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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

Accompanying the document

**REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

assessing the implementation and achievements of the 2014-2020 justice programme

{COM(2022) 121 final} - {SWD(2022) 64 final}

Background

This staff working document accompanies the report from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions in accordance with the obligation specified in Article 14.2(c) of the legal base of the justice programme¹. The Regulation requires the European Commission to provide the European Parliament and the Council with an ex-post evaluation report for programme by 31 December 2021. The report shall assess the long-term impact and the sustainability of the programme's effects, to inform a decision on a subsequent justice programme. In 2021, however, a considerable number of projects, around 30 %, remain still ongoing. This situation is also reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused the extension of the duration of several projects.

For these reasons, and to have a meaningful evaluation of the programme's long-term results and impacts, the ex- post evaluation will be carried out in two parts. This staff working document and the report represent the first part of the evaluation. It is based on the currently available data and assesses the programme's achievements so far. While the new justice programme 2021-2027 was already adopted, based amongst others on the interim evaluation of the justice programme 2014-2020, this first part of the ex-post evaluation of the previous programme will be of added value to shed light on potential areas for improvement in the new justice programme's implementation phase. The second part of the evaluation will be carried out at a later stage, once all final data will be available and together with the interim evaluation of the succeeding justice programme (2021-2027). This second part will assess the long-term impacts and sustainability of the programme's effects and will provide recommendations for the Multiannual Financial Framework after 2027, as appropriate.

The staff working document outlines the justice programme's objectives, its implementation and intervention logic as well as the needs it addresses. The staff working document covers the evaluation questions concerning the programme's effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence, EU added value, equity and scope for simplification. In terms of geographical scope, the evaluation covers all participating countries, namely all EU Member States, except for Denmark and the UK, and when relevant Albania and Montenegro.

Description of the justice programme

The justice programme focuses on the creation of a European area of justice in four areas corresponding to its specific objectives: judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters; access to justice for all; judicial training and drugs prevention policy. Compared to its predecessor programmes, its specific objectives tackle the issues from a cross-cutting perspective. This has resulted in a more streamlined Programme providing flexible support to stakeholders. The European Commission implemented the programme via direct management.

Implementation of the programme

¹ REGULATION (EU) No 1382/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 establishing a Justice Programme for the period 2014 to 2020

The programme's initial budget for 2014-2020 is **EUR 377,6m**. In total **118 calls** for proposals were launched between 2014-2020. Most of these calls covered the judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters' specific objective, with 40 calls. Overall, **569 action grants** and operating grants were awarded throughout the programme. Training activities were a key component of funded projects. Between 2014 and 2018, there was a relatively strong prevalence of higher secondary education institutions among beneficiaries. However, from 2018, public institutions and non-profit organisations became the programme's most frequent beneficiaries. Procurement was an important funding mechanism for a number of specific objectives, amounting to a total of **417 contracts** over the entire period. In total, approximately **EUR 81,7 million** was allocated to procurement contracts and services. The most common type of procurement was information and communication technology tools and other IT-related activities, such as the maintenance of the European Criminal Records Information System.

Evaluation results

Based on the results of the evaluation, the justice programme continues to be **relevant to the (changing) needs** of stakeholders and the general population. This was ensured via its flexible programming nature, including the annual prioritisation of emerging policy needs and issues. Overall, based on the collected qualitative evidence, the implementation of the justice programme was **effective** and contributed to the achievement of the objectives. In particular, this success was due to the high level of alignment of the funded projects with the needs of the groups they target. Vice-versa, the funded organisations, were relevant to achieving the programme's specific objectives. These factors, combined with the high quality of projects, ensured the programme's effectiveness.

The conducted research shows that the projects were largely successful in implementing the planned activities and **almost all finalised projects have achieved the expected results**.

Progress has been also tracked by the indicators identified in the Regulation in particular:

- the cumulative number (not just through the justice programme) of legal professionals receiving training, on EU law or law of another Member State, including civil justice, criminal justice and fundamental rights. The 2020 target of 700 000 trainees was achieved ahead of schedule, with over one million legal practitioners trained in 2018.

Overall, the evidence gathered suggests that the justice programme has **contributed to the creation** of a European area of justice. Qualitative evidence collected by the study suggests that **benefits of the programme outweigh the costs**.

The evaluation also identified a number of areas for improvement for successor programmes, such as: (i) a closer alignment of the timing of the application cycle with stakeholders' needs; (ii) improvement of the monitoring framework in order to more systematically collect information on outputs, results and targets achieved; (iii) targeted activities to foster a wider geographical spread of funds across participating countries; (iv) dedicated initiatives to facilitate the application process for organisations that sometimes lack the capacity, expertise and experience to draft quality proposals, including with a view to designing non-underspending projects; (v) stronger attention to integrating cross-sectional topics such as gender mainstreaming, children's rights and where possible the rights of people with a handicap into the justice programme.