



**Capacity for Risk Management of
Earthquakes & Health Emergencies**

Mid-term review

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Executive summary

At mid-term, the implementation of the IPA CARE programme is progressing well, having delivered a range of tangible outputs across all thematic areas and programme partners. The programme is widely perceived among the programme partners and stakeholder as relevant, valuable, and aligned with national priorities and EU accession processes, while also fostering improved inter-institutional cooperation and capacity development.

The programme has successfully established a strong foundation through the development of Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs), tools, and capacity strengthening activities, alongside enhanced coordination between key actors. Most results are at the output or early outcome stages.

The programme demonstrates high relevance, driven by its flexible and adaptive approach to diverse contexts and needs. Continued relevance will require sustained engagement with partners and adaptation to evolving institutional and political contexts.

Sustainability prospects of programme results remain moderate but uncertain. While important foundations have been laid, such as strengthened capacities, systems, and coordination mechanisms - the long-term durability of results is highly dependent on formal institutionalisation of outputs, availability of financing, clear ownership and responsibilities and continued use and operationalisation of developed tools.

To maximise impact and ensure lasting results, the programme, and programme partners, should focus on:

1. Institutionalising outputs through formal adoption of and integration into disaster risk management systems by programme partners.
2. Operationalising capacities by testing and applying tools, SOPs, and systems in practice.
3. Strengthening sustainability through facilitating and developing financing strategies, ownership, and long-term planning.

Overall, IPA CARE is well-positioned to achieve its intended outcomes, provided that the second phase prioritises consolidation, practical application, and long-term sustainability of results.

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1 Introduction

In 2026, the IPA CARE programme is half-way through its implementation. As stated, and committed to in the Grant Agreement, the programme has conducted a mid-term review in order to review initial results, collect lessons and provide recommendations for the second half of the implementation period.

The review is an opportunity to reflect upon where the programme is, in relation to the objectives and intended outcomes set out in the results framework and what actions are needed for continued implementation and strategic direction. Furthermore, this review process safeguards accountability and transparency in relation to IPA CARE's programme partners. Given that the review is carried out mid-term, it allows for time to make adaptations necessary in order to ensure programme effectiveness, relevance and sustainability.

Data for the mid-term review was collected through a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data was generated through multi-stakeholder structured reflection sessions with all programme partners (conducted in person where possible and digitally in Türkiye) as well as with thematic clusters. In addition, one key informant interview was conducted with the responsible person for IPA CARE at the European Commission (EC). Quantitative data consisted of selected survey results from programme activities.

More information about the IPA CARE programme can be found [on the programme website](#).

2 Mid-term review findings

2.1 Effectiveness – to what extent is IPA CARE reaching its objectives?

Overall, this review shows that IPA CARE demonstrates overall good progress towards its intended intermediate outcomes, with strong results at the output level and early stages of outcome achievement. Across programme partners and thematic areas, outputs and intermediate results are visible, whilst there are expected individual differences amongst thematic areas and programme partners in terms of progress. Full achievement of outcomes will depend on continued consolidation, institutionalisation, and practical application. The breadth of the programme (no of thematic areas and programme partners) in combination with the current budget, means that available resources presents limits to what extent the programme can support the programme partners to achieve the defined outcomes and a sustainable impact beyond the implementation period.

At mid-term, IPA CARE has delivered a set of tangible outputs across all work packages, such as:

- Development of SOPs and tools are underway across clusters, with several programme partners already producing draft procedures and finalising team compositions.
- Capacity strengthening activities (trainings, workshops, exercises) have been widely implemented and are seen as key contributors to improved knowledge.
- Improved inter-institutional coordination is one of the most consistently reported results, with new or strengthened cooperation mechanisms between civil protection, health, and other actors.

Across programme partners, most outputs are at early or intermediate stages, requiring further testing, validation, and formal adoption to fully achieve intended results as well as sustained institutional commitment to develop and maintain capabilities over time.

There is evidence that IPA CARE is contributing to early outcome-level changes and has built a foundation for the further development of capabilities. However, progress related to institutional change and inter-institutional coordination is slower, reflecting higher complexity and dependency on multiple actors.

Enabling factors for progress have been:

- strong leadership and political engagement (notably from e.g., Kosovo^{*1}),
- institutions actively collaborate (development of EMT especially benefitting from cooperation between Ministries of Health and civil protection authorities) (notably from e.g., North Macedonia),
- ownership, motivation and engagement from programme partners,
- activities adapted to national needs and capacities,
- technical expertise and support from the IPA CARE consortium.

