

**Action Plan in response to
the EP Discharge Decision
for 2018**

Document number: FO.REPO.008-1
Approval date: 26/08/2020



European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
(CEPOL)

**Follow-up Report of the Executive Director on
measures taken in light of the European Parliament's
recommendations (Discharge 2018)**

(Article 107 of the Framework Financial Regulation)

<Final>

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Document/record ref. no.	Status	Date		
RP.INCO.008-1	Final	26/08/2020		
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CEPOL Action Plan in response to the EP Discharge Decision for Financial Year 2018¹

OBSERVATION OF THE DISCHARGE AUTHORITY	RESPONSE AND MEASURES TAKEN BY CEPOL	STATUS/TARGET DATE
<p>Performance</p> <p>6. Welcomes the fact that the Agency continues to cooperate closely with the Justice and Home Affairs agencies' network, and the nine agencies which comprise it (including in particular the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency); notes that those agencies share training and organise courses; strongly encourages the Agency to actively seek further and broader cooperation with all of the Union agencies; urges the Agency to explore the possibilities of sharing of resources on overlapping tasks (such as IT and other services) with agencies in the Agency's proximity, notably the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in Vienna and the European Labour Authority in Bratislava;</p>	<p>CEPOL is continuously exploring the possibilities of sharing of resources on overlapping tasks (such as IT and other services) with other Agencies, especially with European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), which is also located in Budapest.</p> <p>To this end, a working agreement has been signed in 2014 based on which cooperation takes place in the following fields: sharing facilities (e.g. meeting rooms for joint trainings for staff), sharing expertise and capabilities in ICT including mutual placement of back up servers, joint staff training, joint development of a disaster recovery solution, support for the implementation of a document management and archiving system at CEPOL, mutual support for recruitment and procurement procedures.</p> <p>In 2014 CEPOL outsourced its accounting services to the European Commission, therefore the EC Accounting Officer provides all services required by Articles 49 and 50 of the Framework Financial Regulation applicable to Agencies. The outsourcing arrangement produced positive outcomes since established, resulting in continuously favourable opinions on reliability of accounts from the external auditor.</p> <p>Since 2017, when CEPOL obtained ISO 9001:2017 certification, the regular internal quality audits are implemented with the support of the Lead Quality Auditor from the European Maritime Safety Agency, generating cost savings and exchange of practices on quality management system.</p>	<p>Continuous</p>

¹ P9_TA-PROV(2020)0109 Discharge 2018: EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)

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	<p>CEPOL will contact the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in Vienna and the European Labour Authority in Bratislava to analyse jointly options for closer cooperation to generate synergies.</p> <p>In the context of the training contact group of the Justice and Home Affairs Agencies CEPOL has repeatedly recommended to build up synergies towards the Electronic Learning platforms that are used by the different agencies. EMCDDA has expressed a strong interest in this regard.</p>	
<p>Performance</p> <p>7. Calls on the Commission to conduct a feasibility study in order to assess the possibility of (if not fully merging) at the very least setting up shared synergies with Europol; calls upon the Commission to evaluate both scenarios, namely the transfer of the Agency to the Europol headquarters in The Hague, and the transfer of the Europol headquarters to the Agency's headquarters in Budapest; notes that such an act would mean sharing corporate and support services and the management of common premises, as well as shared ICT, telecommunications and internet-based infrastructures, thereby saving huge amounts of money which would be used to fund both agencies further;</p>	<p>Although this action is to be addressed at the level of the EC, Agency's contribution to such a feasibility study is vital as far as any transfer would affect Agency's business continuity, services to the Members States and currently employed staff. In addition, we would like to provide a few remarks about current cooperation with Europol and the status of CEPOL's premises in Budapest.</p> <p>CEPOL has an active Working Agreement with Europol based on which, very close and efficient cooperation is taking place concerning the organisation of joint activities and providing input to residential activities and e-learning tools. Europol's experts contributed significantly to CEPOL's residential activities in a complementary manner and we acknowledge Europol's continuous involvement in implementation of CEPOL's Work Programme. Europol is equally strongly engaged into the analysis and identification of training needs based on their operational knowledge.</p> <p>Cooperation takes place on a daily basis, via the usual means of communications, including videoconference for larger audiences. Events are organised at both CEPOL and Europol headquarters depending on the nature of the event and business needs.</p> <p>Concerning CEPOL's headquarter, Hungary put at the disposal of CEPOL a building for a period of at least 10 years free of any charges, including the cost of utilities. The premises are owned by the Hungarian State (held in trust by Mol NOK-ITC), and were handed over as of 1 September 2014. In accordance with the headquarter agreement, no later than 2022, Hungary and CEPOL</p>	<p>N/A (observation addressed to EC)</p>

