



OSCEval News is the evaluation newsletter of the Office of Internal Oversight.

Its aim is to provide insights into the OSCE's work in evaluation, by sharing key evaluation findings and conclusions, as well as new developments regarding the OSCE's overall evaluation culture.

Evaluation is a management tool that contributes to decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational learning.



This edition of OSCEval News is dedicated to the

The Evaluation of the Executive Gender Coach Programme

Case study I of the
OIO Evaluation of Capacity Building and Learning in the OSCE

This evaluation was conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight in 2018.

Introduction

The *OSCE Executive Gender Coach Programme* (hereafter 'the Programme') aimed to strengthen OSCE's leadership capacity for meeting the organization's gender equality commitments. It was specifically designed to respond to the needs of the senior management team of the Secretariat, i.e. the OSCE Secretary General and the Directors of the Secretariat. The Programme was introduced as an OSCE pilot, with a view of potentially rolling it out to other executive structures.

It is in this context that this evaluation was conducted. Its main purpose was to draw conclusions and make recommendations that will feed into the decision to implement (or not to implement) similar programmes in the future, while at the same time providing relevant insights to the larger *OIO Evaluation of Capacity Development and Learning in the OSCE*, which this case study is part of. The evaluation put particular focus on the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the Programme. It was carried out shortly after its completion, and covers the period from the start of the Programme in September 2017 up to the time of this evaluation (July 2018).

Programme Description

The Programme consisted of four half-day (4 hours) seminars conducted in two-month intervals, which were dedicated to the following topics: introductory seminar, *leading through knowledge*, *leading through effective management*, and *leading through inspiring others*. The topics related to a set of key leadership behaviours, considered to be required for the establishment of a gender-sensitive management culture and working environment in the OSCE, as well as for gender mainstreaming to be fully introduced in OSCE policies, programmes and activities.

The seminars were complemented by four one-hour individual coaching sessions (per phone) for each participant, scheduled for the alternating months, as well as one final coaching call two months after the last seminar. These sessions were dedicated to discussing progress made with the implementation of participants' individual development plans, and to helping participants deepen the learnings from the seminars.

Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Relevance and Effectiveness

The Programme was well aligned with the principles and goals of the *2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*. It also served to implement one of the key recommendations of an OIO evaluation of the implementation of the *2004 Action Plan* conducted in 2017, which called for leadership for gender equality to be strengthened in the OSCE. The timing of the Programme coincided with other important efforts for the promotion of gender equality in the OSCE Secretariat, such as the finalization and implementation of the *Secretariat Roadmap* for the Implementation of the *2004 Action Plan*, and the design of the Secretary General's overall reform agenda that comprises gender equality as one of its areas of focus. In light of these combined efforts, the Programme can be considered relevant in that strong leadership for gender equality is a prerequisite both for the implementation of the Roadmap as well as for any future reform efforts in this area.

*The following image was included in an article titled "La apuesta que tu organización necesita: convertirte en un líder para el cambio" by Marian Iriando on the website of nGlobo Strategy.



The evaluation also showed positive results with regards to participants' assessment of their own progress and growth in confidence regarding their individual knowledge, skills and gender equality leadership profile. For instance, their familiarity with key concepts and policy documents had increased, as well as their clarity about what was expected from them in terms of gender responsive leadership and of creating a gender responsive management culture and working environment. They also reported that they now felt more confident to use arguments in favour of gender equality when meeting resistance, and more competent to explain how gender equality contributes to their specific area of work. Several of them, however, still had some doubts regarding their ability to convincingly demonstrate the link between gender equality and comprehensive security overall.

Participants reported to have initiated a number of activities following their participation in the Programme, most of which are still work in progress. They include the introduction of performance appraisal objectives for 2018, both for Directors and for deputies and programme managers; putting gender equality more prominently on the agenda; the introduction of gender-equality related measures in various areas of work; ensuring gender parity in events and training activities; requesting that gender equality be mainstreamed in activities, projects and programmes etc. Other interviewees had noticed that Programme participants had become more gender-sensitive in their language, that they were now able to speak about the topic clearly and convincingly, that they made efforts to integrate a gender perspective in meetings and activities. Other staff members, however, had not observed any significant change in terms of leadership action. Overall, as regards individual behaviour change initiated by participants, it is obvious that the Programme has had an effect, but this effect is uneven across departments and depends on the individual commitment, prior engagement and working context of each participant.

At the end of the Programme participants committed to a set of key *Leadership Principles and Actions*. Taking these forward in the future and achieving long-term change at the level of the Secretariat will not only require the commitment of Programme participants, but also sustained action by their teams. There is hence a need for the commitments made at the top to further 'trickle down' to others, and both the leaders and their staff to implement new practices. In this respect, the evaluation observed some discrepancy between the expression of leadership commitments and the actions taken by Programme participants on one hand, and how they were perceived and translated into action (or not) by staff members on the other hand. Some of the Programme participants expressed the need for more concrete 'how-to guidance' that would help them ensure this 'trickle-down' effect and better guide their teams in their work.

The evaluation also observed the need to finalize the *Leadership Principles and Actions*, to share them internally and with

participating States, and to integrate them in the Secretariat Roadmap in order to avoid parallel and / or overlapping processes and to ensure their implementation. This should be complemented by following up with participants through the regular performance appraisal mechanism.

Methodology

The Programme used a variety of interactive learning methods, which were much appreciated by participants. Learning through face-to-face participatory workshops facilitated by an expert was considered most useful, followed by the coaching calls, and the learning through lectures and seminars led by a peer. The coaching calls, together with the assignments given between seminars, were deemed essential in terms of keeping participants engaged and on track through-out the duration of the Programme. The calls had also helped participants translate the insights gained during the seminars into concrete commitments and activities. One of the important elements of the Programme was the creation of a safe space outside the usual working environment, where leaders could discuss in confidence among themselves. The small group setting also had the advantage of keeping everyone engaged and focused.

The duration of the Programme over a period of more than six months was considered appropriate by most of the participants, as it allowed for time for reflection, for making sense of the learning content in their day-to-day work, and for practicing and receiving feedback and encouragement on newly learned behaviours.

Sustainability and Follow Up

The evaluation observed a need for participants to further consolidate individual learnings, to practise new behaviours and to make them an integral part of their work. The challenge will be to sustain this process in the absence of continuous reminders and coaching calls, and in light of competing priorities.

Another challenge in terms of ensuring the sustainability of the Programme is the non-career nature of the OSCE level and the resulting high level of staff turnover, especially at the Directors' level. This invites the question whether alternative, more cost-effective ways to build top-level leadership commitment could be considered in the future, to be complemented by more extensive trainings of mid-level leadership, who tend to stay longer in the organization. This would also have the benefit of further supporting the translation of leadership commitments into real action on the ground.

The Way Forward

The evaluation generated a number of recommendations. These relate to the creation of a shared (flexible) leadership narrative on the overall link between gender equality and comprehensive security; the finalization, distribution of and follow up on the shared *Leadership Principles and Actions*; and strengthening institutional knowledge related to the Programme. It also offers several factors to be considered when potentially rolling out the Programme to other OSCE executive structures.

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