



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Conference

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Contribution of the Council of Europe

**THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND
THE RULE OF LAW**

The efficiency and quality of independent judicial systems in its member states remain a main issue for the Council of Europe.

The actual programme for cooperation of the Council of Europe in the field of rule of law was established following the conclusions of the Third Summit held in Warsaw in May 2005 where the Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe, emphasised the need to reinforce the protection of human rights and committed themselves to strengthening the rule of law and the security of citizens throughout the continent, building on the standard-setting potential of the Council of Europe, its mechanisms of legal co-operation and its contribution to the development of international law. They stressed the role of an independent and efficient judiciary in the member states in this respect (Warsaw Declaration of 17th May 2005). They decided to develop the evaluation and assistance functions of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) and to make proper use of the opinions given by the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) in order to help member states to deliver justice fairly and rapidly and to develop alternative means for the settlement of disputes (Action Plan adopted by the Third Summit, 17th May 2005).

1. The European standards and their implementation

In May 2012, the Committee of Ministers gave instructions to the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) for the follow-up to the Brighton Declaration (April 2012) for the completion of the work on various issues, including the elaboration of two Protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights:

- A Protocol No. 15 to the Convention and explanatory report thereto including a reference to the principle of subsidiarity and the doctrine of the margin of appreciation in the Preamble to the Convention; shortening to four months the time limit for making an application to the Court ; amending the “significant disadvantage” admissibility



criterion by removing the condition that no case may be rejected on this ground which has not been duly considered by a domestic tribunal ; removing the parties' right to object to relinquishment of jurisdiction by a Chamber to the Grand Chamber ; replacing the age limit for judges by a requirement that they be no older than 65 years of age at the date on which their term of office commences. The Protocol was adopted at the 123rd Ministerial Session of the Committee of Ministers (16 May 2013) and opened to signature in Strasbourg on 24 June 2013.

- A Protocol No. 16 relating to advisory opinions allowing highest courts and tribunals of a High Contracting Party to request the Court to give advisory opinions on questions of principle relating to the interpretation or application of the rights and freedoms defined in the Convention. The Protocol was adopted at the 1176th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (10 July 2013). It will be opened to signature on 2 October 2013.

Alongside these amendments to the Convention, the Committee of Ministers adopted several reports elaborated by the CDDH, including one on the measures taken by the member States to implement relevant parts of the Interlaken and Izmir Declarations, giving an overview of national implementation of the Convention, and one containing conclusions and possible proposals for action on ways to resolve the large number of applications arising from systemic issues identified by the Court.

As regard national implementation of the Convention, the CDDH notably drafted a guide to good practice with respect to domestic remedies. The Guide outlines the fundamental legal principles which apply to effective remedies in general, and the characteristics required for remedies in certain specific situations and general remedies to be effective. The specific situations dealt with concern remedies for deprivation of liberty, in relation to both the measure's lawfulness and the conditions of detention, and the way in which the person in detention is treated; investigations in the context of alleged violations of Articles 2 and 3 of the Convention; remedies against removal; and remedies for non-execution of domestic judicial decisions. The Guide also identifies good practices which may provide inspiration to other member States.

The CDDH also elaborated a toolkit to inform public officials about the State's obligations under the Convention. This toolkit aims to provide officials with information and practical guidance to equip them to respect the Convention rights of the people they deal with, fulfill the State's Convention obligations and so, as far as possible, avoid breaches of the Convention.

See: www.coe.int/cddh
www.coe.int/reformECHR

2. Improving the organisation of judicial systems

The **European Commission for the efficiency of justice (CEPEJ)** aims to improve the efficiency and quality of the day-to day functioning of the justice systems of member states, thereby generating increased confidence of the citizens in the public service of justice, preventing appeals to the ECHR based on Article 6 and enabling a better

implementation of the Council of Europe's relevant instruments (conventions and recommendations in the justice field). Its ongoing works focus in particular on:

