Assessment Tool and Rehabilitation Methodology in working with violent extremist prisoners)

- **EU/CoE Regional JP, “Roma Integration III”:** An agreement was established with the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue in Serbia and the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina (institutional partners), on the revision of instruments for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of National Action Plans for Social Inclusion of Roma. Co-ordination in prevention of risk of statelessness in the Western Balkans and Türkiye has been discussed with UNHCR. Institutional partners of the project participated in the Summit on green and digital agenda organized by the Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative (REDI) with the support of the European Commission.
- **EU/CoE JP, “Support for the implementation of judicial reform in Serbia”:** The project continued supporting the High Judicial Council and the High Prosecutorial Council in developing bylaws for the new judicial and prosecutorial laws. Moreover, the project organised an international workshop on the harmonization of prosecutorial practices as an effective method for prevention of conflicting case law. A workshop on the effectiveness of legal remedies in the process of elections of prosecutors and freedom of expression of prosecutors was organised and developed business requirements for the grant to the Supreme Court. In addition, two quarterly meetings of all four appellate courts and the Supreme Court of Serbia were held to harmonise case law.
- **HRTF VC, Regional “HELP in the Western Balkans”:** The project launched two regional HELP courses – Judicial Reasoning and Human Rights for the Judicial Academies of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and North Macedonia, and Violence against Women and Domestic Violence for all six Bar Associations in the Western Balkans. The HELP course on Introduction to Corruption Prevention was launched in Albania and International Cooperation in Criminal Matters was launched in Serbia. More than 450 legal professionals from the region enrolled in these courses. The number of users in the region of the HELP platform is 9129, which is an increase by 28% since the beginning of the project in January 2023.
- **Sweden (Sida) VC, “Preventing money laundering and terrorist financing in Serbia”:** The project enhanced capacities of Serbian authorities to supervise virtual assets service providers. A gap analysis was conducted for investigating, processing, and adjudicating of money laundering cases and asset recovery regime. An online training session was launched for prosecutors to improve co-operation in criminal matters. The project supported the Agency for Prevention of Corruption to analyse the existing Law on Lobbying to address GRECO recommendations. An assessment was conducted to develop technical specifications for improvement of the Beneficial Ownership Register and a system for the data collection of the Ministry of Trade.
- **Sweden (Sida) VC, “Countering Economic Crime in Serbia”:** The project, officially started on 1 January 2024, is in its 6-month inception phase and during the reporting period inception meetings with the project beneficiaries took place.
- **Germany VC, “Prevent bullying and peer violence in schools”:** The project started on 1 January 2024 and a detailed planning of the project activities took place in February. An analysis of the existing research studies, reports and publications on prevalence and impact of peer violence in schools done over the past decade has been conducted. It will be presented during project research methodology planning meeting, which will be held with beneficiaries and stakeholders. A call for international and national consultants who will provide support to beneficiaries in conducting research and policy development has been launched.

Follow-up action

- The IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) Committee adopted the 2024 program for Serbia, which includes two Council of Europe projects – on local self-government and mental health in prison. The next step for the EC should be to sign the financial agreement with the Serbian government (once it is appointed) so that the Council of Europe could start preparing the final versions of the project proposal and the contribution agreement.

Other relevant activities

- On 8 March, the International Women's Day was marked with an online campaign to combat discrimination and promote equality. The Council of Europe Office in Belgrade undertook an online promotion of women's rights through social media (Facebook), starting from 7 and 8 March, in co-ordination with DPC and DC. The material provided by DC was adapted and translated into Serbian to appeal to the wider audience in Serbia. The promotion of women's rights and anti-discrimination included posts on SG message, promotion of the dedicated website on gender equality, free HELP online course on gender equality in Serbian and general message of the Council of Europe's commitment to protect and promote rights of women and equality for all. The posts reached around 1000 persons in Serbia.
- On 20 March, on the eve of the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the office organised a joint event with the Commissioner for Equality and the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia, to present the results of the research "Attitudes of citizens towards discrimination in Serbia".

Cybercrime Programme Office in Bucharest

Situation of the Office

The Cybercrime Programme Office of the Council of Europe in Bucharest has 35 (eight men, 27 women, Head of Office split between Bucharest and Strasbourg) staff members, out of which two (one man, one woman) is core staff and 33 (seven men, 26 women) project staff.

During the reporting period the office was responsible for the implementation of seven capacity building projects on cybercrime, out of which five are jointly funded with the European Union and two are funded by voluntary contributions. Five of these projects are new and commenced in the first quarter of 2024.

State of implementation of projects

Joint initiatives of the Cybercrime Programme Office (C-PROC) collectively strengthened international cooperation, legal frameworks, and awareness in the fight against cybercrime worldwide. Coordination of positions and cybercrime experts' participation from Africa, Asia-Pacific, and South America was ensured in relation to the 7th Session of the [United Nations Ad Hoc Committee](#) tasked to prepare a new cybercrime treaty. The [International Network of Judicial Trainers' Plenary](#) enhanced global judicial training on cybercrime and electronic evidence by starting [a new series of practitioner to practitioner webinars](#).

- **EU/CoE Regional JP, “Enhanced co-operation on e-evidence by EU Member States through the Second Protocol to the Budapest Convention (CyberSPEX)”**: The preparation of the launching event started and the process of establishing pilot countries from among EU member States is underway. The identification of guides and tools to be developed under the project was initiated including through the dialogue with relevant EU agencies and projects.
- **EU/CoE Regional JP, “Enhanced Action on Cybercrime for Cyber Resilience in the Eastern Partnership states (CyberEast+)”**: An assessment of progress in the Eastern Partnership region since 2019 on the matters of cybercrime legislation, strategies, investigative and cooperation capacities is being prepared.
- **AP, “Strengthening capacities on electronic evidence of war crimes and gross human rights violations in Ukraine (CyberUA)”**: An inception study on electronic evidence of war crimes and related offences in the context of the war of aggression against Ukraine was completed with the aim of supporting relevant criminal justice authorities of Ukraine when conducting investigations and prosecutions. The growth of knowledge and skills on matters of open-source intelligence and e-evidence of war crimes and related offences was supported through direct inputs to the relevant workstreams of the Ukraine Dialogue Group. A review of investigative manuals and guidelines of the Prosecutor General’s Office in terms of electronic evidence handling is underway.
- **EU/CoE Regional JP, “Enhanced cooperation on cybercrime and electronic evidence in the Southern Neighbourhood Region (CyberSouth+)”**: The inception

phase of the project started and the preparation of the workplan was initiated by engaging all project countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine** and Tunisia). The contribution of project partners was sought in view of identifying and planning further joint activities. The support provided to the Tunisian authorities led to the accession to the Budapest Convention by Tunisia. International co-operation in the region was promoted by contributing to the launch of the Regional [Rule of Law Youth Network](#), initiated by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, and to the [International Conference on Digital Justice](#) organized by the United Nations Developed Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Justice of Morocco.

• **EU/CoE Regional JP, “Co-operation on Cybercrime: Enhanced action on cybercrime and electronic evidence in South-East Europe and Türkiye (CyberSEE)”:**

Co-ordination with other organisations and project partners was ensured in view of identifying new synergies and preparation of the project workplan. The development of the Council of Europe ransomware webpage is underway with the aim of increasing understanding and knowledge of criminal justice representatives of legislative frameworks, international initiatives, law enforcement responses, and risks and challenges posed by ransomware attacks.

• **EU/CoE JP, “Global Action on Cybercrime extended (GLACY+)”:** The ongoing legislative reforms in Rwanda, Mozambique, The Gambia (electronic evidence) and Vanuatu (data protection) were supported. Some 34 Senegalese and Fijian law enforcement officers enhanced their knowledge on collecting and preserving evidence as first responders. 47 participants from 21 countries sharpened their skills on digital forensic at the [Digital Security Challenge 2024](#). The capacities of the Philippines on judicial training were reinforced by [expanding the pool of national experts and enhancing of their knowledge](#). Two handbooks (one on judicial training strategies and one dedicated to cybercrime strategies) and a survey on the state of play of the cybercrime strategies were developed. This project ended in February 2024.

• **EU/CoE JP, “Global Action on Cybercrime Enhanced (GLACY-e)”:** During its inception period, the project enhanced co-operation with hub and selected countries and projects as well as international organisations active in the field by identifying synergies and planning joint activities for 2024. The project increased its visibility by participation in the Annual FOPREL Plenary and the third anniversary of the Cybercrime Unit of the Public Ministry of Peru. The design of the [future cybercrime strategy of Ecuador](#) was supported. The creation of a pool of national trainers in Mauritius (prosecutors and magistrates) and Brazil (prosecutors) was fostered by delivery of the first introductory training courses.

• **8⁷ donors VC, “Octopus Project”:** Analysis and strengthening of legislation and capacities on cybercrime and electronic evidence were in the focus for Mauritania, Mauritius and Southeast Asian countries. The engagement of parliamentarians in the Caribbean and African regions was sought in view of advocating for the international legal standards of the Budapest Convention. Translations of a [discussion paper on cybercrime and freedom of expression](#) into Spanish and French were published to broaden understanding and engagement on these critical issues. The [Cyberviolence resource](#) and [Octopus Platform](#) maintained by the project served as important platforms enabling criminal justice authorities and legal practitioners worldwide to increase their knowledge on the topic.

⁷ Canada, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States of America

** This designation shall not be construed as a recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of Council of Europe member States on this issue

Follow up actions

- Celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Cybercrime Programme Office.
- Organisation of the 30th T-CY Plenary.
- Launch of the:
 - ✓ CyberSouth+ project on enhanced cooperation on cybercrime and electronic evidence in the Southern Neighborhood Region.
 - ✓ CyberEast+ project on Enhanced action on cybercrime for cyber resilience in Eastern Partnership States.
 - ✓ CyberSPEX project on Enhanced co-operation on e-evidence by EU Member States through the Second Protocol to the Budapest Convention.
 - ✓ CyberSEE project on Enhanced action on cybercrime and electronic evidence in South-East Europe and Türkiye.
- Organisation of the first Steering Committee of the GLACY-e project.
- Creation of a team at the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine to support the implementation of the CyberUA project on "Strengthening capacities on electronic evidence of war crimes and gross human rights violations in Ukraine".
- Semi-Regional online Workshop on implementation of the Second Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention in light of EU requirements for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- Preparation of national studies on cybercrime threats, victims, reporting, offenders and criminal groups under the CyberEast+ project.
- Finalisation of the regional study on legislation in Southeast Asia.
- Finalisation and publication of the Council of Europe ransomware webpage.
- Launch of CYBOX online training platform.
- Support the EuroDIG 2024 Annual event on cyber resilience and engagement of civil society.
- Co-operation exercise with private sector actors on handling of evidence of war crimes and related offences for Ukraine.
- Completion of the final assessment report of the CyberSouth project and GLACY+ project.
- Regional workshop on Second Additional Protocol for Latin America.
- Regional Conference on cybercrime and electronic evidence in Southeast Asia.
- Regional training exercise on dark web and cryptocurrency for the countries from the Southern Neighborhood Region.
- Regional workshops for the countries in South-East Europe and Türkiye on the following topics:
 - ✓ strategies and practices of law enforcement training on cybercrime and electronic evidence (with the support of the US Department of Justice)
 - ✓ priorities for criminal justice action on cybercrime and e-evidence as well as on online child sexual exploitation
 - ✓ emerging cyber threats and timely exchange of cyber threat information (with the support of Albania).
- Regional forum on fight against cybercrime for Heads of Cybercrime Units and prosecutors, with Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Center.
- Workshops on the role and responsibilities of the 24/7 Contact Points in Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Benin and Ecuador.
- Mobilization of resources for the Octopus Project.

Other relevant activities

- 7 February: [Grenada and Mozambique have been invited to accede to the Convention on Cybercrime](#).
- 8 March: [Tunisia becomes 70th Party to the Convention on Cybercrime](#).

Office in Chisinau

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Chisinau has 40 (10 men, 30 women) staff members, out of which eight (four men, four women) are core staff and 32 (six men, 26 women) project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 16 projects, eight funded through voluntary contributions at Action-Plan-level, three in the framework of the EU/CoE regional Joint Programme "Partnership for Good Governance (PGG)" III and five funded through voluntary contributions from Norway, the Netherlands, the United States of America, Austria through the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the European Union. The Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 has received as of 31 March 2024 Action-Plan-level contributions from Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, as well as from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe.