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	<p>may enter into negotiations as to the conditions governing the further utilisation of the premises.</p> <p>At present, the CEPOL staff numbers (including staff contracted for projects granted to CEPOL, interim staff as well as staff made available by the Hungarian authorities, such as receptionists, security, building maintenance and cleaning) has surpassed the maximum capacity as originally foreseen for the building.</p> <p>Therefore, CEPOL Management has set up a channel of communication with the Hungarian authorities to investigate the possibilities for a new headquarters with additional functionalities and capacity compared to the current building.</p>	
<p>Performance</p> <p>8. Observes that, following the five year periodical external evaluation which was concluded in January 2016, and for which the Agency had to implement corrective actions by the end of 2018, the evaluation report was adopted by the Agency and incorporated 17 recommendations covering five areas relating to the Agency's structure and working practices; notes that since the adoption of the action plan, 24 activities have been completed, 3 activities relating to further development of E-net are still ongoing, 4 activities are no longer considered relevant and 1 activity has been put on hold;</p>	<p>CEPOL's five-year evaluation report was adopted by the 35th Governing Board² in the Hague and incorporated 17 recommendations, covering five areas, regarding CEPOL's structure and working practices.</p> <p>The plan elaborated by the Executive Director identified 32 actions addressing all the MB's 17 recommendations.</p> <p>One of the pending activities related to further development of e-net (LEED platform) was addressed in April 2020.</p> <p>Overall, since the adoption of the action plan: 32 activities have been completed (of which 7 activities are no longer considered relevant as they has been overtaken by events and will be addressed in a broader context connected to EQF³ and further ISO certification of CEPOL services).</p> <p>Having in view that EQF and further ISO certification are long term developments scheduled in the Single Programming Document (multi-annual section and work programme), further progress achieved shall be reported via regular established channels</p>	Complete

² Decision 11/2016/GB of the Governing Board of the European Police College adopting the Five-Year External Evaluation of the European Police College. Adopted by the Governing Board on 24 May 2016

³ European Qualifications Framework

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	<p>(progress report to MB and Consolidated Annual Report), therefore the related action points have been closed in the context of the 5 years evaluation action plan.</p>	
<p>Performance 9. Encourages the Agency to pursue the digitalisation of its services;</p>	<p>In 2019, CEPOL Management Board has adopted the Comprehensive Strategy towards the Digitalisation of the Agency, to address the digitalisation needs of CEPOL and the core business services, enabling the Agency to follow up on the latest technological trends and provide advanced and innovative training. Full implementation of the strategy depends on the availability of respective human and financial resources, subject to approval by the Budgetary Authorities.</p> <p>The objective of this future-facing strategy is to provide a holistic long-term vision, up to five years, on the development of technology-enhanced business model and learning system that is in line with CEPOL's regulation, allowing the Agency be at the forefront of Law Enforcement training in Europe.</p> <p>To enhance the online learning experience of users, and as a first action under the digitalisation strategy, on 30 April 2020, CEPOL released its brand new eLearning platform, LEEd. CEPOL's novel online training system has been engineered to be simple to use yet powerful, with built in customisation capabilities, a powerful search engine as part of its core infrastructure and advanced data functionalities for streamlined reporting and easy track of learners' progress. In addition to the training offer, the platform offers research and science resources in the form of a repository of documents with browsing and filter capabilities by categories. LEEd also includes a forum for the users to communicate among themselves and publish or modify content; a connection with the EBSCO Discovery Service to consult e-books and e-journals; and a space for conference management. On top, the platform also allows closer collaboration with other partners and organisations from the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) agencies' network through a new Virtual Training Centre. This new e-learning environment is made available to iOS and Android phone users through a mobile app.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

