

Evaluation of the Cooperation Programmes

Management Board response

Overall appreciation

In the first semester of 2021, GICHD will undertake a mid-term review of its Strategy 2019 – 2022. A series of external evaluations will inform this review and subsequently support and assist GICHD in its internal reflection relating to the validation of its past, current and future work. One of these evaluations aims to assess GICHD's ability to facilitate dialogue and cooperation operationalised through its cooperation programmes. For that purpose, the Centre contracted the RISKey GmbH to review the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, coherence and sustainability of the two main existing cooperation frameworks – the Arab Regional Cooperation Programme (ARCP) and the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Regional Cooperation Programme (EECCA RCP). The period that was covered by the evaluation is 2017 – 2019 and the evaluation has been conducted between October and December 2020.

The GICHD Management Board (MB) welcomes the submission and completion of the “Final Report Cooperation Programmes Evaluation”. The MB is fully satisfied with the evaluation process and appreciates the interaction with the evaluator during this process including the final meeting and presentation of findings and recommendations.

The MB is pleased to note that “the relevance and effectiveness of the Cooperation Programmes could both be confirmed. Stakeholders highly appreciate the initiative and acknowledged that without the programmes, cooperation and dialogue would not exist among national authorities in the relevant region”.

The report includes a series of recommendations of how the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the Cooperation Programmes could be improved. The MB is committed to act upon the recommendations stemming from the evaluation and will follow up on each of them as described below. Recommendation three is of particular importance and the revision of the cooperation programme's strategy will take into account the other recommendations, in particular recommendation 4 and 5 to develop virtual activities. The latter is a recommendation which is valid beyond the cooperation programmes and will be followed up across the GICHD.

Specific recommendations

<p style="text-align: center;">Recommendations</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GICHD Management Board response</p>
<p>1. For easier future monitoring and evaluation of the Cooperation Programmes' performance; objectives, indicators, targets and relevant reporting should be consistent, comprehensive and easy to understand.</p> <p>It should be considered whether a handy reporting format could be used to produce an annual report for the ARCP and the EECCA RCP (e.g., Powerpoint presentations). This would enhance internal and external stakeholders' understanding of the Cooperation Programmes purpose and achievements.</p> <p>In conjunction with that, indicators should be meaningful, better balance quantitative and qualitative expectations (e.g., what is more important: the number or the relevance and quality of translated documentation) and most importantly, it has to be clear what methodology is used to measure relevant achievements (e.g., what is meant by 'adopting' good practice).</p>	<p>The GICHD welcomes the recommendation on improving the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the RCP performance.</p> <p>The CPs evaluation covers two GICHD strategy periods: 2015-2018 and the current 2019-2022 with two different associated adopted RBM systems. The GICHD RBM system has evolved over the years. CPs is responsible for outcome 5 and a service line in this current strategy 2019-2022. The project outputs, indicators, targets have been better defined with this new RBM system to feed to the outcome level reporting. In 2020, and as we learn and adapt, there have been adjustments made to certain indicators, but there is room for improvement. At the GICHD mid-term strategy review, the Management Board (MB) will discuss this further. The term 'adopting good practice'¹ is a pertinent question and one that is relevant to the overall GICHD strategy.</p>
<p>2. For future strategy development and activity planning, GICHD should consider both the life cycle of beneficiaries' MAPs and the life cycle of Cooperation Programmes. It should be acknowledged that linguistic outreach and capacity building may be more important in</p>	<p>The GICHD agrees on the need to recognise the life cycle of beneficiaries as criteria for activity planning. CPs had been over the</p>

¹ The current strategy outcome 5: 'Regional cooperation furthers the exchange and dissemination of good practice.' Whilst this has been slightly adjusted in our outlook reporting to be 'Regional cooperation furthers the exchange, dissemination and **adoption** of good practice.'