State of implementation of projects / programmes / Action Plans / co-operation documents

- **AP, "Preventing and protecting children from violence including in the digital environment":** The Project Steering Committee meeting presenting the updates of the project and plans for the upcoming year was organised on 23 January with the participation of 21 representatives of authorities and civil society, including 17 women and four men. The exploratory study into risk factors of juvenile sex offending and available services for juvenile sex offenders in the Republic of Moldova was presented and consulted with over 120 professionals during an online presentation event organised on 9 February.
- **United States of America (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs INL) VC, "Action against Corruption in the Republic of Moldova – phase 2":** (1) Capacity building activities on "Corruption risk assessment and management tools" for 80 representatives of law enforcement agencies and representatives of the prosecution service took place on 19-23 February; (2) an onsite consultative mission to the Republic of Moldova took place on 26-28 February to support the Superior Council of Magistracy on the formulation of recommendations for an institutional strategic plan; (3) a remote consultation meetings took place with the national stakeholders to coordinate the development of a guide for persons exercising top executive functions and high officials, covering all relevant integrity rules and principles.
- **AP, "Strengthening the prison and probation reforms, provision of health care and the treatment of patients in closed institutions in the Republic of Moldova":** 16 staff from the Probation Service were trained to deliver the new rehabilitation Programme for aggressive and violent offenders under probation; 46 professionals from 16 prisons were trained on Risk and Needs Assessment in devising Individual Sentence Plans for prisoners, for a more accurate and responsive decision making towards prisoners' rehabilitation and reintegration, as a follow-up to piloting these tools gradually in seven prisons since 2018.
- **AP, "Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in the Republic of Moldova":** The project facilitated a public discussion in the Moldovan Parliament focusing on the digital dimension of violence against women. The event was attended by 50 participants (40 women and 10 men), including MPs, representatives from national authorities, and activists. Additionally, the project launched a study on digital violence against women in the

Republic of Moldova, aimed at introducing legal amendments to enhance the protection of women and girls from the technology facilitated violence. Furthermore, a workshop on combating digital violence against women was conducted for judges, prosecutors, and police officers, which contributed to enhancing the knowledge of 43 professionals (21 women, 22 men) in handling cases of online abuse against women.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Combating discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes in the Republic of Moldova":** A [platform for discussions with relevant stakeholders](#) regarding the legislative reform on Legal Gender Recognition was initiated. [82 operators of Police databases](#) were trained on disaggregated data collection on hate crimes. Contribution to [advancing regional co-operation on equality reforms for the protection of LGBTI community](#) was achieved through participation of six representatives of relevant authorities in a regional peer exchange in Podgorica, facilitated by the project. [Cooperation with the Young European Ambassadors in countering hatred and discrimination in the Republic of Moldova](#) was started and it was agreed to create synergies by involving the youth in future project actions.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Support to the justice reform in the Republic of Moldova":** On a study visit to Council of Europe Headquarters, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) representatives got acquainted with Council of Europe bodies and services, learning about their operations, and enhancing reporting processes. As a result of organized training courses, MoJ and Superior Council of Magistracy (CSM) representatives have improved crisis communication skills. Additionally, a seminar has enhanced CSM representatives' understanding of judges' freedom of expression. The draft regulation of the Superior Council of Prosecutors (CSP) on prosecutorial inspection was assessed and presented to the SCP. Recommendations from the assessment will be considered in finalizing the draft. The assessment of draft regulations on the organization, competencies, and functioning of the judicial inspection and Disciplinary Board was presented to CSM with improvement recommendations for finalizing the draft.

- **Norway VC, "Strengthening the human rights compliant criminal justice system in the Republic of Moldova":** 35 judges increased their knowledge and practical skills on the European principles and standards related to release of life-sentenced prisoners and the application of Law on amnesty in the Republic of Moldova. The Advisory Council under the Government Agent of the Republic of Moldova convened in a meeting, where the Council members (representatives from state institutions, civil society and academia), engaged in discussions addressing complex and systemic issues concerning the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights against the Republic of Moldova.

- **AP, "Improving electoral practice in the Republic of Moldova (IEPRM), phase III":** 160 policymakers, lawmakers, representatives from public institutions, political parties, international community, civil society, media, and election observation missions discussed the impact of electoral reform, lessons learned, and follow-up recommendations at the Post-Election Analysis Conference held in Chisinau on 14-15 March. In March, more than 45 law enforcement officials were trained in investigating illegal financing of political parties prior to the 2024 Presidential election. Additionally, the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova (CEC) approved its strategic program for 2024-2026 and the Training Centre's strategic program for 2024-2027, developed using the Council of Europe [URSO methodology](#).

- **AP, "Support for Media Pluralism and Freedom of Expression in the Republic of Moldova":** The project has continued its focused support to the Government of the Republic of Moldova in the implementation process of the newly adopted Law on Access to Information of Public Interest, aligned with the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents. In this sense, over 150 public officials were further trained on the law

requirements within 11-15 March, and a Policy Advisory Paper has been developed by the Council of Europe as support to the State Chancellery on monitoring the proactive transparency criteria set out in the law for public institutions.

- **Netherlands VC , “Enhancing diversity and equality in the Republic of Moldova”:**

Three support networks have been established in Soroca, Calarasi, and Dubasari districts, to protect vulnerable groups from hatred, discrimination, and bias-motivated offenses, and provide specialised assistance to the victims. A booklet was developed with relevant information and contact details, aiming to empower vulnerable groups to seek specialised support in cases of discrimination and bias-motivated violence. The annual Steering Committee meeting was organised and project partners were consulted on the project progress and future activities.

- **AP, “Reinforcing the culture of dialogue and ethical open local governance in the Republic of Moldova”:**

To advance open local government in the Republic of Moldova, the project supported six applications to the Open Government Partnership Local Programme Call. Consultations with the Government continued on draft amendments for a consultation mechanism and enhancing multi-level governmental dialogue in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government. On 5 March, 100+ representatives from central and local authorities and civil society discussed improving multi-level co-operation for effective migration management at the Roundtable "Building resilience at local level through migration management and inclusion".

- **Austria (ADA) VC, “Enhancing Employment Rights in the Republic of Moldova”:**

The project partners discussed the project progress achieved in 2023 and its priorities for 2024 during the second Steering Committee meeting. The needs assessment report in the field of social labour rights was published. The national authorities discussed the acceptance of additional provisions of the European Social Charter at a roundtable. 49 legal professionals successfully finalised the HELP course on Labour Rights as Human Rights. 21 Vocational Education and Training (VET) - related actors agreed upon the concept for the creation of the National Network for NEET (Youth not in Education, Employment, or Training) Integration into the VET system during a workshop. The web and social media pages of eight VET institutions were analysed and the concept to better promote their educational offers was developed.

- **AP, “Education for Democracy in the Republic of Moldova”:** The project organised 11 information visits to the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova for 300 high school students across Moldova. As a result, the students developed the competences that are needed to take action to defend and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This is an innovative experience-based learning process through democracy piloted with the support of the Council of Europe in the school year 2023-2024.

- **AP, “Strengthening the human rights protection of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Moldova”:**

60 school teachers participated in two-day training seminars in Chisinau and Balti on providing psychological support and assistance to children and adolescents who have experienced traumatic events and preventing burnout. The Study on Perceptions of Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova 2023, including the rights of the refugee population from Ukraine was presented publicly. The HELP course on “Asylum and Human Rights” was launched for judges, lawyers and prosecutors. The “Study on the Capacity of the National Asylum System in the Republic of Moldova”, presenting the primary shortcomings and challenges within the national asylum system was presented in a dedicated workshop.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, “Enhancing the anti-money laundering and asset recovery regime in the Republic of Moldova”:** A two-day training for law enforcement practitioners on investigating and prosecuting money laundering cases involving virtual assets was organized. Additionally, the project team presented a technical paper on extended confiscation mechanisms and compensation of crime victims during separate stakeholder roundtable discussions at the request of the MoJ, providing suggestions for establishing a system of social reuse of confiscated assets. At the request of the FIU, the project team delivered a technical paper reviewing the FIU's beneficial ownership guidelines against international standards, including recommendations for improvement.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, “Support to further modernisation of court management in the Republic of Moldova”:** The working groups on court performance reporting and HR policy optimization in Moldova met on 4 and 6 March. Their methodology, based on statistics and key performance indicators, aims to assess court workload objectively, ensure resource distribution, and prevent overburdening of judges and court staff. Gender equality and non-discrimination in judge and staff recruitment and promotion are equally prioritized by the Working Group.

Other relevant activities

- The second Steering Committee meeting of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 was held on 23 January with the participation of national authorities and public institutions involved in the programme of activities. The purpose of the event was to assess the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Action Plan.
- The Council of Europe Office in Chisinau held round table discussions on the elaboration of a new Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028 on 22 March. The round tables were attended by national partners and stakeholders, including civil society organizations. The aim of the round tables was to define priorities, identify beneficiaries, target groups and indicators, as well as to set out key actions and expected results, for each theme to be included in the new Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova for the years 2025 - 2028.

Council of Europe high level visits and other official delegations

- The co-rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Pierre-Alain Fridez and Zanda Kalnina-Lukasevica, visited the Republic of Moldova from 4 to 7 February. They focused on topics such as the political landscape, electoral reform, justice sector reforms, parliamentary oversight, and anti-corruption efforts. The co-rapporteurs met with relevant national authorities, representatives of civil society and donor communities.
- Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Mathieu Mori, attended the roundtable on migration management and inclusion, and met with representatives of the State Chancellery, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Parliament, the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM), the Ombudsperson, civil society, and the international community, notably in view of the Congress contribution to the forthcoming Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova.

Office in Georgia

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Georgia has 46 (seven men, 39 women) staff members, out of which 10 (three men, seven women) are core staff and 36 (four men, 32 women) are project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 15 projects, four in the framework of the EU/CoE "Partnership for Good Governance", two funded by Austria through the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and from Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and nine funded through contributions at the Action-Plan-level. The Action Plan for the Georgia 2024-2027 has received as of 31 March 2024 Action-Plan-level contributions from Denmark, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, as well as from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe.

State of implementation of projects

- **Austria (ADA) VC, "Strengthening participatory democracy and human rights at local level in Georgia" (civil participation):** A consultation workshop was held with key stakeholders (in co-operation with the Congress) to collect inputs and ideas of the project partners and beneficiaries, with the aim to tailor the new project with their needs and priorities. Based on the results of the workshop, the theory of change of the new project will be elaborated reflecting the behavioural and social change insights. The project is supporting, with international expertise, the second citizens assembly to be organised in Ozurgeti municipality on the issue of the stray dogs.
- **Austria (ADA) VC, "Strengthening participatory democracy and human rights at local level in Georgia" (local authorities):** Six local authorities have revised and developed local policies, with expert support, aligning them with human rights principles. A curriculum enhancing local authorities' capacity in human rights, anti-discrimination, and gender equality has been drafted with input from local and international experts. Four focus groups have assessed attitude and behavioural shifts among local authorities as a result of the project intervention. A roundtable engaged 30 participants from local and central government and civil society to co-create a new project's theory of change emphasising sustainable behavioural and social change.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Support to modernisation of court management in Georgia":** Following the court managers' forum, six courts volunteered to conduct a time motion study in line with CEPEJ SATURN Guidelines. This study is strategically aimed at analysing the time allocated to every task performed by non-judicial staff over a two-month period. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Supreme Court's statistical unit, an online statistical form has been developed to streamline data collection in courts for civil cases. In the initial phase, three courts volunteered to pilot this form, with plans for gradual implementation in other courts. The workshop for Independent Inspector's office identified areas for improvement and provided recommendations to enhance its role in Georgia, focusing on refining statistical categories and data analysis techniques for a better understanding of the justice system.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Consolidating and enhancing the institutional and operational frameworks for the prevention and combating of corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing in Georgia":** 44 representatives of virtual asset service provider sector

together with the National Bank of Georgia and the Financial Monitoring Service discussed the anti-money laundering/counting financing of terrorism compliance and supervision for alternative payment methods. The representatives of the Anti-corruption Bureau of Georgia were educated in identifying the necessary steps and the essential measures for development and effective implementation of national anti-corruption policy documents.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, “Strengthening Independence and Professionalism of Justice in Georgia”:** As a result of four rounds of training sessions, 32 prosecutors (19 women and 13 men) have gained necessary skills to deliver trainings for their peers within the framework of a continuous legal education program. Legal staff of the Independent Inspector’s Office (six in total, out of which four women and two men) enhanced knowledge on international standards of substantiation decisions on disciplinary proceedings in respect of judges. Legal expertise was provided to the Legal Issue Committee of the Parliament to improve the draft amendments in the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia on introduction of the New Preventive Measure- Restriction of the Movement.

- **EU/CoE JP, “Support for a better evaluation of the result of judicial reform efforts in the Eastern Partnership (Justice Dashboard EaP)”:** The quality check for the data collection campaign “Evaluation of the judicial systems 2024 (2022 data)” is nearing completion, given that a selection of 2022 data will be used for the 2023 EaP Report. The 2023 data collection and quality check of the submitted data within the framework of the Justice Dashboard EaP are underway in line with CEPEJ methodology and in close co-operation with the EaP Dashboard national correspondents from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. On 15 February, the team had a working meeting on 2022 and 2023 data collection campaigns with Ketevan Tsintsadze, Supreme Court judge in her capacity of CEPEJ national correspondent for Georgia.

- **AP, “Support to Penitentiary System Reforms in Georgia”:** The official launching ceremony and the first Steering Committee Meeting of the project were held on 13 March with the participation of governmental institutions and state agencies, international and donor organisations as well as civil society representatives. The Pompidou Group component of the project delivered a training on the pressing issues of mental health for 15 specialists (psychologists and social workers) working in the criminal justice context in prisons, the Juvenile Referral Centre (JRC) and the National Agency for Crime Prevention and Probation (NPA). The project organised a two-day workshop for mapping and improving beneficiary services and integrating them at the central and municipal level for 20 representatives of 10 municipalities and 10 specialists from NPA and JRC.

- **AP, “Reinforcing gender equality and implementing GREVIO recommendations to combat violence against women and domestic violence in Georgia”:** The project’s launching event was organised on 19 March. The event brought together a diverse group of participants including state partner organisations, legal professionals working on violence against women and domestic violence, alongside representatives of civil society. Participants (70 in total, out of which 62 women and eight men) took the opportunity to review outcomes from the previous project and to convey their dedication and perspectives concerning achieving objectives of the new project. A summary video highlighting the achievements of the previous project was prepared and screened during the event.

- **AP, “Reinforcing national execution of the European Court’s judgments by Georgia”:** On 22 March, the launching conference of the project was organised to highlight the crucial role of the parliamentary oversight mechanism in fostering an effective implementation of the European Court of Human Rights’ judgments. The project will focus on

equipping the relevant execution stakeholders in Georgia with the necessary tools, resources and expertise to ensure full compliance with the European Court of Human Rights' decisions.