- the evaluation of the judicial systems of all CoE member States thanks to the collection and analysis of data through a specific Scheme aiming at identifying main trends of these systems and defining CoE's priorities to improve justice efficiency¹,
- the concrete knowledge of lengths of proceedings in the member states so as to propose pragmatic tools and measures to improve judicial time management, through the work of the SATURN Centre, which is due to evolve towards a genuine permanent European observatory of judicial timeframes, with the support of the CEPEJ Network of Pilot courts; within this framework, a court coaching programme has been made available to volunteer courts wishing to get concrete support for implementing the relevant CEPEJ tools,
- preparation of concrete tools for promoting the quality of justice, including a Handbook for organising court satisfaction surveys, a report on "*contractualisation and judicial processes*" and guidelines on the organisation of judicial maps; draft guidelines on the role of experts in judicial proceedings and guidelines on the organisation of court premises are under preparation; within this framework, a court coaching programme has been made available to volunteer courts wishing to get concrete support for implementing the relevant CEPEJ tools,
- the European Day of Justice, co-organised in all European countries with the European Commission, including the European Prize of innovative practice contributing to the quality of justice: "The Crystal Scales of Justice",
- the design of several other tools aimed at policy makers and justice practitioners, such as Guidelines for a better implementation of the existing Council of Europe Recommendations concerning mediation and execution of court decisions.

see: www.coe.int/cepej

3. Strengthening the judicial professions

Unless the right training is provided for the legal professions, judicial systems cannot function effectively and will forfeit public trust. Therefore the Council of Europe attaches special importance to dialogue with members of the judicial service, who play a key role in promoting the rule of law and protecting fundamental rights and individual freedoms.

Reinforcing the independence and impartiality of judges

The **Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE)** is the first body consisting solely of judges ever set up within an international organisation, and in this respect it is unique in Europe. It supports the Committee of Ministers in carrying out the priorities for safeguarding the status of judges in Europe and strengthening of the role of judges in Europe and advises on whether it is necessary to update the legal instruments.

¹ The last report, containing data of 2012, has been made public in September 2013. The next report is expected by mid 2014.

The CCJE has already adopted 15 Opinions for the Committee of Ministers. An Opinion on "the relations between judges and lawyers in judicial proceedings " will be finalised soon.

The CCJE may be called upon to provide practical assistance to help States comply with standards relating to judges. It addresses topical issues and, if necessary, visits the country concerned to discuss ways of improving the existing situation in legislative and practical terms.

Under the auspices of the CCJE, regular European Conference of Judges is held.

See: www.coe.int/ccje

Co-operating with prosecutorial systems

The prosecuting authorities play a crucial role as the interface between governments, which are responsible for crime policy, and courts, which must be independent. Their functions and powers thus depend on a balance, which is not easily defined. The Council of Europe works to define such a balance in **Recommendation Rec. (2000)19 on the role of public prosecution in the criminal justice system**.

Recognising the essential role of the public prosecutor in the criminal justice system, and the important contribution to international cooperation played by the prosecutors, the Committee of Ministers decided in 2005 to create the **Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE)**. This consultative body to the Committee of Ministers has in particular a task to prepare opinions for the Committee of Ministers in order to facilitate and promote the implementation of Recommendation Rec. (2000)19 and to collect information about the functioning of prosecution services in Europe.

The CCJE has already adopted 7 Opinions for the Committee of Ministers. An Opinion on prosecutors and media will be finalised soon.

The CCPE has also been given the task to continue the organisation of regular European conferences of prosecutors.

See: www.coe.int/ccpe

Supporting judicial training

The **Lisbon Network** (European Network of judicial training institutions) supports the development of judicial training in CoE's Member States. The Network meets regularly to discuss topics of common interest. It cooperates closely with the CEPEJ.

See: www.coe.int/lisbon-network

Co-operation programmes

Under its various programmes, the Council of Europe has developed a number of targeted activities in order to help CoE member States on issues relating to the proper functioning of independent justice systems, including where the monitoring procedures have revealed a need for new measures or a change in approach. Such programmes rely in particular on the CEPEJ evaluation mechanism, as well as the CEPEJ concrete

tools aimed at policy makers and justice professionals. This may have come out of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the reports of the CoE Human Rights Commissioner (HRC). Cooperation activities for the efficiency and quality of judicial systems are being developed (often within the framework of joint programmes with the European Union) in particular with Albania, Turkey and the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine), as well as with the countries of the South neighbourhood (Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan).

