

Justice Programme 2014-2020

2011/0369(COD) - 29/06/2018 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented a report on the mid-term results obtained by the 'Justice' programme 2014-2020 and the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation of the programme.

The report is based on the findings of the evaluation prepared by the European Commission and supported by an external evaluation. The evaluation reference period corresponds to the first half of the implementation of the programme, **between 2014 and mid-2017**.

The objective of the 'Justice' programme 2014-2020 is to contribute to the further establishment of a **European area of justice** based on mutual recognition and trust, in particular by (i) promoting judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters, (ii) supporting judicial training for legal professionals with the aim of fostering a common legal and judicial culture, (iii) facilitating effective access to justice for all and (iv) supporting initiatives in the field of drugs policy.

The main conclusions of the report are as follows:

Relevance: the report confirms the relevance of the programme in contributing to upholding EU values (such as the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and the effectiveness of the justice) and in supporting Member States to achieve more effective justice systems. Since its very beginning, the Programme has shown its potential in fostering the acquisition of durable legal knowledge and competencies in the Member States.

One of the key features of the programme has been its **ability to adapt and modify the priorities in light of emerging needs**. For instance, following a string of terrorist attacks in Europe, two calls were issued to combat the radicalisation of inmates in prison. This can be achieved thanks to the **unique structure** of the Justice programme.

The specific objective concerning the initiatives in the field of drug policies is sometimes difficult to reconcile with other programme priorities. However, in general, **the needs identified when the programme was adopted are still relevant**, in particular the general objective of pursuing the establishment of a European area of justice based on mutual recognition and trust.

EU added value: over the years, the programme has demonstrated its high EU added value both in its positive impact on participants and target groups and in its role as a complement to other EU funding instruments and policy initiatives. The EU added value of the Justice programme is evident, above all, in the **promotion of transnational projects with a European dimension** to tackle cross-border issues and in the provision of financial resources to fund activities in key areas that are not necessarily high on the agenda of Member States due to lack of political will (according to stakeholders, this is particularly true for the specific objective on access to justice).

The programme also enables beneficiaries to **work with partners in other Member States**, which has increased their knowledge of the issues covered by the programme, broadened their expertise and given them access to examples of good practice and tools developed in other Member States.

Moreover, the fact that **judicial training** figures more prominently in the programme's intervention logic is an important step forward for the European added value of the programme.

Possible improvements: in the framework of the preparation of the future EU budget and funding programmes, the Commission based on the findings of the mid-term evaluation will address all aspects that have been identified for improvement, in particular:

- **the increase of the Programme's basin of potential recipients of the actions:** the Programme could include additional target groups that are relevant to the achievement of its general objective. These groups include staff in regulatory agencies, young judicial professionals and students and judicial professionals in candidate countries and countries within the scope of the European Neighbourhood policy;
- **the revision of the monitoring indicators:** the Programme-specific indicators are adequate to monitor progress towards the objectives of the Programme, but sometimes they are difficult to measure or need some improvements;
- **the achievement of a more geographic balance among the beneficiaries:** the programme did not involve all Member States homogeneously. Indeed, about 25% of the beneficiaries come from either Italy or Belgium, and about half of the partner organisations come from five countries. The remaining 50% are organisations from the remaining 21 Member States;
- **the strengthening of synergies with other relevant EU funding programmes and initiatives:** this is the case, for instance, of the drugs policy area, where the coordination with the Health for Growth Programme could be increased.

Improvements are also needed in the area of **equity**. The evaluation showed that **gender equality** is rarely a major theme in the projects developed. The majority of respondents agreed to integrate **child rights** into the programme. The priority of the rights of people with **disabilities**, on the other hand, seems to be lower. The programme should strive in the future to distribute its resources in a more balanced manner across the different target groups of beneficiaries and Member States.