- **AP, "Further Enhancement of Social and Economic Rights in Georgia":** The project held its first Steering Committee Meeting on 14 March in Tbilisi where the stakeholders discussed the project outline and defined priorities for the upcoming six months. The project documentation, which lays out the basis of future work and activities, was approved unanimously. The project team held bilateral meetings with the representatives from the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs and the Labour Inspection Office to agree on the way forward and strengthen collaboration on the priority areas of the project.
- **AP, "Enhancing Equality and Non-Discrimination in Georgia":** The first Steering Committee Meeting gathered government partners and CSOs, who were presented with previous achievements as basis for the plan of the new project. The working meeting with the partner institutions from the government and CSO members of the Coalition for Equality allowed the project to learn the current challenges and needs in order to properly plan and accordingly adjust its activities.
- **AP, "Supporting Freedom of Expression and Media in Georgia (SFEM-GE)":** The consultations with five project partner organisations took place identifying the exact scope of the planned project activities through the year. This was followed by the project launching event and the project's first Steering Committee Meeting at the end of March. A Council of Europe expert on safety of journalists started the preparation of the co-operation action plan for improving the quality of investigation by the Special Investigation Service (relevant interviews have already taken place). A roundtable with CSOs was organized to identify their needs in terms of addressing safety of journalists concerns in Georgia. The preparation of the mapping and needs assessment of CSOs in the field of safety of journalists is underway.
- **Switzerland (SDC) VC, "Democracy Starts in Schools - Engaging School Children in Decision Making Processes in Schools and Communities in Georgia (Phase II)":** Four-year workplan of the project was developed. A meeting to introduce the main directions of the phase II was conducted with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth. Three tenders on local and international consultancy services were published and finalised. An article for digital journal "School Management" to promote the guidelines on student participation in democratic school governance and to increase the visibility of the project was prepared for dissemination among education professionals and schools in Georgia.
- **AP, "Supporting transparency, inclusiveness and integrity of electoral practice and processes in Georgia":** Representatives of media outlets and high-level election officials discussed ways to improve the media environment at the conference "Media and Electoral Processes: upcoming 2024 Parliamentary Elections". The conference provided an effective platform for decision makers and journalists to engage in discussions, facilitated by the Council of Europe experts, about solutions aiming to enhance the transparency and integrity of electoral processes. The journalists underlined the importance of the existing communication platform in contributing to a fair competitive electoral environment.

Follow up actions

- **Austria (ADA) VC, "Strengthening participatory democracy and human rights at local level in Georgia" (civil participation):** Following the no-cost extension of

the project, a training in civil participation methodology "CivicLab" is planned for representatives of all target municipalities. In collaboration with the Parliament of Georgia, a working meeting will be supported to define next steps for introducing "Democracy Workshops" in Georgia.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Support for a better evaluation of the result of judicial reform efforts in the Eastern Partnership (Justice Dashboard EaP)":** Finalise the first deliverable for DG NEAR by 1 June. This first deliverable is composed of comparative tables and graphs for all Eastern Partnership beneficiaries with summary overviews per indicator.
Proceed with the preparation of the second deliverable (beneficiary profiles for each country) and third deliverable (condensed version of the data analysis) to be submitted to DG NEAR by 30 June.

Other relevant activities

- On 2-3 February, the project team contributed with a presentation on CEPEJ judicial statistics tools as well as Georgia's participation in Evaluation cycles and EaP Dashboard at the workshop for the Independent Inspector of the High Council of Justice. The event was dedicated to the European good practices related to judicial inspection and was organised by the EU/CoE PGG III project "Support to Modernisation of Court Management in Georgia", implemented by CEPEJ.
- On 5-6 February, Kristin Olson, Senior Programme Specialist from Sida, visited Tbilisi and held meetings with Council of Europe Georgia stakeholders as well as with the selected project staff.
- On 13-14 February, a delegation of the Council of Europe Directorate of Political Affairs and External Relations (Cristian Urse, Deputy to the Director, and Marjan Janssens, political adviser) visited Tbilisi, in preparation of the 29th consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia covering the period from November 2023 till April 2024.
- On 15-16 February, the auditors visited the Council of Europe Office in Georgia and conducted an audit for the activities implemented in 2023 within the scope of the Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023.
- On 4 March, Frank Power, the Head of Policy Planning and Confidence Building Measures Division, paid a visit to Tbilisi and met with different State Agency representatives.

Office in Morocco

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe office in Morocco has 10 (two men, eight women) staff members, out of which four (one man, three women) are core staff and three (one man, five women) are project staff.

State of implementation of projects

• EU/CoE JP "Support to the National Preventive Mechanism against torture and Support to the development of the role of the Parliament in Morocco" (ENI/2020/418-263)

Support to the development of the role of Parliament in Morocco (extension until 30 September)

- 5-6 March: Seminar on the evaluation of laws by the parliamentary institution in cooperation with the Venice Commission.
- Finalisation in progress:
 - ✓ Website for the House of Councillors
 - ✓ Electronic platform on petitions and motions for the House of Representatives
 - ✓ Study on public consultation by the parliamentary institution
 - ✓ Study of parliamentary practices in public policy evaluation

Support to the National Preventive Mechanism against torture (NPM)

- From 15 to 17 January: Training activity on formulating proposals for the harmonization of laws for members and executives of the NPM, the National Council for Human Rights, representatives of the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the High Council of the Judiciary, the General Delegation for Prison Administration and Rehabilitation (DGAPR) and the Moroccan Bar Association.
- 30 January: Presentation of the case law on the prevention of torture and discussion session with case studies.
- 14-15 March: Introductory training activity on the principles of effective interviewing for investigations and information gathering, the "Méndez Principles", for members and managers of the Moroccan Ministry of Justice, the MNP, the General Directorate of National Security, the Royal Gendarmerie and the DGAPR.

• EU/CoE JP, "Regional support for the consolidation of human rights, the rule of law and democracy in the southern Mediterranean (hereinafter South V Programme)".

HELP programme

- 20 February: Moroccan participation in the launch of the HELP course on ethics for Judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers.

- 6 March: training of trainers for representatives of the Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports, the Interministerial Delegation for Human Rights, lawyers at the Rabat bar and social workers.

Combating human trafficking

- 7-8 March: Participation of a Moroccan delegation in the regional workshop on combating human trafficking in Tunis: launch of the identification kit for Lebanese victims of human trafficking. The delegation was made up of the person in charge of coordinating measures to combat and prevent human trafficking at the Ministry of Justice and senior officials from the Customs and Judicial Police.

Children's rights

- 6 February: National conference "Safer Internet Day SID 2024" under the slogan "Together for a secure and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence technologies" under the aegis of the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform, in partnership with the Moroccan Centre for Polytechnic Research and Innovation (CMRPI).
- 3 March: SID 2024 regional awareness-raising caravan for the rural world on the responsible use of the Internet and the protection of personal data online, under the aegis of the Ministry of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform, in partnership with the Council of Europe and the CMRPI.

• **Third-party funding (other than voluntary contributions)**

Combating violence against women

- 7 March: a café-debate on gender equality in the arts (cinema, theatre, etc.) between ambassadors from European Union member states/heads of missions in Morocco and leading figures from the Moroccan theatre, cinema and cultural worlds (artists, authors, actors), proposed by the Council of Europe with one-off funding from the EU.
- 13 March: Round table on the fight against discrimination and the promotion of gender equality in the media, organised by the Gender Working Group in Morocco together with the EU, the Belgian Embassy and the Council of Europe, at the suggestion of the Council of Europe and with funding from the Belgian Embassy.

Other activities

- 25 January: Participation and speech by the Head of the Office at the SAVE project closing workshop.
- 8-9 February: Participation of a Council of Europe delegation made up of the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Morocco, the Head of the Cybercrime Division and the Executive Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the CEPEJ in the international conference on "Digital Transformation of the Judicial System: Vector for Efficient and Inclusive Justice", co-organised by the Moroccan Ministry of Justice and the UNDP.

- 16 February: The Head of the Office attends the plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean organised at the Chamber of Representatives of the Moroccan Parliament.
- 19 February: Participation and speech by the Head of the Office at the International Parliamentary Forum on Social Justice on the subject of decent work in relation to the objectives of sustainable development and the exploration of innovative approaches and collective solutions to achieve social justice, organised by the Chamber of Councillors of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco.
- 4-7 March: Participation of two representatives of Moroccan youth organisations in the launch of the Rule of Law Youth Network (RoLYN) organised by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in Tunis.
- 8 March: Speech by the Head of the Office at the study day on the occasion of International Women's Day organised by the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco.

High-level visits from the Council of Europe and other official delegations

- From 5 to 7 March: Meetings between a delegation from the Venice Commission, including Simona Granata-Menghini, Secretary of the Venice Commission, and Bertrand Matthieu, member of the Venice Commission on behalf of Monaco, and a number of Moroccan institutions and institutional partners:
 - ✓ The Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Morocco;
 - ✓ The Mediator of the Kingdom of Morocco;
 - ✓ The President of the Constitutional Court;
 - ✓ The President of the National Council for Human Rights;
 - ✓ The President of the House of Representatives;
 - ✓ The Director of the European Union and Mediterranean Processes Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccans Resident Abroad.

Programme Office in Podgorica

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Programme Office in Podgorica has 15 (three men, 12 women) staff members, out of which two (women) are core staff and 13 (three men, 10 women) project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Programme Office has implemented six projects within the framework of the EU/CoE regional Joint Programme "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye", one project within the framework of the EU/CoE Joint Programme ROMACTED phase II and one funded through a regional voluntary contribution from Germany.

Additionally, the following regional projects, not directly managed by the Podgorica Office are conducting activities in Montenegro:

1. HF III Regional Project "Women's access to justice in the Western Balkans"
2. HRTF Regional VC HELP in the Western Balkans
3. EU/CoE Joint Project Roma Integration – phase III
4. End Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse@Europe, funded by the End Violence Against Children Fund

State of implementation of projects

• **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening accountability of the judicial system and enhancing protection of victims' rights in Montenegro"**: The Judicial Reform Strategy (2024-2027) and the Action Plan for its implementation (2024 – 2025) were finalised. The project provided assistance to the Ministry of Justice in presenting the Strategy and Action plan to the professional and general public during the public debate held on 31 January, and in developing necessary Fiscal Analysis. The process of drafting amendments to the Law on Judicial Council and Judges and the Law on State Prosecution Office was completed, focusing on addressing Venice Commission's recommendations. In addition to experts' support and guidance, the project also provided support in translating WG materials and facilitating WG meetings. The process of amending the Law on the Special Prosecution Office commenced. The Communication Strategy of the Judicial Council and Courts (2024 – 2026) with an Action Plan for 2024 and an updated Communication Protocol for Courts was adopted on 10 February, creating a framework for continued work on transparency and improvement of judges' communication competences.

The revision of the Criminal Procedural Code is at the final stage with the WG addressing the comments received from the EU. The work on the National Victims' Rights Strategy was initiated. Action is taken to enhance lawyers' capacities to provide free legal aid to the victims of trafficking in human beings. Capacities of the Constitutional Court to apply human rights standards are further enhanced, particularly concerning the property rights and victims' protection. Work on the Analysis of the effects of the Constitutional Courts' decisions was initiated.

• **EU/CoE HF III, "Enhancing the human rights protection for detained and sentenced persons in Montenegro"**: A group consisting of 14 members of the middle management in the prison system improved their managerial skills through a coaching-based

exercise rather than traditional training methods. This exercise equipped them with enhanced competencies for effectively implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), focusing on supervision, oversight, setting and enforcing standards, communication, providing performance feedback, taking corrective actions, monitoring, and leading by example. Additional number of police intervention units (21) improved their mental tactical skills to ensure more effective conduct in highly stressful situations, which leads to reduction of excessive use of force, hence preventing instances of ill-treatment. The national working group tasked to develop operational procedures (SOPs) for police officers' conduct continue to work on development of SOPs that regulate the identified priority areas.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Action against Economic Crime in Montenegro":** The drafting of the national Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2028 has progressed, thanks to the support provided by the project, which reviewed the first draft of the strategy and provided recommendations for improvement. Based on this feedback, the working group has enhanced the second draft of the Strategy, and the process is set in motion. The project assisted in proposing the legal framework for implementing integrity checks for the highest members of the executive (PTEFs) and has contributed to consolidating the draft amendments to the Law on Prevention of Corruption. These developments directly contribute to meeting interim benchmarks in Chapter 23 and the GRECO V evaluation round report on Montenegro.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Combating hatred and intolerance in Montenegro":** The first working group meeting for the new LGBTI National Strategy, led by two national experts, was held in Bar with the participation of focal points from the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and members of the working group from CSOs and focal points from relevant ministries. A second round of Hate Speech group interviews involved civil society, media, and government representatives, aiming to map hate speech in Montenegro. The activity of collecting data was completed and it contributed to gather inputs for the final analysis on the phenomenon of Hate Speech in Montenegro. A new legal expert was appointed to assist the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights in the development and finalisation of the draft of the Law on Legal Gender Identity. At the regional level, a peer exchange on equality reforms with focus on the LGBTI community has been realized in Podgorica with the participation of Ombudsman Offices, representatives from relevant Ministries and CSOs from the region dealing with LGBTI issues.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Quality Education for All":** The Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture in Curriculum in Higher Education took place in Belgrade on 21-22 February and gathered around 30 experts from UK, Finland, Spain, Netherlands, Serbia, and Montenegro and the regional conference. Also, around 80 educators from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia gathered at the conference "Schools as driving force for democracy" which took place in Herceg Novi on 5-6 March. The conference provided a platform for sharing regional experiences on fostering an environment of democracy, transparency, and integrity at schools. The ne-day "Social media literacy as a key competence of democratic citizenship in schools" course gathered in Budva around 30 parents and students from schools located in southern region. Meetings of the working groups to analyse schools' resilience for potential education emergencies and of the working group to develop the code of ethics for University of Montenegro continued.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Protecting Freedom of Expression and of the Media in Montenegro":** Legal review of three main law regulating the area of media was provided by experts hired through PRO-FREX-M: Law on media, Law on Audiovisual Services and Law on Public Broadcasting Service. Montenegro's full membership into the Creative Media Europe programme is pending the adaptation of these laws. Assuring that the laws are in line with the

standards of Council of Europe, and European Union will provide for transparency, pluralism, and a better protection of freedom of expression and of the media.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED phase II)":** Through the ROMACTED small grants scheme, asphaltting the street and cleaning the canal in the Roma settlement Sokolana in Bar was realized. A van was purchased in Ulcinj and a driver was hired. Thus, transportation to the school for children from the Roma and Egyptian communities has been established. A grant agreement was signed with the Municipality of Tivat. Activities aim to improve access to public social services for the Roma and Egyptian population and equip the primary school IT classroom.