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	<p>Further digitalization of support processes in the Agency took place via introduction of e-recruitment which is in place since 2017 and common EC HR tool SYSPER (1st modules in operation as of February 2020).</p> <p>CEPOL has initiated in 2020 the process to implement ARES as document management system. The partner agency EIT provides direct support for this project to CEPOL in Budapest. Subject to the necessary contract with the European Commission it is planned that this should be realised in first quarter 2021.</p> <p>In 2019 CEPOL has implemented open calls for tender using both e-tendering and e-submission and also accepts electronic offers for negotiated procedures, currently (still) falling outside the scope of the e-Procurement suite.</p> <p>In 2019 CEPOL has also implemented a travel booking platform (Symphony).</p> <p>CEPOL has signed in 2020 the necessary working arrangements to implement an electronic workflow for Finance (so called Speedwell System). It is planned that this will be functional by 1st of September.</p> <p>Since June 2020 CEPOL utilises the functionality of the e-recruitment system for the contracting of short term experts.</p> <p>The workflow concerning invoices for short-term experts was moved at the same time to the e-invoicing system.</p> <p>The workflow for the submission of cost claims from CEPOL Framework Partner will be, with the currently ongoing call for new Framework Partnerships 2021-2025, shifted to the e-invoicing system.</p>	
<p>Performance</p> <p>10. Welcomes the fact that the Court has declared the transactions underlying the annual accounts of CEPOL for the financial year 2018 to be legal and regular in all material respects and that its financial position on 31 December 2018 is fairly represented; recalls that the budget of the Agency increased from EUR 9 to 10 million (+11 %) while its staff decreased from 53 to 51 (-4 %) compared to 2017; deplores however</p>	<p>CEPOL welcomes the remark of the European Parliament and appreciates its support towards strengthening CEPOL's resources.</p> <p>In the last years, the number of officials taking part in CEPOL training activities has continuously grown, in spite of a budget which remained essentially stable, as no significant increase of financial or</p>	Continuous

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<p>the fact that CEPOL had to refuse numerous valid and legitimate training requests from Member States in crucial areas of law enforcement because of budgetary restraints; is concerned that CEPOL currently cannot sufficiently cover the demand from Member States regarding education and training for law enforcement communities in the Union and its neighbourhood;</p>	<p>human resources was granted to the agency to implement fully its enhanced mandate that came into application in July 2016.</p> <p>In its Decision 08-2020⁴ MB emphasised the importance of providing the Agency with adequate resources (both financial and human) for the implementation of its mandated tasks as well as addressing the ever-growing demand from the law enforcement community to provide more specific training and capacity building activities.</p> <p>Successive expert analyses⁵ of CEPOL have identified that the agency operates with a deficit of human resources to carry out its tasks.</p> <p>Agency has repetitively requested additional budget and staff to enable full implementation of its mandate and will continue to justify its needs via the programming documents; however, this is subject to approval by the EC and Budgetary Authorities.</p>	
<p>Staff policy</p> <p>12. Observes that, as a consequence of its relocation from the United Kingdom to Hungary and the lower correction coefficient applied to staff salaries as a result, the staff turnover has been high and geographical balance has not always been maintained as applications from Member States other than the host country have decreased; notes that in 2018, the Agency continued to receive a significant number of applications from Hungarian citizens and host Member State nationals continued to be overrepresented in the total number of staff; observes that the legal dispute regarding the relocation was closed by the judgment of the General Court in 2018, and the initial judgment was confirmed; highlights that a low correction coefficient applied to staff salaries may create difficult situations which may hamper an agency's ability to effectively perform its daily duties; stresses that agencies located in countries where a low correction coefficient is applied should receive further support from the Commission for implementing complementary measures in order to make them more attractive to</p>	<p>CEPOL welcomes the remark of the European Parliament and appreciates its initiative towards addressing the salary correction coefficients.</p> <p>In 2019 CEPOL continued to receive a significant number of applications from Hungarian citizens This however does not impact on the quality of applications received and the Agency's ability to recruit suitable candidates.</p> <p>Host Member State nationals are still overrepresented in total number of staff. At the end of 2019, there were 27 Hungarian citizens (39%) working for the agency, from a total of 69 staff (TA, CA & SNE - CEPOL establishment plan and project related staff).</p> <p>In 2019 the staff turnover continued to be relatively high, therefore CEPOL continued to implement staff retention and business</p>	<p>N/A (observation addressed to EC)</p>