See: www.coe.int/cepej

ECHR effectiveness at national level is enhanced through effective remedies

The Council of Europe helps enhancing ECHR effectiveness at the national level through effective remedies in accordance with the Recommendations included in the Declaration of the 114th Session of the CM (May 2004); Third Summit Action Plan; Declaration of the 116th Session of the CM (May 2006); Decision n° CM/867/14062006; Communiqué of 118th Session of the CM (May 2008), Declaration of the 119th Session of the CM (May 2009).

In 2012-2013 in the framework of the CoE/EU Joint Project entitled “Enhancing human rights protection in Kosovo”² a reform proposal to make Kosovo* human rights structures more efficient was prepared, three key acts in the field of human rights - Law on Ombudsperson, Law on Gender Equality and Law on Anti-Discrimination – were reviewed by the CoE and necessary amendments were proposed to bring them in compliance with the ECHR. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a project entitled “Strengthening the capacity of the judiciary as regards the implementation of the ECHR in Bosnia and Herzegovina” has been implemented since September 2012, and in its framework a review of the draft Law on Courts was carried out, proposing changes aimed at securing the judicial independence in line with the ECHR standards.

The EU/CoE Joint Programme entitled “Reinforcing the fight against ill-treatment and impunity”, that started on 1 July 2011 and will end on 31 December 2013 is implemented in five countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). It pursues to continue supporting the legal and institutional reforms and to reinforce the national capacities for combating ill-treatment by law enforcement agencies and penitentiary institutions, including the strengthening of the effectiveness of investigations of allegations of ill-treatment. The Project also includes a new element related to combating ill-treatment in pre-trial detention facilities and penitentiary institutions.

The policy of zero tolerance towards ill-treatment is officially declared as a priority of national governments, highlighted in the addresses of the high level public officials and systematically introduced in the strategic documents of the partner countries. The Project promotes actively the adoption of corresponding messages which, although sometimes declarative by their nature, shall serve as deterrents for police impunity and

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

as a clear message to the society in which the human rights' values are being engrained. As examples of policy documents containing the message zero tolerance can serve the Human Rights Action Plan and the Strategy for Justice Sector Reform 2011-2016, adopted by the Parliament of Moldova in 2011, the Report of the Inter-Agency Coordination Council against Torture adopted also in 2011 in Georgia, or the adoption of the National Programme for Action to raise effectiveness of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Azerbaijan in 2011. A similar example can be brought from Ukraine, where a high-level Commission for Prevention of Torture was established under the Administration of President of Ukraine on 27 September 2011. The

see: www.coe.int/t/dghl/cooperation

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see: www.coe.int/t/dghl/cooperation

ECHR capacity-building for professional groups

ECHR capacity-building for professional groups aims at ensuring that the Convention and its case law are incorporated into the decision-making of judges, prosecutors and lawyers at the national level, in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity. In 2010, activities were held in 13 countries and they included: 1) thematic seminars on selected ECHR Articles and cross-cutting issues; 2) "training-of-trainers" (ToT) seminars for ECHR national trainers; 3) cascade seminars in the regions by ECHR national trainers; 4) study visits to the CoE, including the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and to the EU institutions; 5) conferences and round tables; 6) E-learning courses.

The training activities for judges, prosecutors and lawyers were implemented in co-operation with national training institutions, formally tasked by the authorities with professional training for these target groups, thus the natural partner for the CoE in that field. This was the case in particular with the Academy of Judges and the Academy of Prosecutors of Ukraine, the High School of Justice of Georgia, the National Institute of Justice of Moldova, the Academy of Justice of the Russian Federation and the Federal Academy of Prosecutors of the Russian Federation, Judges' and Prosecutors' training centres of Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Co-operation with national Association of Judges and Bar Associations, such as the Chamber of Advocates of Armenia, was also strengthened. (+ Justice Academy and High Council of Judges and Prosecutors in Turkey)

In the scope of above-mentioned EU/CoE Joint Programme entitled “Reinforcing the fight against ill-treatment and impunity” more than 2400 judges, prosecutors, lawyers, penitentiary officers and forensic doctors were trained on the ECtHR case law covering *inter alia* independent investigation of ill-treatment and other related articles of the ECHR.