A consultant was engaged to support municipalities in preparing new local action plans for the social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians. In three municipalities (Nikšić, Bar, and Berane), the process has officially started - working groups have been established and had their first meetings.

- **Germany Regional VC, "Promoting deliberative democracy and innovative approaches to citizen participation in South-East Europe":** The project, which covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo*, started on 1st January, no activities have been organized yet.

Other relevant activities

The Head of the Programme Office met with:

- Zoran Brdjanin, Director of the Police Administration
- Danilo Micovic, President of the Bar Association
- Branislav Radulovic, President of the Association of Lawyers
- Momo Koprivica, Deputy Prime Minister for Political System, Judiciary, and Anti-Corruption
- Dawn McKen, British Ambassador in Montenegro
- Naida Nisic, Minister for Labour and Social Welfare
- Nick Hartmann, UNDP Deputy Regional Director

Council of Europe high level visits and other official delegations

- 15 -16 February: A delegation of the [Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CPT\) held high-level talks in Montenegro](#) with the Deputy Prime Minister, Aleksa Bečić, the Minister of the Interior, Danilo Šaranović, as well as with senior officials from the Ministry of Justice and the Administration of Enforcement of Criminal Sanctions and the Supreme State Prosecutor, Milorad Marković, in Podgorica.
- 4 – 8 March : A delegation of the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) carried out its [follow-up evaluation visit to Montenegro](#).
- 18 - 23 March: [Visit of Dunja Mijatovic, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, to Montenegro](#).

Office in Pristina

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Pristina has 22 (seven men, 15 women) staff members, out of which six (three men, three women) are core staff and 16 (four men, 12 women) project staff.

The new Head of Office took up her duties on 1 March.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 11 projects, four in the framework of the EU/CoE regional Joint Programme "Horizontal Facility III for the Western Balkans and Türkiye", two EU/CoE Regional Joint Programmes (ROMACTED phase II and Roma Integration phase III), one EU/CoE Joint Project, three funded through non-earmarked voluntary contributions, as well as two earmarked voluntary contributions by UNMIK and the USA (INL), respectively. The Overview Document⁸ for Kosovo* has received non-earmarked contributions from Belgium, Germany, Ireland and Norway.

State of implementation of projects/programmes/Action Plans/co-operation documents

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Protecting Freedom of Expression and of the Media (PRO-FREX-K)":** The Steering Committee meeting brought together essential stakeholders to review progress and plan forthcoming activities. The meeting highlighted a shared dedication to promoting media freedom and expression, in line with European standards. Moreover, a capacity-building activity, focusing on the safety and protection of journalists was organised in close co-operation with the Association of Journalists of Kosovo. This initiative aimed to strengthen the environment of security for media professionals, aligning with the Council of Europe's dedication to combating threats against journalists. Key discussions were based on the European Court of Human Rights' standards for investigating attacks on journalists, safeguarding journalistic sources, and ensuring safe newsgathering practices. The training also highlighted the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on enhancing journalist safety.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening the Quality and Efficiency of Justice in Kosovo*":** The project supported the Kosovo Prosecutorial Council in improving the collection of reliable statistics automatically, within the case management system, through an expert mission in mid-January. CEPEJ expert's recommendations on performance evaluation of judges were incorporated in proposed legislative amendments within the Joint Commitment process initiated by the Ministry of Justice, Kosovo Judicial Council and Kosovo Prosecutorial Council. The second Steering Committee meeting took place with representatives of key justice institutions.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Combating discrimination and hatred":** The new Action Plan for the Rights of LGBTI 2024-2026 has been finalized based on the expertise provided by the action. Public awareness of the ex officio report "Language in Public Discourse" was increased through supporting the Ombudsperson Institution in organising a conference on 6 February. Five Young Ambassadors (three women, two men) benefited from the Seminar on Contra Narratives and Combating Hate Speech with European Young Ambassadors from Western Balkans and

⁸ This document is an update of the document [GR-DEM\(2021\)11](#), of which the Ministers' Deputies took note at their 1420th meeting (8 December 2021).

It provides an overview of the projects which are proposed as well as of the ones which are currently being implemented by the Council of Europe in Kosovo*. For more information, please see [Result details \(coe.int\)](#)

Eastern Partnership countries, which was organised on 17-19 January in Budapest. On 21-22 March, Deputy Ombudsperson and Legal Advisor to the Ombudsperson Institution engaged with peer-to-peer exchanges during an online seminar for equality bodies on "Collaborative strategies in addressing hate speech: a multidimensional approach".

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Enhancing co-operation in the Western Balkans in managing violent extremism in prisons and preventing further radicalisation after release":**

22 representatives of Prison and Probation Service, Social Welfare and Ministry of Interior attended the second working group session on development of Rehabilitation and Reintegration, and pre-release programme for Violent Extremist Prisoners (VEPs), vulnerable/marginalised prisoners at risk from radicalisation, which took place on 29-30 January. The Action's team met with Kosovo Correctional Service management to discuss the implementation of the project activities, while the first coordination meeting with international (IC) organisations active in the prevention and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) arena took place on 31 January, to exchange information, ensure complementarity and establish synergy between different initiatives. The second IC coordination meeting was held on 28 March.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Project against Economic Crime in Kosovo* (PECK III)":** Following support provided by PECK III project, the Central Bank adopted the Manual on Anti Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) risk-based supervision which addresses shortcomings in the risk profiling practices and aligns its procedures with international and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards. The project strengthened capacities of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption (APC) to effectively audit and verify asset declarations. It launched the Council of Europe ML/FT Risk Assessment Methodology and agreed with authorities to support the process. 10 leasing and money transfer companies and 32 notaries raised awareness on implementation of targeted financial sanctions. It strengthened capacities of the APC staff to analyse data for the purpose of corruption risk mapping.

- **EU/CoE Regional JP, "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED phase II)":** Members of the Institutional Working Group and Community Action Group members of Lipjan/Lipljane and Fushe Kosove/Kosovo Polje municipalities expanded their knowledge on Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian identity through an interactive training session held on 14 February. A mini Roma library, including publications with Roma titles and Roma related issues, was established in Gracanica/Gracanice municipality.

- **EU/CoE Regional JP, "Roma Integration phase III" :** The programme facilitated introductory meetings during the inception period, fostering collaboration between line ministries and Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian organizations. Key highlights include: 1/ National-level presentation of the project to relevant stakeholders, ensuring cooperation with Roma focal points, NGOs, and the European Delegation; 2/ Exploration of synergies with the ROMACTED II programme, leading to their integration into the project's work plan; and 3/ Consensus on key activities across thematic areas, effectively integrated into the project's strategic framework. Simultaneously, a comprehensive assessment of progress on Poznan Declaration commitments in Kosovo* for 2023 was conducted, emphasizing multifaceted consultations with government agencies, NGOs, and European Delegation Union Office focal points and desk research highlighting the need for enhanced coordination, Roma Responsive Budgeting, and legalization of Roma settlements. The programme provided support in preparing the report for the Strategy for the Integration and Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Communities 2022-2026, reinforcing collaborative efforts towards Roma inclusion in Kosovo*.

- **Overview Document VC, "Support to the Constitutional Court in applying and disseminating the European Human Rights standards":** 23 legal professionals (14 women, nine men) of the Constitutional Courts of Kosovo* and Albania improved their understanding of European Court of Human Rights standards on assessment of evidence, access to court and re-opening of proceedings, and implications of the right to a trial within reasonable time. The project supported the launch of the HELP course on Judicial Reasoning with 24 judges, prosecutors, and legal associates of Justice Academy (15 women, nine men). The Implementation Plan and Risk Register 2024-2025 of the Constitutional Court's Strategy 2021-2025 have been revised. 19 judges of regular courts (seven women, 12 men) were trained on the practice of the Constitutional Court and European Court of Human Rights in Civil Law. The project launched a study on the consistency of caselaw and harmonisation of judicial practice.

- **Overview Document VC, "Aligning laws and policies with the Istanbul Convention":** A group of 12 prisoners in Dubrava prison started attending the Programme on Perpetrators of Violence against Women, in line with article 16 of the Istanbul Convention. 33 judges and prosecutors (13 women and 20 men) enhanced their knowledge about domestic violence and violence against women through two training sessions held in co-operation with Academy of Justice based on the new Curriculum designed with the support of the Project. The courses were titled "Domestic Violence Offences: Effective Criminal Justice Responses" and "Violence Against Women, Domestic Violence and Gender Based Violence - The Basics". High-level conference on "Implementing the Istanbul Convention through Case-Law: Judicial Dialogue for an Effective Judicial Response" which was organised in co-operation with the Constitutional Court and AIRE Centre, gathered more than 120 representatives of stakeholders and draw a lot of media attention.

- **Overview Document VC, "Improvement of the treatment of persons deprived of liberty":** 16 correctional, healthcare and probation professionals enhanced their skills on the application of Occupational Therapy in prisons and other closed institutions, through a three-day Training of Trainers which took place from 22-24 January. In February, the Institute for Forensic Psychiatry of Kosovo (IFPK) and the Special Institute in Shtime/Stimlje (SIS) were each equipped with 125 copies of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). 50 healthcare and correctional professionals were trained through three two-day cascade training sessions between February and March 2024. One four-day assessment mission assessing the working methodology and cooperation of project partners, the existing procedures regulating mandatory psychiatric hospitalisation and involuntary treatment, and the current situation on informing patients of their rights took place in March.

- **UNMIK VC, "Promoting human rights and non-discrimination principles at the local level-phase II":** 36 participants (23 women and 13 men) benefitted from the tutored HELP course on anti-discrimination, which was launched on 12 February. They included officials from municipalities, ministries, Ombudsperson Institution, Office for Good Governance, and Kosovo Police, as well as teachers and lawyers. Implementation of the grant agreements with four NGOs, namely Kosovo 2.0, Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture, Instituti QIKA and Bethany Christian Services raised awareness of discrimination and its consequences on society. A questionnaire has been designed as a basis of a research on anti-racism which will be used to assess the state of play in relation to racist trends and efforts to counter them.

- **INL VC, "Enhanced Action on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence (CYBERKOP) under the Octopus Project":** The activities to start in April were planned in close co-operation with stakeholders and beneficiaries. The Deputy Head of Office attended a donor

coordination meeting on cyber and digitalization, which confirmed the added value of this new Council of Europe project. The staff to be based in the Council of Europe Office in Pristina were recruited and will start work in April.

Follow up actions

- **EU/CoE Regional JP, "Roma Integration phase III" :**
 - ✓ Compiling the Roma Responsive Budgeting Guideline on Central level.
 - ✓ Poznan Commitments Assessment during five years of implementation.
 - ✓ Creation of general guidelines on Roma Responsive Budgeting in Kosovo*, including for the central and local levels.
 - ✓ Support the Documentation and Reporting of Discrimination Cases against Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.
 - ✓ Support to the inter-institutional team for encouraging and promoting employment for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.
 - ✓ Development of housing legalization guidelines.
- **Overview Document VC, "Support to the Constitutional Court in applying and disseminating the European Human Rights Standards":** Workshop to be delivered by Jurisconsult of the European Court of Human Rights for the Constitutional Court and has been scheduled for the first week of April.
- **Overview Document VC, "Aligning laws and policies with the Istanbul Convention":**
 - ✓ Support to the Ministry of Justice on the development of the Administrative Instruction based on the new Law on DV, VAW and GBV.
 - ✓ Support to the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation on the manual for teachers on identification and treatment of all forms of VAW.
- **Overview Document VC, "Improvement of the treatment of persons deprived of liberty":**
 - ✓ Assessment mission report submitted and shared with relevant project partners.
 - ✓ Activities organized based on the findings from the assessment mission.
 - ✓ Occupational therapy guidelines and tools piloted in one selected institution.
- **INL VC, "Enhanced Action on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence (CYBERKOP) under the Octopus Project":**
 - ✓ Domestic workshop on agreements on international legal cooperation in criminal matters (12-13 April).
 - ✓ Specialized Judicial Training Course on International Cooperation (23-25 April).
 - ✓ Workshop on public-private cooperation and information sharing in the 5G era (24 April).

Office in Sarajevo

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Sarajevo has 32 (nine men, 23 women) staff members, out of which seven (four men, three women) are core staff and 25 (five men, 20 women) project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 14 projects, seven in the framework of the EU/CoE Horizontal Facility (phase III), and seven funded by contributions at Action Plan-level (2018-2021 and 2022-2025). The Action Plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina 2022-2025 has received as of 31 March 2024 Action-Plan-Level contributions from Belgium, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway and Slovenia as well as from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe. The Office is moreover involved in three regional projects, the EU/CoE Joint Programme on Roma empowerment at local level, enhancing co-operation in managing violent extremism in prisons, and evaluation of the results of judicial reform in the Western Balkans.