⁴ Decision of the Management Board 08/2020/MB on establishing the analysis and assessment of the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2019

⁵ Five Year Evaluation of CEPOL published in 2011, Study on the amendment of the Council Decision 20905/681/JHA setting up CEPOL activity. Final Report 21.4.2012. GHK Consultants

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current and prospective staff; calls on the Commission to assess the impact and viability of applying salary correction coefficients in the future;	continuity measures. The Agency used a number of interim staff and SNEs to fill in for staff absence, until recruitment of statutory staff was completed and continued reclassification of staff and functions, maintaining the social arrangement (e.g. schooling for staff's children), teleworking and flexitime arrangements.	
Staff policy 13. Recalls the suggestion of the Court that vacancy notices be published on the website of the European Personnel Selection Office in order to increase publicity; understands the Agency's reply concerning the high translation costs triggered by such publication; furthermore acknowledges that the Agency in 2018 also published all vacancies on the interagency job board developed by the EU Agencies Network; reiterates however, that (to avoid incurring high translation costs) the Agency should take a first step in this direction and make use of the capability to publish titles of such vacancies in all the official languages of the Union with a link to the full text in the English language only.	Considering the changes in publication policy of the EPSO, the Agency shall re-visit its procedures to establish to what extent it can make use of the capability to publish titles of such vacancies in all the official languages of the Union with a link to the full text in English language only.	Ongoing
Staff policy 14. Notes with satisfaction that an even gender balance was achieved in 2018 with respect to senior management positions (3 men and 3 women), but is concerned that at management board level there is an imbalance in the participation of men (17 members) and women (9 members).	The nomination of the MB members is done independently by Member States, therefore ensuring gender balance is beyond CEPOL's control. To be noted however that the nature of profession of law enforcement officer is by default generally attracting more males than females.	Ongoing
Procurement 15. Recalls, from the Court's report, that by the end of 2017 the Agency had not yet introduced all the tools launched by the Commission which aimed to introduce a single solution for the electronic exchange of information with third parties participating in public procurement procedures (e-procurement); notes that, according to the Agency's reply, it has introduced e-invoicing and e-tendering, and it intends to adopt e-submission; calls on the Agency to report to the discharge authority on the progress made in this regard by June 2020.	The progress made was latest reported via the 2019 Consolidated Annual Activity Report, which was shared with the EP. CEPOL has already implemented open calls for tender using both e-tendering and e-submission. As from 2019, CEPOL also accepts electronic offers for negotiated procedures, currently (still) falling outside the scope of the e-Procurement suite.	Complete
Procurement 16. Notes with concern that the Agency awarded a framework contract for travel arrangements for its own staff and for participants in training, without requesting an explanation from the winning tenderer for its	CEPOL has changed its policy to ensure proper documentation on (potential) abnormally low prices for a winning tender. The Evaluation Report for the related procedures includes a specific paragraph	Complete