Translations and publications of human rights handbooks, training materials, proceedings of multilateral conference, ECHR Glossaries and relevant ECtHR case law were systematically distributed during the training activities and constituted lasting resources. HUDOC CD-ROMs or DVDs containing ECtHR’s database were also distributed. The book “Human Rights and Criminal Procedure: the Case Law of the European Court of Human Rights” was translated and published in Armenian, Georgian, Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan. In 2013, a book “European Convention and Human Rights and Criminal Procedure” was published in Belarus. Publication of the book, which is mostly addressed to lawyers in Belarus, is a follow-up to a round-table which was held in late 2009 and is part of the CoE’s co-operation activities aimed at support of Belarusian professional groups. The availability of human rights materials in national languages in all beneficiary countries has increased due to translation and publication of the CoE handbooks and ECtHR case law. Substantial training and capacity-building activities were carried out also under the EU/CoE JP entitled “Access to Justice in Armenia”.

The EU/CoE JP “Training of military judges and prosecutors in Turkey” was completed on 24 December 2012. A training system on human rights issues was developed for members of the Turkish military justice system and knowledge. A pool of 50 national trainers was established and 370 military judges, prosecutors and legal counsellors were trained. Two studies, entitled “Comparative Analysis of Military Judicial Systems in the Council of Europe Member States” and “Study of the Turkish Military Justice System in the Light of the Case Law of the ECtHR”, have been prepared by a Working Group composed of 15 international and national members. Recommendations to improve the Turkish military justice system were included. They were presented and discussed during a high-level international conference. Thus awareness on the challenges for military justice systems in Europe in the light of European human rights standards was raised.

Under the JP “Enhancing the role of the supreme judicial authorities in respect of European standards in Turkey”, about 600 key decision-makers have been trained, including in the form of series of study visits to the CoE and EU institutions. 20 judges of the Turkish High Courts were placed for six month term in the European Court of Human Rights order to enhance their knowledge about the ECHR values for a further dissemination in Turkey. In addition, 22 judges were placed in various departments in the Secretariat of the CoE, The European Court of Justice and national courts in Germany.

In 2012, a new Joint Programme between the Council of Europe and the European Union on “Improving the Efficiency of the Turkish Criminal Justice System” started. A needs assessment was drafted to identify the main problems of the Turkish criminal justice system, including regarding training of judges, prosecutors and lawyers, and recommendations for action were made. Study visits and placements at the ECtHR and

EU judicial institutions were organised for 100 future judges and prosecutors. It is foreseen to create a pool of 280 trainers and to train consequently 420 candidate judges and prosecutors on the right to a fair trial, effective investigations of ill-treatment cases, preventive measures, the fight against cybercrime, organised and terror-related crimes and corruption. The capacity of up to 1000 defence lawyers to play a more active role in the criminal justice system will also be strengthened and 350 liaison officers and chief clerks will be trained on international judicial cooperation in criminal matters.

HELP II Programme

The European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (the HELP Programme) supports member states to comply with Council of Europe standards, by enhancing judges, prosecutors and lawyers' capacity to apply the ECHR at national level, in accordance with the 2012 Brighton Declaration.

A large peer-to-peer European Human Rights Training Network (the HELP Network) has been created, aimed to promote an improved coordination among international and national institutions on human rights training initiatives for legal professionals and to share best practices on curricula, training materials and training methodologies, identifying priority themes for training activities, also providing advice on how to enhance the capacity of lawyers to comply with the admissibility criteria in applications submitted to the ECtHR, increasing the quality of well-founded applications.

The HELP Network is made up of representatives from National Training Institutions for Judges and Prosecutors (NTIs) and Bar Associations (BAs) of all 47 member states of the Council of Europe. Every year a plenary conference is organised and a Consultative Board composed of 6 members is elected. International associations of judges and lawyers are also partners of the HELP Network.

The HELP website is open to all interested users and provides free on-line access to a wide range of training resources on the ECHR. They include training manuals on ECHR methodology and key concepts, as well as handbooks, standard curricula, course outlines, presentations, case studies and e-learning courses on the different articles and themes of the ECHR.

Just to make some examples more strictly linked to 2013 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, new curricula and training materials have been developed both on Anti-discrimination -including issues related to national minorities and hate crimes- and on Family Law -including prevention of violence against women and children and gender equality-.

National experts are appointed in many countries as HELP Focal Points, to co-operate with NTIs and BAs, organising national events focused on disseminating the use of the HELP resources among national legal professionals. National pages in national languages have also been created and made available on the HELP website.