State of implementation of projects / the Action Plan

- **EU/CoE HF III, “Strengthening the Efficiency and Quality of Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiHSEJ)”**: The assessments conducted in five BiHSEJ pilot courts in 2023 were summarised in expert reports and discussed in a workshop on implementation of the recommendations. The pilot courts and the Secretariat of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (HJPC) designed tailor-made steps for improving efficiency and quality in these courts and agreed on implementation timeline. The stakeholders also agreed to promote mediation and implement Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools.
- **EU/CoE HF III, “Further strengthening the treatment of detained and sentenced persons in line with European standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**: [Amendments to the FBiH Law on execution of criminal sanctions](#), enabling digitalisation of prisons, entered Parliamentary procedure on 5 March. The action's Steering Committee welcomed the draft procedural manuals for police interviewing and preparing forensic offenders' release, assessing them as a good balance between the requirements of the local legislation and international standards. [Improvement of human rights training skills among law enforcement officers](#) continued with a Train-the-Trainer session held on 13-14 February. The need to enhance human rights training was underlined in [a series of visits to cantonal Ministries of Interior](#) in January and February.
- **EU/CoE HF III, “Action against corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**: Complementary to the VC activity (see below) on developing a manual for effective Targeted Financial Sanctions (TFS) oversight, the action initiated preparations of a capacity building training for authorities assigned to carry out TFS monitoring and performing TFS inspections planned in April. The training is expected to equip the supervisors with skills and knowledge to navigate the intricacies of TFS oversight and ensure proper application of the manual.
- **EU/CoE HF III, “Towards an equal, inclusive and tolerant Bosnia and Herzegovina”**: At the first online co-ordination meeting, 55 representatives from relevant institutions, international organisations, media and CSOs discussed the implementation of the roadmap charted by [Mapping responses to hate speech in BiH](#). 224 karate trainers and youth

from 96 different karate teams from the FBiH [raised their awareness about the importance of inclusion and diversity in sports](#) and the negative effects of hate speech and peer violence. Six small grants were awarded to CSOs and a local self-government body for fighting discrimination and hate speech.

- **EU/CoE HF III, “Quality Education for All – Bosnia and Herzegovina”:** Co-ordination among relevant ministers of education and other stakeholders was reinforced through project-organised activities and collaborative efforts with the EU, UN, and OSCE to develop education action plans. A session of [the Conference of Ministers of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) was held in Sarajevo - the first since December 2017 - a significant step towards better coordination in the field of education. Through targeted capacity building sessions, 74 teachers, school leaders, and other school staff from nine pilot schools were equipped with tools for promoting democratic culture within their educational institutions.

- **EU/CoE HF III, “Protecting Freedom of Expression and of the Media in Bosnia and Herzegovina (PRO-FREX – BH)”:** 29 prosecutors and police officers, designated points of contacts for the safety of journalists, participated in their first training session on the European standards of journalists’ protection. This network of professionals, gathering members of prosecutor’s offices and police agencies across BiH, was established as a collaborative effort between the Council of Europe, EU and OSCE. Their capacities will be further enhanced via three additional training sessions by the end of 2024.

- **AP, “Ensuring Sustainable Penitentiary Actions in managing rehabilitation of violent extremist prisoners in Bosnia and Herzegovina (ESPA-VEP)”:** In February, capacity building continued with a 4-day specialised training session held for staff from five prisons at the premises of the State prison. The project signed a grant agreement with the Atlantic Initiative NGO to support interagency cooperation and local partnership in preparation of release and rehabilitation of VEPs. In March, another training was held for 22 personnel from prisons and Ministries of Justice. On 22-23 March the first working group session was held on creating Guidelines for improvement of well-being and mental health of prison staff.

- **AP, “Support to a coherent national implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and facilitating execution of ECtHR judgments in Bosnia and Herzegovina”:** Assessment of comments submitted during the public debate related to the execution of the European Court of Human Rights’ *Hadžimejlić* judgment is on-going. New HELP courses on Antidiscrimination, Access to Justice for Women, and Violence Against Women were launched for judges in the pool of trainers of the project. Judges and prosecutors appointed in 2022 and 2023 started the Anti-discrimination HELP course as part of the Human Rights Training curriculum. 35 judges and legal associates improved their knowledge in a training session on legal reasoning of civil cases. The project attended a regional meeting in Podgorica involving Council of Europe’s projects and Constitutional Courts from the region to exchange on national practices in applying the European Convention on Human Rights standards.

- **AP, “Innovating democratic participation at local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina”:** A [guide on combating sexism in local politics in BiH](#) was presented and discussed with 30 representatives of local authorities, institutions, and CSOs on 18 January. In January and February, Citizens’ Assemblies in [Banja Luka](#) (35 members) and [Mostar](#) (40) made 20 and 29 recommendations for local authorities on supporting youth entrepreneurship and tourism development. Staff in both cities were trained to devise Action Plans to implement recommendations. Banja Luka Citizens’ Assembly was represented at the [ELDW Meeting](#) on

27 February. In March, the Association of local authorities in Republika Srpska received expert support for the assessment of local financing, building upon Congress [monitoring findings](#).

- **Sweden (Sida) VC, “Enhancing institutional capacities on freedom of expression and information in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EFEx)”**: 20 representatives of domestic institutions, independent bodies and civil society organisations gathered at the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Reporting on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Information to finalise the *Reporting Guidelines* establishing a more efficient monitoring and reporting matrix and a detailed list of indicators. In addition, the group agreed on the structure of the planned pilot report. The following outputs were completed pending translation and publication: training curriculum on chosen sub-topics of freedom of expression and access to information and Guide to Council of Europe Standards on Limiting the Use of Criminal Law to Restrict Freedom of Expression.
- **AP, “Strengthening anti-trafficking action in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**: A [round table](#) held on 28 February focused on improving access to justice and legal remedies for victims of labour trafficking. On 22 March, the Federal Police Administration and the Federal Administration for Inspection Affairs [signed a cooperation protocol](#) that provides a framework for joint inspections to suppress labour trafficking. A thematic HELP online course was launched with 34 registered participants. A [seminar](#) held on 25 March gathered 40 professionals to discuss combating human trafficking facilitated by modern internet technologies.
- **AP, “Combatting digital and sexual violence against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**: The project prepared for activities and events planned for the upcoming period. They include the development of a gap analysis on the legal, policy and institutional framework in BiH for harmonising with the Istanbul Convention, and guidelines and best practices in investigating and prosecuting digital violence against women and the consent-based definition of sexual violence. As part of the awareness-raising activities, the project is working, together with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, on the development of a podcast that discusses the challenges of digital violence against women.
- **AP, “Action against corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing in Bosnia and Herzegovina”**: A manual on Targeted Financial Sanctions (TFS) compliance was completed to guide authorities in supervising TFS effectively. The draft amendments to the Law on Political Party Financing were reviewed to align legislation with GRECO recommendations. A workshop on asset management provided advice for establishing a database for managing seized assets, enhancing transparency and statistical data collection. Republika Srpska's legal framework on beneficial ownership disclosure was analysed, recommending improvements. The second Steering Committee meeting reviewed project progress since September 2023.
- **EU/CoE Regional JP “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level” (ROMACTED phase II)**: Through small grants scheme, ROMACTED supported Brčko District in opening the first classroom for preschool education of Roma within the local primary school. A Local Action Plan for Social Inclusion of Roma was adopted by the City Council in Gradiška and a new Roma NGO was established. With support by ROMACTED, Bijeljina authorities, in synergy with the Caritas NGO, inaugurated the construction of a shelter with the capacity to accommodate 50 children. A monitoring tool developed in co-operation with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees was disseminated to 12 municipalities to enhance data collection and contribute to the implementation of the National Action Plan.

• **EU/CoE Regional HF III, “Towards a better evaluation of the results of judicial reform efforts in the Western Balkans – phase II (Dashboard Western Balkans II)”:**

The Dashboard Western Balkans (DWB) Action focus was on data collection within the Fifth Cycle (2023 data) and initiating Data Quality Control for the first set of collected data. DWB made available to the public the resources from the Workshop on case-flow management and data analyses (held in November 2023). For this purpose, a dedicated part of the [Action web page](#) was presented, aiming to facilitate exchange of experiences and good practices across judiciaries. DWB team carried out missions to enhance data collection in North Macedonia, with preparations underway for a mission to Montenegro.

• **EU/CoE Regional HF III, “Enhancing co-operation in the Western Balkans in managing violent extremism in prisons and preventing further radicalisation after release”:**

The regional action implemented seven activities in the region gathering 92 participants, 39% of them women. The focus was on optimisation and standardisation of the specific tools and rehabilitation programmes and development of pre-release and reintegration programmes. In addition, 25 representatives from 15 institutions in BiH contributed towards the ongoing base-line assessment on application of community sanctions and measures, with a special emphasis on women. The action organised a coordination meeting with the international community in Kosovo* active in the field of prevention of prison radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist prisoners.

Other relevant activities

- On 30 January, the Deputy Head of Office opened the Workshop: Review of the legislative provisions on political finance in BiH and analysis of the draft addenda and amendments to the Law on the Financing of Political Parties, organised by the Council of Europe Office in Sarajevo.
- On 21 February, the Head of Office participated in the Second networking event of Mayors, held in Teslić, within the “Možemo bolje” project of EU, UN, OSCE and the CoE.
- On 5 March, the Head of Office opened the Steering Committee meeting of the Strengthening the Efficiency and Quality of Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIHSEJ) project in Mostar.
- On 18 March, the Head of Office addressed the closing event of the 1st phase of the “Možemo bolje” project.

Council of Europe high level visits and other official delegations

- From 25-26 January, Mathieu Mori, Congress Secretary General, visited BiH.
- On 21 February, the Venice Commission held on-line meetings with authorities to prepare an Opinion on certain questions relating to the functioning of the BiH Constitutional Court.
- From 25-26 March, the Secretariat of the Department for Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights carried out a mission to BiH. The Head of Office accompanied the delegation.

Programme Office in Skopje

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje has 19 (four men, 15 women) staff members, out of which two (one man, one woman) are core staff and 17 (three men, 14 women) project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Programme Office has implemented nine projects, six in the framework of the EU/CoE Joint Programme "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye", two EU/CoE Joint Programmes (ROMACTED phase II and Roma Integration phase III), and one funded through a voluntary contribution from Germany.

State of implementation of projects/programmes

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media in North Macedonia":** The action, in collaboration with the media regulator, prepared a draft rulebook to ensure accessibility of audiovisual media services (AVMS) for persons with disabilities. A 90 day-long public debate started with a public presentation of the draft Rulebook with a view of its finalisation and adoption. The Training of Trainers for additional certification of judges, prosecutors and lawyers took place in March. The ToT benefited 11 participants, who will join the already existing certified local cadre of consultants on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening anti-trafficking action in North Macedonia":** 59 professionals benefited from training on THB for labour exploitation and providing free legal aid to THB victims. The Handbook on THB and the Feasibility Study on the standards for shelters and services for THB victims were printed out and distributed among the interested parties. Two grants on raising public awareness on THB were awarded to a media outlet and an employers' association.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Towards a Consolidated and More Efficient Free Legal Aid (FLA) System in North Macedonia":** [35 lawyers were trained to become trainers in free legal aid](#) for the Education Centre of the Bar Association. The second phase of the development of software for the appointment of *ex-officio* lawyers for the Bar Association is now complete and at the testing stage. The Action facilitated the organisation of the [14th meeting of the National Co-ordination Body for FLA \(NCB\)](#) and enhanced the capacities of 19 students in the area of legal aid in criminal proceedings.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening the capacities of the penitentiary system in North Macedonia":** The External Oversight Mechanism stakeholders were trained on effective investigations of potential ill-treatment. Recommendations were drafted by an international consultant, concerning the proposed amendments to the Law on Execution of Sanctions. Medical personnel working in prisons were trained in mental healthcare and psychiatric medications' dosage practices, while the Ministry of Health working group discussed the co-ordination mechanism of prison healthcare.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Combating hatred and intolerance in North Macedonia":** A call for grants to support CSOs and/or self-government units in implementation of activities for combating hate speech on local level was published. A gender mainstreaming report for the action was prepared by a local consultant and it will be incorporated in a wider regional

analysis. ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.17 was translated into Macedonian. In cooperation with ROMACTED phase II, a group of facilitators followed a training course on combating hate speech, inclusive education and access to healthcare and social services for Roma persons.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Action against Economic Crime in North Macedonia":** The law on confiscation of property in civil procedure (non-conviction based confiscation) was adopted by the Macedonian Parliament on 28 February. This is the first time ever that such a legal solution has been introduced in this country. The legislative drafting process was supported by the Action against economic crime through the Horizontal Facility phases II and III. The action also initiated the process of amending the Law on prevention of corruption and conflicts of interest in terms of the sanctioning regime in line with GRECO Recommendations from the 4th and 5th Rounds of evaluation.

- **EU/CoE Regional JP, "Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED phase II)":** The action actively empowered the Roma community with tailored information sessions and services of mobile gynaecological clinics, ensuring free healthcare access for women and girls. Legal Aid support facilitated the acquisition of ID documentation and access to social protection services, enhancing community integration. Inclusion workshops united Roma and non-Roma parents, fostering dialogue and understanding for cohesive communities.

- **EU/CoE JP "Roma Integration phase III " :** No activity in the first quarter due to the preparation and approval of the work plan for this year.