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potentially abnormally low tender; notes that according to the Agency's reply, the evaluation committee did not proceed in seeking clarifications because, in the course of their daily work, they were already aware of the prices charged by the company holding the previous contract; acknowledges that the Agency accepts the Court's observation that this assessment was not formalised in the evaluation report; calls on the Agency to request and analyse the reasons behind potentially abnormally low tenders, and to ensure that all assessments are adequately formalised in future evaluation reports.	where the request and analyse for the reasons for potentially abnormally low tenders are documented.	
Other comments 19. Notes with concern that, unlike most of the other agencies, the Agency did not carry out a comprehensive analysis of the likely impact of the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union on its organisation, operations and accounts; notes that according to the Agency's reply, the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union has been discussed in management meetings, in discussions in the inter-agency network for procurement officers and in the inter-agency legal network, and also that the communications received from the Commission have been followed closely, and that the corresponding risks have been evaluated as limited.	In 2018 CEPOL re-assessed the likely Brexit impact on its operations and accounts, which was formalised in the risk register, with the conclusion that Brexit has a limited impact on CEPOL. This is a consequence of the fact, that as stated in recital 25 of Regulation (EU) 2015/2219 , (the 'CEPOL Regulation'), United Kingdom (UK) is not taking part in its adoption, has not opted-in to it and is not bound by it or subject to its application. This means that UK is considered to be a third country for any CEPOL operational activities. It is to be added that the cooperation of CEPOL with third countries is governed by a specific provision of Regulation (EU) 2015/2219 that refers to the conclusion of working arrangements and that up-to-date no such arrangement exists with the UK. Regarding staff, concerned impact is also considered limited, with 2 staff members affected, one of which retired in 2019.	Complete
Other comments 20. Notes the Agency's efforts to ensure a cost-effective and environment-friendly workplace; regrets that the Agency does not have a carbon off-setting scheme in place but acknowledges on the basis of the Agency's reply that the cost of participating in such a scheme cannot be covered from its limited financial resources; and acknowledges that the Agency encourages its staff to make use of public transportation to reduce emissions;	The Agency shall deliberate on realistic goals on environment management, taking in consideration the responsibilities of the Agency as a public administration versus its limited human and financial resources. The results of this exercise shall be formalised in the next programming document (Single Programming Document and Work Programme 2021).	Ongoing
Other comments	CEPOL has limited capacity for conducting its own research. However, the few pieces of research produced, such as the Strategic	Continuous

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<p>21. Calls upon the Agency to direct its focus at disseminating the results of its research to the general public, and to reach out to public via social media and other media outlets;</p>	<p>Training Needs Assessment (EU-STNA) and the Operational Training Needs Assessment reports (OTNA) are made widely available to the <i>general public</i> through offline and online means.</p> <p>The last EU-STNA report issued (2019) was published on CEPOL corporate website⁶. Additionally, a promotional video, a leaflet and several infographic materials were produced to disseminate the results of the research and to call for action among EU level law enforcement training providers to align their training offer to the findings outlined in this publication. Hard copies of the EU-STNA report were also printed and distributed by the Publications Office.</p> <p>Likewise, those OTNA and ad hoc TNA produced in 2019 and 2020, which do not disclose sensitive information, are available on CEPOL website in the form of electronic publications and further disseminated online at the time of issuance.</p> <p>In those cases where the agency plays the role of interlocutor, research results coming from partners in the Member States, Universities or independent scientists and researchers, are regularly published in the form of articles in the European Law Enforcement Research Bulletin⁷, an open-access online journal managed by CEPOL.</p> <p>The Agency offers also access to a wide range of scientific international journals and electronic books via its LEED-extranet to all members of law enforcement bodies of the EU, which are CEPOL's main target audience.</p> <p>Although the <i>general public</i> is not considered as first tier audience, it is recognised in CEPOL's Communication Strategy⁸ as an enabler in pursuing, in particular, the objective of promoting the role of training to enhance cooperation amongst law enforcement officials. This</p>	
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⁶ <https://www.cepola.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EU-STNA%20Report.pdf>

⁷ <https://bulletin.cepola.europa.eu>

⁸ <https://www.cepola.europa.eu/sites/default/files/21-2016-GB%20ADOPTING%20CEPOL%27S%20COMMUNICATIONS%20SUB-STRATEGY%20FOR%202016-2020.pdf>

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	<p>resolution cascades down into each annual communication action plan.</p> <p>From that perspective, CEPOL managed in 2019 to connect with a wider demographic of people by reinforcing its presence in social media through the use of sophisticated multimedia materials and a steady and regular drumbeat of communications on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube.</p> <p>These platforms have grown into a fundamental channel for interacting with CEPOL stakeholders on a daily basis and for reaching a wider audience. As a matter of fact, in 2019 CEPOL's increased its number of followers by 24% on LinkedIn, by 37% on Facebook and by 33% on Twitter⁹, a trend that has continued in 2020.</p> <p>Likewise, since the beginning of 2020, CEPOL issues weekly an electronic newsletter to reach out to a wider audience.</p> <p>Other examples of outreach initiatives to inform and connect with the <i>general public</i> includes the organisation of awareness-raising activities on the occasion of Europe Day (9 May) and the hosting of annual formal gatherings with Justice and Home Affairs counsellors and <i>attaches</i>.</p>	
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⁹ https://www.cepola.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Annex_08-2019-MB.pdf