The HELP methodologies and resources are systematically used in all CoE capacity building activities on the ECHR, organised in the beneficiary countries, including within the framework of EU/CoE Joint Programmes.

See: <http://www.coe.int/help>

In 2012/2013 in co-operation with the Judges' and Prosecutors' Training Centres (JPTCs) of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, eight 2-day capacity building seminars were held for judges and prosecutors from both Entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina on various topics related to the ECHR, including the balance of rights under the ECHR, freedom of speech and protection of private life, the use of the ECtHR database (HUDOC). The topics of the seminars were chosen by both JPTCs based on the current needs of judges. In most cases, the seminars were attended by judges and prosecutors from both Entities, which enhanced professional communication between them.

A distance-learning course on "Community sanctions as one of the measures against prisons overcrowding" was launched for judges and prosecutors from RS, and two more distance-learning courses ("Family law and the ECHR" and "Child-friendly justice") are now under way with participation of judges from the Federation. Court staff from the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina also takes part in the mentioned distance learning courses together with judges and prosecutors.

In total, more than 150 judges and prosecutors from Bosnia and Herzegovina were participated in these capacity building activities, which were organised in synergy with the CoE's European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP Programme), which aims at supporting the CoE member states in implementing the ECHR at the national level, in accordance with the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2004) 4, the 2010 Interlaken Declaration and the 2012 Brighton Declaration

see: www.coe.int/t/dghl/cooperation

Capacity building on independent judicial systems and strengthening the role of judicial professions

Capacity building on independent judicial systems and strengthening the role of the judicial professions aims to improve the independence, transparency and efficiency of the judicial systems in CoE member states. The activities of the European Union and Council of Europe Joint Programmes (EU-CoE JPs) aim to promote the conditions in which the rule of law and its principles are respected. They focus on the way in which the relevant structures and institutions operate, seeking to ensure that they respect the requirements of the rule of law and of the specific treaty obligations of the member states.

Capacity-building for judicial professionals and judicial systems is based on the CoE

findings, in particular by the ECtHR, the Venice Commission, the CEPEJ, the CCJE and the execution of judgments of the ECtHR. It targets the beneficiary countries' fulfillment of their accession commitments and the obligations arising out of their CoE membership. It is this CoE *acquis* regarding the rule of law principles, which makes it possible to pursue a high degree of consensus among member states and which has resulted in the CoE being recognised as the main organisation in the field of independent and efficient judiciary.

Co-operation activities organised by the CoE have led, inter alia, to the following results:

- a) providing legislative expertise to ensure that domestic regulations conform to the requirements of the rule of law (in particular the independence of the judiciary from executive and legislative powers);
- b) assisting in creating a legal framework for the functioning of legal professions, strengthening their role and status.
- c) strengthening high judicial councils and judicial academies, drafting training curricula and selecting lecturing staff; improving the transparency of judicial systems;
- d) improving transparency in the selection procedure of judges and prosecutors;
- e) putting in place or strengthening effective systems of free legal aid;
- f) strengthening the administration of justice through the training of judges, prosecutors, lawyers, as well as auxiliary court personnel (clerks, registrars) and bailiffs;
- g) improving the efficiency of court management through the introduction of pilot court management practices;
- h) providing technical advice on how to improve administration and the computerisation of courts;

Large-scale projects have been implemented in Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine. In addition, since January 2011 the Council of Europe has implemented a European Union funded project which aims at supporting the newly established system of appeal in civil and criminal matters in the Russian Federation, which will become effective as of January 2012 and January 2013 respectively. The objective is to advise the Russian authorities on organisational and legal measures which may help smoothen the impact of the reform.

See: www.coe.int/t/t/dghl/cooperation/capacitybuilding/

Capacity-building for law enforcement officials

The case law of the ECtHR related to allegations of ill-treatment by the police and the findings of the CPT during country visits have identified the need for further assistance to law enforcement institutions in order to increase their professional skills in line with the CoE and CPT standards.