- **Germany VC, "Quality Education for All – North Macedonia":** The action advanced with onsite training sessions in 25 pilot schools, focusing on democratic values. These sessions combined in-person education to promote inclusivity. Additionally, a round table was convened in response to the *Elmazova and Others v. North Macedonia* judgment. The action also presented the Mapping Report on Education Strategy 2018-2025, gathering input from 25 pilot schools, CSOs, and national institutions.

Follow up action

- The State Compensation Commission adopted its Rules of Procedures, prepared with the support from Horizontal Facility II "Action on Trafficking in Human Beings in North Macedonia" (2016-2019).

Council of Europe high level visits and other official delegations

- On 26-27 March the pre-electoral mission of the *Ad Hoc* Committee for the Observation of the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in North Macedonia of the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe took place. The mission met, *inter alia*, the members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of the civil society, media, State authorities and political parties.

Office in Tirana

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Tirana has 25 staff members (four men, 21 women) out of which seven (four men, three women) are core staff and 18 (women) project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 10 projects, out of which eight are co-funded by the EU, one by Sweden (Sida) and one by Germany.

State of implementation of projects / programmes / Action Plans / co-operation documents:

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Strengthening the Quality and Efficiency of Justice in Albania (SEJ IV)"**: 45 participants from all court councils of domestic courts in Albania enhanced their capacities on due implementation of the CEPEJ tools in courts' daily work, particularly the unified methodology for collection of the judicial statistics, application of the CEPEJ performance indicators to monitor court performance and the use of court users' satisfaction surveys and tools on judicial time management. A report on European and Albanian good practices on the roles of non-judge staff was also prepared and discussed with the councils.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Enhancing the protection of human rights of prisoners in Albania"**: Following the publication of the European Committee for Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) 2023 report on Albania, a high-level round table with senior representatives of relevant state institutions discussed the upcoming steps in addressing the key challenges and recommendations with particular focus on the treatment of psychiatric forensic patients in the Lezha provisional facility. 20 prison directors enhanced their capacities on positive prison management, leadership and decision making, effective communication, management of material and human resources, strategic thinking, organisation and planning.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Action against Economic Crime in Albania"**: The project continued to assist Albanian authorities by reviewing the measures addressing the requirements of Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Recommendation no. 15 on "New technologies". Additionally, the Action supported competent authorities with guidelines and recommendations for improving compliance of Albanian legislation with FATF Recommendation no. 17 on "Reliance on third parties". The Action supported the Ministry of Interior and the General State Police with a set of tangible recommendations on paid services to third parties of State Police and post-employment restrictions' rules for State Police employees, in view of GRECO Fifth Evaluation Round (Rec. XIV and XXIII). In co-operation with the Minister of Public Administration and Anti-Corruption and the Albanian School of Public Administration, an online HELP course on "Introduction to corruption prevention" was adapted and launched in Albanian for local stakeholders. The first group of 35 political advisers enhanced their capacities on integrity, ethics, and anti-corruption policies based on Council of Europe and domestic standards, through the course.
- **EU/CoE HF III, "Supporting effective domestic remedies and facilitating the execution of judgments (D-REX III)"**: A comprehensive training curriculum for legal professionals active in the property rights field was developed, as 15 representatives of relevant Albanian authorities enhanced their capacities on enforcing property rights and execute related European Court of Human Rights' decisions.

- **EU/CoE HF III, "Advancing the protection from discrimination in Albania":** The project supported the organisation of awareness raising activities in seven cities in Albania, in view of the 2024 Week against Discrimination, an initiative of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. Senior representatives of state authorities, civil society and media discussed on how to address the challenges to segregation, hate speech, bullying and discrimination of vulnerable groups.
- **Sweden (Sida) VC, "Strengthening Democratic Citizenship Education in Albania":** The Fake vs Fact initiative was promoted at the primary school "Bashkim Fino" with the participation of 50 students from five schools in Tirana district.

Office in Tunis

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Tunis has 21 (four men, 17 women) staff members, out of which six (three men, three women) are core staff and 15 (one man, 14 women) are project staff.

As of 3 March 2024, the Office has implemented one programme and seven projects: the EU/CoE Regional JP "Protecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean" (South Programme V, 11 components), quatre projects funded through voluntary contributions at the Neighbourhood Partnership-level, one funded through voluntary contributions from Monaco and at the Neighbourhood Partnership-level and one funded through voluntary contributions from Switzerland and at the Neighbourhood Partnership-level.

State of implementation of projects/programmes/Neighbourhood Partnership

• NP VC, "Enlarging common legal space with Tunisia":

- ✓ Combating corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing
 - Several training sessions were held as part of the 8th promotion of the International Academy for Good Governance / *Académie Internationale de la Bonne Gouvernance* (AIBG), which is organised through a tripartite cooperation between the National School of Administration / *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA), the General Directorate for Governance and Corruption Prevention at the Presidency of the Government and the Council of Europe. This eight-month training programme aims to build the capacity of senior civil servants, as well as representatives of civil society and the private sector, in the field of good governance. It will culminate in the development of a short- and medium-term project for change, which will be presented to ENA's scientific council and relevant ministries during the next reporting period.
- ✓ Combating cybercrime
 - On 8 March, Tunisia has completed the accession process to the Budapest Convention. Prior to the accession, an information meeting was organised in collaboration with the joint EU/CoE CyberSouth+ project on 2 February in Tunis on the process ahead and key questions. The meeting targeted ambassadors of the Council of Europe Member States and partners present in Tunisia, such as the EU Delegation and the US Embassy. Plans for a bilateral "Cyber-T" project in Tunisia were also shared with participants to encourage funding.
- ✓ Combating the counterfeiting of medical products
 - On 7 February, Tunisia has signed the Council of Europe Convention on the Counterfeiting of Medical Products and Similar Crimes Involving Threats to Public Health (Medicrime Convention). It is worth recalling that the invitation to sign the convention was extended by the by the Committee of Ministers for one year until 2024, upon request of the Tunisian authorities. During 2023 dialogue with the authorities, notably the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad was intensified, with an aim to keep the signature of the Medicrime Convention high on the political agenda. This signature testifies to

Tunisia's strong desire to strengthen the fight against the scourge of falsified medicines and represents the culmination of the work carried out by the Tunisian authorities and supported by the Council of Europe.

- **NP VC, "Support to the School of Political Studies of Tunisia":** Final capacity building activities of the grant for the Tunis School of Political Studies (TSP) were completed in January 2024. The grant consisted of activities contributing towards the annual training cycle of the TSP civil society class 2023 and itinerant training sessions targeting local young civil society activists in governorates of interior regions in Tunisia, as well as participation in the Council of Europe 2023 World Forum for Democracy. The itinerant training sessions reached 180 participants, of which 49% women, in the governorates of Monastir, Kef, Kairouane, Béja, Gafsa and Médenine. The civil society class consisted of 30 young participants aged between 25-35 years, of which 63% women, belonging to different Tunisian civil society organisations. A new grant was negotiated during the reporting period to ensure continuation and follow-up of this action.

- **Monaco/NP VC, "Combatting violence against women and domestic violence in Tunisia":**

- ✓ On 4 March, the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Tunis and Neighborhood Policy Coordinator, met with the Tunisian Minister of women, family, children, and seniors. The exchange was an opportunity to discuss about future collaboration, namely the support of a Ministry-led project on financial empowerment of women victims of violence and the establishment of a national referral system to support the process. The meeting was also a chance to further discuss about Tunisia's invitation to accede to the Istanbul Convention.
- ✓ On 27 March, a first follow-up meeting was held between the Directorate of women affairs and the Council of Europe project team to put in place a work plan for the project implementation. The next follow-up meeting will take place on 16 April.
- ✓ On 19 March, the project team met with the representative of the General Delegation of Wallonie - Bruxelles in Tunisia. The Delegation expressed the willingness to cooperate with the Council of Europe through a joint capacity building program that will target journalists and focus on good media practice in preventing and combatting violence against women and children.

- **NP VC, "Combatting violence against children in Tunisia":**

- ✓ The Tunisian General Delegate to the protection of children participated in the Lanzarote Committee meeting held in Strasbourg from 13 to 15 February. The participation was highly appreciated both in Strasbourg and Tunisia. The Tunisian delegate valued the cooperation with the Council of Europe and insisted on the fact that prevention component is to be reinforced as the number of children victims of sexual abuse is increasing alarmingly in Tunisia.
- ✓ During the meeting held between the Head of the Council of Office in Tunis and Neighborhood Policy Coordinator, and the Minister of women, family, children, and seniors, held on 4 March, several possibilities of potential cooperation were discussed mainly the support for the National Observatory on Children's Rights and the Directorate-General for Children within the Ministry.
- ✓ On 15 March, a meeting took place between the project team and the Civil Society organisation SAWN, working on preventing children exploitation. Its president asked

for the support of the Council of Europe on different activities. The project team is currently exploring the possibilities of supporting the actions of this association and will produce an action plan including all different activities to be held with diverse partners on this field.

- **Switzerland VC/NP, "Fight against trafficking in human beings in Tunisia":**

- ✓ In the presence of the Lebanese Minister of Justice, Judge and the Regional Coordinator for Neighbourhood Policy with the Southern Mediterranean and Executive Director of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, the Identification KIT for identifying victims of human trafficking in Lebanon, the first of its kind in the country, was launched on 7 March in Tunis, with the participation of the Head of Cabinet of the Tunisian Ministry of Justice and official delegations from Morocco, Malta and Portugal. The event is organised within the framework the joint initiative between the European Union and the Council of Europe "South Programme V".
- ✓ This KIT is a reference document and a work tool aimed at developing a common vision among all stakeholders on the detection of situations of trafficking in persons. Its aims to enable professionals affiliated with governmental and non-governmental bodies and institutions along with activists in civil society to monitor crimes of trafficking in persons and to identify potential victims, which would help launch the process of supporting them as victims and providing them with assistance and protection in accordance with what is required by the relevant international and national legal texts.
- ✓ This KIT includes lists of general and specific indicators of detection and identification of human trafficking victims in Lebanon, as well as a guiding document on sample questions used when interviewing victims and a Data Protection Guide. The use of this kit contributes to launching a sound and appropriate process to support victims and refer them according to a referral mechanism based on a human rights approach.

- **NP VC, "HELP in Tunisia":**

- ✓ The HELP course on data protection and privacy rights, launched in December 2023 with the national Bar Association (ONAT) for 49 lawyers from 24 governorates, was completed in March 2024.
- ✓ The adaptation of the HELP courses on the prevention of ill-treatment and CPT standards advanced in collaboration with the national authority for the prevention of torture (INPT) during the reporting period.

- **EU/CoE JP, "Protecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean" (South Programme V):**

- ✓ Enlarging the common legal space between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean
 - Online consultations on the Venice Commission opinion on the draft law on the Administrative Judiciary in Lebanon were carried out with key stakeholders in Lebanon. The opinion was adopted at the 138th Plenary session of the Venice Commission on 15-16 March. It was provided at the request of the Lebanese Minister of Justice as part of the Quick Response Mechanism (QRM) of the South Programme V.
 - Expert support was provided for Moroccan partners during a workshop on "Evaluation of laws by the parliamentary institution", organised on 5-6 March in

Rabat, Morocco, by the Venice Commission in partnership with the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

- The needs assessment processes on the protection of personal data advanced in Lebanon, Jordan and Libya with the finalisation of analytical reports for these three countries during the reporting period. As a next step, technical expertise will be provided in support of legal reforms in this area in all the above-mentioned countries as part of the QRM of the South Programme V.
 - The South Programme V supports the participation of Southern Mediterranean partners in various technical meetings and high-level events organised by the Council of Europe to encourage peer-to-peer exchanges and awareness of partners on Council of Europe work and standards. This included support for the participation a Tunisian representative in the 6th meeting of the Council of Europe Network of Single Points of Contact for the exchange of procedural information concerning the legal status of victims of terrorism organised in Strasbourg on 5 March.
- ✓ Strengthening capacities to address global challenges through common tools and responses
- The HELP programme in the Southern Mediterranean continues to be promoted in the framework of the South Programme V. Several activities were implemented during the reporting period. In Morocco, a tutored course on violence against women and domestic violence was launched for judicial attachés in February. During the same month, the participation of Moroccan and Tunisian representatives was ensured for the launch of the HELP course on Ethics for Judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers in Strasbourg. Finally, during a regional event on combating trafficking in human beings organised in Tunis (see below), tutored HELP courses on combating violence against women and domestic violence and trafficking in human beings were launched with Lebanese partners in the justice sector.
 - A regional seminar on combating trafficking in human beings was organised in Tunis on 7-8 March in partnership with the Ministry of Justice of Lebanon. The event culminated in the official launching of the Kit for Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking in Lebanon in the presence of the Lebanese Minister of Justice. Separate tools for the protection of personal data for victims of human trafficking, as adapted to the Lebanese and Tunisian contexts were also presented and good practices shared by partners in Morocco and Portugal to combat trafficking in their respective areas, including on the establishment of detection units at borders.
- ✓ Enhancing co-operation and dialogue
- The 4th and 5th online meetings of the South Mediterranean Network of Justice Inspection Services (SUDMEDIJ) of the CEPEJ were organised during the reporting period (24 January and 28 March) with the participation of representatives from South Programme V partners in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Due to high interest of Arab countries towards this cooperation, the network was renamed as the Arab network of Justice Inspection Services (ARNJIS). Qatar and Oman have recently joined the network (without financial support of the South Programme) with

further interest from Mauritania and Saudi Arabia. The network was established in 2022 in the framework of the fourth phase of the South Programme by the CEPEJ, and the current phase of the programme continues to support its consolidation and to promote it to new members.