<p>the early phases of a life cycle, while cooperation and networking (and with that the enhancement of operational efficiency) becomes more important in the mature state of MAPs and Cooperation Programmes. A concept regarding which linguistic efforts and capacity building activities should be enabled over time is required and equally, how cooperation and networking can be fostered beyond Cooperation Programmes activities. Also, it is necessary to clarify how beneficiaries in different phases of their MAP life cycle can benefit most from the Cooperation Programmes, but also what their duties and responsibilities are.</p> <p>Benefits and duties should be well-balanced and distributed among beneficiaries, e.g., with regard to hosting activities or being able to participate in bilateral visits.</p>	<p>years working on targeted and focused set of beneficiaries based on the needs, conventions obligations and the nature of contamination.</p> <p>The GICHD – LMAC ARCP MoU is an example of where clear duties and responsibilities are stipulated at the regional level. The GICHD consider partners to be equally beneficiary and rotates location of delivery between the programmes where security allows.</p> <p>The GICHD will take up this recommendation and further enhance and facilitate bilateral visits depending on need and availability of resources.</p>
<p>3. In conjunction with recommendation 2, the Cooperation Programme initiative needs a clear long-term strategy that clearly identifies the desirable end state of the cooperation programmes as well as their purpose, demarcation and ultimate objective/outcome of the ARCP and the EECCA RCP. In addition, relevant multi-year and yearly objectives should be identified in order to ensure progress towards the identified strategy.</p> <p>The strategy should also include considerations whether the Cooperation Programmes initiative should be used more to leverage other GICHD activities or not.</p> <p>Finally, the strategy and relevant plans have to be introduced and communicated to internal and external stakeholders.</p>	<p>The GICHD recognises that the existing (<i>internal</i>) Sub-Strategy document for Outcome 5 could be updated and revisited following the evaluation. The update will aim to clarify the desirable end state of the programmes and outcome and to explore further the recommendation to leverage other GICHD activities.</p>

<p>4. In order to increase cooperation and networking beyond regular Cooperation Programmes activities, GICHD should consider establishing and providing a virtual platform that allows easy, timely and informal exchange of information. Furthermore, it may be helpful to investigate in more depth, what hinders beneficiaries to engage more with each other beyond scheduled activities and whether a virtual platform would effectively foster cooperation and exchange.</p> <p>Questions that need to be further investigated: Do beneficiaries not wish to cooperate more or what hinders them doing so? Are there any restrictions that complicate cooperation (e.g., protocols to be followed)? Is there not enough mutual trust and appetite to learn from each other? Etc.</p>	<p>The GICHD welcomes this recommendation to increase cooperation aspects and dialogue beyond the formal activities. Especially during COVID-19 times, CPs will explore this further for instance reviving the ARCP and EECCA websites for inclusion of blogs as one of the possibilities.</p> <p>Recently, less informal means for exchange between beneficiaries and GICHD have been used as virtual means for exchange e.g. ARCP created a (WhatsApp) group to discuss the ongoing ARCP remote Gender Equality and Inclusion course.</p>
<p>5. GICHD should aim to increase the proportion of online activities. This would help the Centre to get back on track during the COVID-19 pandemic and with that, to meet stakeholders unchanged expectations. It could also help to increase the overall number of activities and further improve the efficiency of the Cooperation Programmes initiative.</p> <p>Also, for physical activities, GICHD should focus on implementing them predominantly in Arabic and Russian and continue to use translators, if facilitators are not Arabic or Russian speakers.</p>	<p>The CPs welcomes this recommendation and will explore it beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect. This option reduces flight costs, is environmentally friendly, but it will not replace totally the face-to-face and the importance of meeting our partners.</p> <p>In 2021, there will be an increase in these remote activities, especially with the establishment of Centre wide remote platform. CPs had launched the first remote course in Arabic and English and based on recommendation and needs assessment from partners, it had been stretched over 5 months. In 2021, EECCA RCP is planning three regional events (2 remote, one face-to-face). These events will continue to use translated material and interpreters in Arabic and Russian.</p>