Particular attention to the reform of the law enforcement institutions in Moldova is being paid within the framework of the Joint Programme between the European Union and the Council of Europe "Democracy Support Programme in the Republic of Moldova". Through its relevant components a number of activities have been organised in co-operation with the Moldovan Police Academy and the National Institute of Justice, comprising a conference on the reform of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and police, an

assessment of the laws on police and carabinieri as to their compliance with European standards including a round table to discuss the assessment, cascade training seminars for approximately 200 judges and prosecutors and for 450 policemen all around the country on combating ill-treatment and impunity, with reference to Article 3 of the ECHR and the case law of the ECtHR in respect of Moldova, on the Moldovan legal system of prevention and combating ill-treatment and the CPT findings on ill-treatment and impunity during visits to Moldova; workshops on riot control for law enforcement officials, on the relationship between media and law enforcement agencies, on project design and identification of priority projects for increasing the capacity building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs as well as a study visit for officials from the Moldovan Police Academy and Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Netherlands.

Under the Joint Programme between the Council of Europe and the European Union on “Improving the Efficiency of the Turkish Criminal Justice System”, 25 law enforcement officers have been selected to join the pool of trainers on effective investigations of ill-treatment cases, preventive measures, the fight against cybercrime, organised and terror-related crimes and corruption.

A multilateral workshop on the dissemination of the key principles of the European Code of Police Ethics has taken place at the COE headquarters with the active participation of the OSCE. Contacts are being established with the OSCE and the Fundamental Rights Agency to explore the possibility of developing an e-learning module for law enforcement officials in the field of policing and human rights.

See: www.coe.int/t/dghl/cooperation

Support for national prison systems

The CoE is assisting a number of beneficiary countries to improve the management of the prison system in order to provide better conditions and treatment for prisoners and guarantee the protection of their human rights in line with the CoE and CPT standards.

The prison reform in Turkey is being supported through the implementation of the Joint Programme (JP) between the Council of Europe and the European Union “Dissemination of Model Prison Practices and Promotion of the Prison Reform in Turkey”. Among the activities organised in the framework of this JP could be mentioned the 35 two-day training sessions organised for approximately 7000 prison staff in Turkish medium and high security level prisons on the European Prison Rules and other European standards in the penitentiary field aiming to support the Turkish authorities to build up a sustainable capacity for putting such standards into practice; 5 workshops organised with the participation of Turkish Human Rights NGOs and the Turkish MoJ to draw up a strategic plan for improving the co-operation between the public sector and NGOs in the penitentiary field (a draft strategy paper is already available for final consultation with the NGOs); the preparation by CoE experts of a guidance manual for teachers in prison education in Turkey and the training provided by the CoE experts to approximately 350 teachers on the content of the manual; the publication and the distribution of 20000 copies of the Booklet on the European Standards in the Penitentiary Field to the staff of all 90 prisons, in support of the above-mentioned activities organised in the framework of the JP.

A two-year project "Support for Prison Reform in Ukraine", financed by SIDA, is being implemented since March in co-operation with the Ukrainian State Penitentiary Service, the MoJ and other relevant partners. During the ongoing inception phase of this project, the main priorities are being identified through careful needs assessment by a "Stakeholders Platform". The issues being examined are strengthening of the probation service aiming to reduce prison overcrowding, supporting the reintegration of the offenders into the society and reducing reoffending, as well as developing the professional skills and management capacities of the prison staff for the protection of human rights in prisons. Health care provision is also under consideration.

The CoE has recently provided support to the Ministry of Justice of Armenia to improve the legal basis related to the enforcement of community sanctions and measures and the functioning of a probation service, including a CoE expert opinion as well.

Staff of the Department of the Federal Service for Execution of Sentences in the Chechen Republic and representatives of the Chechen Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights have been trained on human rights and the social rehabilitation of the offenders through pre-release programmes

Ways of improving the conditions and the treatment of life-sentenced and other long-term prisoners, young offenders and women prisoners and the provision of health care in prisons in Moldova have been on the focus of the bilateral co-operation activities organised in co-operation with the Department of Penitentiary Institutions of the Ministry of Justice of Moldova.

A Multilateral meeting on "Improving detention conditions and health care in prisons" took place in the CoE with representatives of the Prison Administrations and prison medical staff from eleven countries (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine). The most efficient ways of improving the detention conditions and the provision of health care in prisons and of applying medical ethics and best practices in Europe in line with the Council of Europe and CPT standards were elaborated at the meeting.

See: <http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/cooperation/capacitybuilding>