- A network of 11 women journalists from the MENA region (Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine** and Tunisia) and Sub-Saharan Africa "Acting together: journalists for human rights and the rule of law" was established in Lisbon on 7-8 February to strengthen communication on human rights and the rule of law. The workshop included presentations on the Council of Europe's standards and work in the fight against violence against women and children, the involvement of youth and civil society, and freedom of expression, as well as the HELP Programme. Network members will be encouraged to continue their exchanges during other relevant activities of the Council of Europe, thus contributing to a concerted response to various issues related to human rights and the rule of law.
- The Rule of Law Youth Network (RoLYN) was launched in Tunis on 4-7 March. Established as a direct outcome of the conclusions of the 29th edition of the Lisbon Forum, the network will equip its members (youth organisations from Europe, Middle East, and Africa) with knowledge, tools, and a platform to delve deeper into Rule of Law issues based on Council of Europe and other international standards, disseminating a sense of ownership and responsibility among youth, and encouraging youth action leading to positive change in their communities. This 2024-2025 cycle will include raising awareness, building capacities, and fostering youth-led anti-corruption initiatives based on Council of Europe and other international standards, focused on the intersection of corruption and environmental damage. South Programme V's beneficiaries represented in the network are Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine** and Tunisia.

Office in Ukraine

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Ukraine has 71 (21 men, 50 women) staff members, out of which 11 (seven men, four women) are core staff and 60 (14 men, 46 women) project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 25 projects: four in the framework of the EU/CoE regional Joint Programme "Partnership for Good Governance", one EU/CoE Joint Programme, and 20 funded through contributions at Action-Plan-level, out of which one ("Combating Violence against Women in Ukraine (COVAW II)") is also funded through a contribution from Sweden. The Action Plan for Ukraine 2023-2026 has received as of 31 March 2024 Action-Plan-Level contributions by Andorra, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom as well as from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe

State of implementation of projects / the Action Plan

- **AP, "Strengthening Ukrainian Law Enforcement Agencies During War and Post-War Period":** In February, during the project's Steering Committee meeting, based on achieved results of 2023, beneficiaries approved the work plan for 2024 and outlined strategically important co-operation areas for future. In February the Deputy Head of Office visited the city of Vinnytsia for presentation of the Custody Records system and the work of its human rights inspectors at one of the police units. In March, the first Council-supported Custody Records system opened in Lutsk Police Unit with participation of the Head of Office and Deputy Head of the National Police of Ukraine. The opening and presentation of the system was followed by a round-table on Custody Records effectiveness in combatting torture and ill-treatment within law enforcement.

- **AP, "Combating Violence against Women in Ukraine II (COVAW II)":** The project has been continuously working on publications to support implementation of the Istanbul Convention (IC) in Ukraine. The publication "Guidelines on Reporting for Baseline GREVIO Evaluations" has been developed to assist parties to the IC to organise all essential information related to the convention's baseline and thematic reporting processes. The project adapted and published a Police Guide on working with cases of violence against women, to include changes to legislation and a new section on conflict-related VAW including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). COVAW II is building stakeholders' institutional capacities through the online course, "Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence" for lawyers, judges and prosecutors. Under the awareness raising component, the focus section of the 4th GREVIO Report on GREVIO's activities on the criminalisation and prosecution of sexual violence, including rape was translated and disseminated.

- **AP, "Protecting the Rights of Ukrainian children during and in post-war context":** Two four-day training activities "Models of effective interagency cooperation in criminal proceedings involving children" were organised with the aim of developing child-friendly approaches and effective Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of interagency collaborative response model interaction. The two events brought together 75 representatives of the prosecutors, investigators, juvenile prevention, probation authorities, lawyers of the free legal aid system, penitentiary institutions and places of pre-trial detention, children's services,

guardianship and guardianship bodies, psycho-social support services of children, working in Kirovohradska and Chernivetska regions.

- **AP, "Strengthening multi-level governance, democracy and human rights at local level in Ukraine":** Ten municipalities (from eight oblasts) launched local initiatives on open government and human rights-based approaches. As part of the expert and financial support, a first workshop provided mayors and local officials an opportunity to exchange on the features of successful project management and grant implementation. The project supported the first meeting of the newly established committee for the development of de-occupied and temporarily occupied communities of the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC). Representatives of 60 communities from nine regions set up a platform to address pressing issues faced by the country's de-occupied and temporarily occupied communities – such as housing, access to employment, and education.

- **AP, "Youth for Democracy in Ukraine: phase III":** 23 young activists (10 men, 13 women) from 14 regions strengthened abilities to participate in democratic processes. They also contributed to discussions on the concept of the State Programme "Youth of Ukraine" for 2026-2030, which is being developed. Four training programmes for 140 civil servants and 18 university teachers have started in Sumy, Poltava and Chernihiv regions applying the approved Model Programme "Participatory Youth Policy". 22 youth workers (nine men, 13 women) from 11 regions are certified on trauma informed youth work. 10 new NGOs from nine regions and Kyiv were supported with grants on open youth work projects with young people. The Project Steering Committee meeting took place in Kyiv on 27 February.

- **AP, "Supporting democratic post-war elections in Ukraine":** A brainstorming and co-ordination meeting on the development of communication strategy for the post-war elections in Ukraine was held in co-operation with the Central Election Commission (CEC) and other partners with an outcome document to further frame the needed activities. The draft on Alternative Forms of Voting at Post-War Elections in Ukraine (with a focus on internet voting) was finalized. Project results achieved in 2023 were discussed and further priorities for co-operation in 2024 were agreed upon with national partners and stakeholders at the project Steering Committee meeting in February. A series of specialized IT-trainings on the use of innovative cyber security systems for staff of the CEC Secretariat were launched with two training events on IBM QRadar SIEM (Security information and event management).

- **AP, "Strengthening Good Democratic Governance and Resilience in Ukraine":** The project prepared the opinion on the draft law #4298 relating to the reform of the State sub-national representation and introduction of legality supervision over local authorities' activities. Also, a policy advice on improvement of public ethics at local level was presented to assist the National Agency on Corruption Prevention in the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy. In co-operation with the Association of Ukrainian Cities, the project prepared two explanatory notes for military administrations at community level on legal novelties. Moreover, the project consultants joined the Co-ordination Committee on the new law on local public service under the National Agency on Civil Service.

- **AP, "Strengthening democratic resilience through civic participation during the war and in the post-war context in Ukraine":** 60 representatives of public authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) participated in a roundtable to raise awareness about monitoring and evaluation of participatory processes and their results. During the conference on deliberative democracy, another 60 representatives of public authorities and CSOs got acquainted with the deliberative tools. Memorandums on the implementation of citizens' assemblies with two territorial communities were signed. Through the project's mentoring

support to teachers and representatives of school administrations, over 6 000 students from eight territorial communities have been raising their capacity in using school participatory budgeting tool. 30 representatives of local authorities and CSOs from Lviv region raised capacity in establishing dialogue and cooperation through the development of joint projects.

- **AP, "Supporting the reform of the national minority legal framework and the resilience of national minorities and Roma in Ukraine":** The project contributed to the presentation of the Roadmap for Improving Language Education for Indigenous Peoples and National Minorities (NM) with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for 130 representatives of educational institutions. The Local Initiative Groups of National Minorities (LIGs) conducted six events: on Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) issues of NMs, minority languages, art therapy for IDP children and women and training activities on crises communication. The events were attended by 300 NM representatives. The project co-organised with ODIHR a conference and workshop for 48 participants, including 17 Roma activists. The outcome document will be used as a roadmap for further actions and work.

- **AP, "Fostering Human Rights in the Criminal Justice System in Ukraine":** A seminar on project management was organized for the war-crimes prosecutors on 31 January. On 13-14 February a strategic session was held for the Coordination Center for the Support of Victims and Witnesses of the Office of the Prosecutor General. On 29 February, the Council of Europe contributed to the high-level conference "United for Justice. United for Heritage". The Council of Europe co-organised a high-level roundtable on reparations in Warsaw, Poland.

- **AP, "Support to the functioning of justice in the war and post-war context in Ukraine":** In March a round table was organized jointly with the Supreme Court on the implementation of the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCEJ) Opinion no. 26 "Moving forward: the use of assistive technology in the judiciary". Furthermore, two training sessions for judicial trainers on the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights' standards were held jointly with the National School of Judges of Ukraine. In addition, the project supported the organization of a high-level roundtable on "Reparations for Damages, Losses, and Injuries Resulting from the Russian Federation's Aggression against Ukraine" held in Warsaw on 18-19 March and the meeting of the Heads of the Courts of Appeal with the President and judges of the Supreme Court on 15 March for the discussion of main challenges of the war for the judiciary.

- **AP, "Strengthening judicial and non-judicial remedies for the human rights protection of the war-affected people in Ukraine":** Upon request from the Ombudsperson of Ukraine, the project rendered expert and technical support to the interagency working group on redress mechanisms for persons affected by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. A field meeting of the working group held with the project support resulted in developing a draft concept of domestic remedies and reparations mechanisms for the war-affected people. The project co-organised a high-level roundtable on "Reparations for Damages, Losses, and Injuries Resulting from the Russian Federation's Aggression against Ukraine" held by the Council of Europe, the IOM, and USAID in Warsaw on 18-19 March. The national hotline for IDPs and war-affected population has enhanced its capacities and coordination with other respective hotlines due to successful implementation of the grant award provided by the project.

- **AP, "Facilitating Housing Solutions for the War-Affected People in Ukraine":** In response to a request from the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Social Policy, the project established a platform for weekly co-ordination meetings on the revision of legislation on housing stocks for social purposes with a focus on housing solutions for the most vulnerable

war-affected population. Furthermore, server IT equipment and software aimed to advance digital tools for housing programs implemented by the Ministry for Reintegration were handed over to the Ministry. The project co-organised the high-level Roundtable on "Reparations for Damages, Losses, and Injuries Resulting from the Russian Federation's Aggression against Ukraine" held in Warsaw on 18-19 March.

- **AP, "Facilitating access to human rights and essential services for internally displaced persons and returnees at the community level":** The project has been launched in February. The project team carried out a number of online and residential consultative meetings with partners at national and local level to synchronize the project response to the current situation in the field of internal displacement in Ukraine.

- **AP, "HELP (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) for Ukraine including during wartime":** The Bar Council of Ukraine officially accredited all Council of Europe HELP online courses available in Ukrainian for lawyers working within the free legal aid system. The certificates of completion of the Council of Europe online courses on the HELP E-learning Platform will enable lawyers working with the free legal aid system to receive two credit points for completion of each HELP course. The first meeting of the working group on development of the new HELP online course on deportation of children during armed conflicts was held. Two HELP tutored courses "Violence against women and domestic violence" and a training programme for the National Prevention Mechanism Department of the Ombudspersons Office have been launched by Council of Europe projects in co-operation with the project HELP for Ukraine.

- **AP, "Enhanced social protection in Ukraine":** The second Steering Committee meeting of the project was held to agree on annual plans with partners. The project provided legal advice and co-ordination support to the working groups developing the Social Code of Ukraine, the Labour Code of Ukraine, the Law on Collective Labour Disputes and the Law on Social Dialogue. The meeting of the Barrier-Free Council was held and the analysis of implementation of the Action Plan for the National Barrier-Free Strategy in Q4 2023 was prepared. Four grant initiatives were launched to foster the promotion of social and economic rights in Ukraine through development of online courses, training sessions and distribution of specialised content to target groups. The European Court of Human Rights' case law regarding limitation of social benefits and the Guide to prepare alternative reports to the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) were translated. The qualitative research on satisfaction of social services provision was presented.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Enhancing anti-money laundering, counter terrorist financing and asset recovery regime in Ukraine (PGG III Ukraine)":** The project organised (1) online training on criminal investigations, in particular money laundering, terrorist financing, involving virtual assets; (2) annual training of justices of the High Anti-Corruption Court; (3) online workshop on technologies and IT solutions for increasing the effectiveness of the State Financial Monitoring Service of Ukraine; (4) analysis and recommendations on the implementation of the updated international standards for non-profit organisations.

- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Support to development of the constitutional justice in Ukraine":** The project organised and/or supported the following activities: a Technical Project Committee meeting, one workshop, one round table and five meetings with the external partners, international organisations and stakeholders. 20% of the staff of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine were empowered to improve the quality of legal interpretations considering the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European

Union. The Constitutional Court of Latvia committed to provide support to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine at its path towards Ukraine's accession to the European Union.

- **AP, "Towards More Humane Detention Conditions and Reduced Reoffending in Ukraine (DECOPRIS)":** The project is in its inception phase. During the reporting period, a Substance Use rehabilitation programme was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Justice, along with a Working notebook. The 1st Steering Committee meeting is planned for 23 April.
- **AP, "Supporting implementation of the European human rights standards in Ukraine":** Continued support was provided on amending the draft law on the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights with the official presentation of the draft law planned for April 2024. To enhance the efficiency of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), the project assisted with the revision as well as development of 24 monitoring methodologies for various places of deprivation of liberty aligning them with the relevant standards and novelties of the national legislation. Furthermore, a special three-month training course on Article 3 of the European Court of Human Rights tailored to the NPM needs has been launched jointly with the HELP programme. The project continued a dialogue with the national authorities on data protection modernisation. A high-level forum on present scenario and outlook of data protection in Ukraine was organised jointly with the Ombudsperson on 20 February. The forum confirmed the consensus reached between the stakeholders with regards to the importance of data protection modernisation on the path of Ukraine towards the EU accession.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Combating hate speech in Ukraine":** Tailored training courses on anti-discrimination and hate speech were organized for the Office of the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights from December 2023 – February 2024, comprising two online informative sessions (14 December and 25 January) and in-person training in Kyiv on 26-27 February. 30 representatives of the Commissioner's Office raised their capacities on issues related to combating discrimination and hate speech within the mandate of the institution. The in-person event enabled exchanges about working on individual cases and good practice in providing assistance to victims as well as on the importance of a solid methodology and data collection system. Participants discussed further steps for strengthening the role of Commissioner's Office in preventing and combating hate speech in Ukraine.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Promoting equality and non-discrimination: towards more resilient and inclusive societies":** During 17-19 January a training session on "Promoting equality and non-discrimination and combating hate speech" was held at the premises of the European Youth Centre in Budapest. More than 50 Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) from Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans regions, including five youth leaders from Ukraine, got introduced to key concepts of human rights, non-discrimination, combating hatred and creating counter-narratives to hate speech as well as methods on how to effectively address hate speech and discrimination. This will enable the YEAs to make a difference in their communities through the promotion of equality and diversity, ultimately contributing to combating hate speech and discrimination online and offline.
- **AP, "Safeguarding Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Media in Ukraine (SFEM-UA)":** The implementation progress and the 2024 work plan were discussed at the second Steering Committee meeting (50 participants). Training sessions on access to information continued with the second group, consisting of 23 administrative judges (12 women, 11 men). Changes to regulations and sports broadcasting policy were discussed with the Council of Europe speakers at the Suspilne boards session and combined with the field

visit to Suspilne Lviv. 98 representatives of printed media (53 women, 45 men) benefited from the online session on the new media registration procedure. A civil society organisation lawyer participated in the Committee on Artificial Intelligence session on the finalisation of the Council of Europe's Convention on Artificial Intelligence. Draft changes to the laws on media and advertising were discussed with 97 participants (70 – online, 27- offline, 44 men, 53 women).

- **EU/CoE JP, "Support for implementing European standards relating to anti-discrimination and rights of national minorities in Ukraine":** The project provided expert and technical assistance to the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnopolitics and Freedom of Conscience (DESS), the Ministry of Education and the the Vice Prime Minister Office on European Integration on issues related to national minorities legislation and the EU negotiation process. At the request of the MFA, the project prepared an expert opinion on the draft Law on Civil Partnerships. The project completed the institutional capacity assessment of the DESS and a capacity assessment of the Equal Rights Department of the Ombudsman's Office. The project facilitated a dialogue between 15 national minority NGOs and the police and supported the participation of NGOs and MFA representatives in the regional event in Podgorica, Montenegro, on LGBTI protection and equality reforms. The project trained 60 regional authorities on the Council of Europe's standards on national minority rights and 130 teachers on minority languages.

- **AP, "Promoting Gender Equality in Ukraine (Pro-GE)":** The project completed its stakeholder interviews, developed its online presence and held its first Steering Committee meeting, attended by 30 participants. As part of the awareness raising component of the project, informational tweets about men and boys as active agents of change were published on 8 March with 526 views. The project further translated the guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality and presented them in Ukrainian. The project team developed and distributed the project brochure and banner.

Follow-up actions

- **AP, "Strengthening multi-level governance, democracy and human rights at local level in Ukraine":**
 - ✓ Coaching support for local initiatives on open government and human rights at local level in Ukraine;
 - ✓ Development of a Training of Trainers programme on open government for local authorities;
 - ✓ Open Government Week 2024 and peer exchanges on open and inclusive government.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Enhancing anti-money laundering, counter terrorist financing and asset recovery regime in Ukraine (PGG III Ukraine)" :**
 - ✓ Capacity-building activity for law enforcement agencies, customs and prosecution office on trade-based money laundering.
 - ✓ Training on interdisciplinary research and investigation methods and intragovernmental cooperation for effective financial crime prevention and investigation.
 - ✓ Workshop for the State Monitoring Service of Ukraine (FIU) on instruments and procedures for strategic analysis.
 - ✓ Analysis and advice on the platforms for anti-money laundering (AML)/countering of terrorist financing (CFT) supervisory authorities.

Council of Europe high level visits and other official delegations

- On 22 March, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, visited Kyiv to launch the antenna office of the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine in Ukraine.

Office in Yerevan

Situation of the Office

The Council of Europe Office in Yerevan has 32 (seven men, 25 women) staff members, out of which five (three men, two women) are core staff and 27 (four men, 23 women) project staff.

As of 31 March 2024, the Office has implemented 14 projects: three projects in the framework of the EU/CoE "Partnership for Good Governance", one funded through a voluntary contribution from Austria (ADA), one funded through the Human Rights Trust Fund, and nine funded through contributions at Action Plan-level. The Action Plan for Armenia 2023-2026 has received as of 31 March 2024 Action-Plan-Level contributions from Cyprus, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden as well as from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe.

State of implementation of projects/programmes/Action Plans/co-operation documents:

- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Enhancing national capacities for effective prevention and fight against economic crime in Armenia"**: The project supported a [three-day capacity building activity](#) with engagement of over 140 representatives from Financial Institutions and Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions (DNFBPs) focused on advancing the expertise of financial institutions and DNFBPs in Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Counter-Terrorist Financing (CTF) compliance, and the implementation of targeted financial sanctions for proliferation and terrorism financing. In February, the project delivered three capacity building events on the [Application of the Interpretative Manual to the Model Code of Conduct for Public Servants in Armenia](#), with the engagement of the national integrity officers, aimed at enhancing the capacities of representatives from the Ministry of Finance, Prime Minister's office and Eco Patrol Service of the Ministry of Environment in terms of unified application of the Model Code of Conduct. Moreover, a review of national legal provisions on Investment funds against international standards has been finalized on 11 March and is currently under discussion.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Promoting equality and non-discrimination in Armenia"**: On 17-19 January, five Young European Ambassadors from Armenia participated in the [regional event "Promoting equality and non-discrimination and combating hate speech"](#) and enhanced their capacities on how to effectively combat hate speech. Furthermore, on 27 March they visited the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan, familiarized themselves with various projects being implemented and expressed commitment in continuing their activities to combat discrimination. On 21-22 March, two representatives from the HRD Office participated in online training session on ["Collaborative strategies in addressing hate speech: a multidimensional approach"](#), together with the PGG and HF regions' Equality bodies' representatives. In mid-March, the Project transmitted to the MoJ the expert opinion on the draft law on ensuring equality. Meanwhile, jointly with the Venice Commission, the project will provide an expert opinion on the Draft law on National minorities by the first half of 2024.
- **EU/CoE PGG III, "Support to the justice reform in Armenia"**: In January, the Chairperson of the Court of Cassation visited the European Court of Human Rights, as part of fostering dialogue between the Court and Armenian judiciary. In February, two local experts provided legal opinions on proposed amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of

Criminal Procedure, as part of the continuous effort to align the Codes with the Council of Europe standards. In March, an international expert conducted one-day workshop for the officials of the Training Commission of the General Assembly of Judges introducing new tool for Judicial Training Cycle Management. In March, two staff members of the Cassation Court visited the European Court of Human Rights in the framework of continuous capacity-building activities.

- **HRTF VC, “Support to the effective execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in Armenia”:** [A two-day workshop](#) aimed at enhancing knowledge of judges and staff of the Office of the Representative of Armenia on International Legal Matters on peculiarities of reopening of cases at national level was organised on 24-25 January. This was an important platform for discussing legal certainty, issues regarding the statute of limitations and possible obstacles of judicial practice during reopening in case of unilateral declaration or friendly settlement. [The round table discussion](#) on reasonable time of proceedings and compensation for delay was organised on 27 February with the participation of state bodies, judiciary, international organisations and civil society. The program was designed to analyse the prominent European standards regarding the examination of court cases within a reasonable time and the timely execution of judicial acts. The introduction of accelerated procedures for fair compensation will be an important general measure contributing to the effectiveness of the execution of *Avakemyan v. Armenia* group of cases.

- **Austria (ADA) VC, “Democratic Development, Decentralisation, and Good Governance in Armenia, phase II”:** 11 grant project proposals were selected for the implementation of feasibility studies on inter-municipal co-operation. In the frames of the legal and policy component, a “Comprehensive study of the legislation related to the enforcement of local duties and fees in Armenia” was initiated. It includes the review of the current Law “On Local Duties and Fees” and recommendations for legislative amendments. The project started further supporting the development of the first draft Chapters of the new / revised comprehensive Law On Local Self-Government in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

- **AP, “Strengthening the Protection of the Rights of Persons in Detention”:** Knowledge-based awareness [sessions](#) were organised on suicide intervention plans for the leadership of all Armenian Penitentiary institutions. Skill-based training [sessions](#) were organised for approximately 130 multidisciplinary team members from all Armenian Penitentiary institutions on suicide intervention plans. Guidelines on specific interventions for suicide prevention in Armenian prisons were developed, published and distributed. A newly developed resocialisation risk and need assessment tool was piloted in four prisons and a workshop was organised for the direct piloting staff to check inter-rater reliability of the tool. A comprehensive report on “Conditional release: assessment of the current system, best practices and way forward” was developed and shared with the Ministry of Justice.

- **AP, “Strengthening the Probation Service in Armenia”:** The project has organised several events (on 16, 27 February and 7 March) that were aimed to discuss criteria and standards for evaluation and monitoring of the work of the probation staff, guidelines on application house arrest and administrative supervision and assessment of needs of the Probation Service for a rehabilitation programme on addictions. The project advanced with the RNA validation study (several missions to prisons and probation units), drafting of amendments to Government decree regulating performance evaluation of probation staff, drafting of research paper on the Law on Probation to be submitted to the working group established by the MoJ, development of technical specifications for IT equipment to be procured.

- **AP, “Protection of Human Rights in Biomedicine II”:** Progress of the development of the Council of Europe HELP course on “Human Rights in Mental Health Services” was discussed during the second working group meeting on 15-16 January. Armenian MPs have discussed the possibilities of the ratification of the Oviedo Convention during the [study visit](#) in Strasbourg on 21-25 January. The second SCM of the project on 7 February continued the [discussion](#) of the possibilities of ratification. The human rights-based approaches applicable to healthcare have been discussed with MPs during a follow-up [capacity-building](#) session. The [capacity-building](#) equipped 15 journalists with the knowledge and skills to promote the work of Ethics Committee for healthcare professionals. [Expert-discussion](#) provided an effective platform for an exchange of views between respective state institutions on the revision of the conditions of legal incapacity according to international standards. Nearly 65 refugee healthcare professionals from the Karabakh region strengthened their knowledge and skills on [key human rights principles in healthcare and biomedicine](#), as well as on rights and responsibilities.
- **AP, “Ending violence against women and promoting gender equality in Armenia”:** The project supported the government to draft the State Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for 2024-2028, which was subsequently submitted for consultation to the relevant state agencies. Moreover, the project initiated research on the digital dimension of violence against women (VAW) and developed modules of the online course “Gender Responsive Education”. 23 law enforcement officers completed the new HELP [course](#) on preventing VAW and domestic violence (DV) for law enforcement agencies, [launched](#) in October. 15 regional Police chiefs were specially [trained](#) on combating VAW and DV. New [resources](#) on the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention have been translated into Armenian and adapted to the national context. These and other publications were widely promoted during the 16-day campaign against gender-based violence.
- **AP, “Fostering human rights in the armed forces in Armenia”:** Starting from March, Armenian professionals were provided the opportunity to enhance their knowledge on the Council of Europe and international standards and best practices on human rights in the armed forces via HELP e-learning platform. The Armenian version of the HELP model course on “Human Rights in the Armed Forces” was finalised and went online. In April, the official launch of the Armenian version of the mentioned HELP course will be organised.
- **AP, “Strengthening human rights safeguards for the displaced population in Armenia”:** The inception mission of the project was successfully concluded in January. During this phase, the project focused on establishing essential relationships and understanding the complexities of the refugee crisis in Armenia. The primary objective of the inception mission was to fine-tune project interventions to align closely with the needs and priorities of the Armenian authorities. Through extensive consultations and dialogues with stakeholders, the project gained a comprehensive understanding of the refugee crisis landscape, enabling it to tailor interventions for maximum impact. In March, the project extended support to the Human Rights Defender's office in finalising their National Preventive Mechanism report for the year 2023.
- **AP, “Protecting the rights of Armenian children in post-war context”:** The project is still in the inception phase (no specific achievements to report for this quarter). Among other activities, the project team held discussions with several partners regarding potential collaboration opportunities within the project.
- **AP, “Enhancing social human rights in Armenia”:** The project inception mission was conducted on [March 11-13](#) with the objective to gauge the interest of the project partners and to tailor the project activities to their actual needs in sphere of social human rights. Bilateral

and multi-lateral meetings were organized with the Armenian authorities, as well as the UN Agencies and USAID. The inception report prepared by the SPO, covering the main points discussed during the meetings, as well as conclusions and recommendations on way forward, will be used to develop the Project Workplans. The Armenian authorities are aware of the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 3-4 July.

- **AP, “Support to Communities Hosting Refugees in Armenia”:** The project implementation started from mid-February 2024. A call for grant proposals was launched in March, with the deadline set for 12 April. It is designed to support local authorities to implement projects aimed at responding to the urgent and mid-term needs of the refugees. Support is being provided to municipalities from local consultants to help the development of robust applications. Within the capacity-development component, the content of a Workshop on Resilience Building Strategies (to be held in April) was developed. On mid-March, the expert opinion on draft law on ensuring equality was transmitted to the MoJ.

Other relevant activities

- The official representative of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Senior Programme Specialist, Kristin Olson, was updated on the activities of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan within her targeted visit to Armenia.

Council of Europe high level visits and other official delegations

- A delegation of the Venice Commission made a [visit](#) to Armenia on 25-26 March and had an exchange of views with state authorities and other stakeholders in order to follow up on the joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR on the draft amendments to the Electoral Code and related legislation of Armenia, which the Commission adopted in October 2023.