Hindering factors for progress have been:

- high institutional complexity (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina),
- inconsistent engagement from key stakeholders,
- coordination gaps and unclear roles between institutions,
- capacity constraints, including staff turnover and limited human resources,
- uncertainty about how the tools (e.g., seismic platforms) outputs will be integrated into overall risk management processes.

¹ The designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Overall assessment

At mid-term, IPA CARE is on a general level effectively progressing towards its objectives, with results at output and early outcome levels. The programme has successfully established foundations that the future work will build upon, strengthened capacities and partnerships and initiated alignment with EU/international standards. However, full effectiveness (achievement of intended outcomes and objectives) will depend on institutional adoption and ownership, further development of capabilities (e.g., training, exercises, equipment) and sustained engagement and financing beyond the programme period.

2.2 Relevance – alignment with needs, priorities and context

IPA CARE remains highly relevant to programme partners needs and priorities. The programme aligns well with priorities and EU accession processes of programme partners. A key strength is its ability to adapt to diverse country contexts, allowing activities to be tailored to varying institutional capacities and baseline conditions. This flexibility has been critical in maintaining relevance across heterogeneous partner settings. At the same time, competing priorities and limited institutional capacity affect partners' ability to fully engage in programme activities, which may influence implementation pace. This adaptability also presents a higher degree of complexity for the consortium and requires more resources in planning and development of activities to ensure tailoring to different contexts and needs.

IPA CARE is considered relevant due to its flexibility and adaptation to diverse country contexts where the programme allows tailoring of activities and priorities at national/sub-national level and organisational level, reflecting different capacities, systems, and development stages. Stakeholders value the adaptation of approaches rather than imposing standard models, particularly where local systems require context-specific solutions. Examples include adjusting activities, approaches and methodologies to local context (e.g., Türkiye) and recognising different levels of development of systems (e.g., existing procedures in some programme partners vs. need for ground setting framework development in others). This adaptability is a major factor in maintaining relevance across a heterogeneous group of programme partners.

The programme aligns with gaps and capacity needs as expressed by partners:

- Coordination and cooperation gaps between institutions and sectors are a central issue across programme partners, directly addressed through IPA CARE activities.
- Limited trained personnel, resources, and structured volunteer systems are being addressed through training/workshops, equipment support, and system development.

- In specialised areas (e.g., seismic risk), the programme responds to technical needs such as data integration and modelling even if their use is still emerging.

A key aspect of relevance is the programme's role in supporting alignment with European and international frameworks in supporting further UCPM participation and interoperability, increasing preparedness for cross-border cooperation and promotion, and adaptation of, INSARAG and WHO EMT standards. This alignment enhances both strategic relevance (EU accession/approximation) and operational relevance (improved response capacity).

Cooperation with the IPA CARE programme is generally rated as effective, useful, and well-functioning by the programme partners. The local coordinators were highlighted by partners as a key role to facilitate the cooperation and communication. Partners recognise the programme's added value in providing access to international expertise, peer learning, and good practices.

While overall relevance is high, the programme continuously needs to maintain dialogue with partners regarding possibly evolving needs and priorities, institutional restructuring, legal changes and shifting political priorities, which could impact the implementation of the programme.

Overall assessment

IPA CARE demonstrates high relevance at mid-term, characterised by continued alignment with national and sectoral priorities, responsiveness to identified system gaps, contribution to EU integration and international standards and high perceived value among stakeholders.

At the same time, maintaining relevance in the second half of the programme will require continued adaptation to evolving country contexts, continued focus on tailoring of support to specific institutional needs and continued focus on operational applicability of outputs.

2.3 Sustainability – will achieved results last?

At mid-term, IPA CARE has laid important foundations for sustainable results, but the likelihood that these results will endure varies significantly across programme partners and thematic areas. Overall, sustainability can be assessed as moderate and uncertain, with strong potential where institutional ownership is emerging, but with considerable risks related to financing, institutionalisation, and long-term capacity.

The programme has established several elements that contribute positively to sustainability:

- Development of systems and frameworks (e.g., SOPs, strategies, platforms) provides a basis for long-term institutional use.
- Capacity building through training and knowledge transfer is strengthening individual and organisational capabilities beyond the programme duration.

- Improved inter-institutional coordination and information exchange are emerging as durable structures that can continue if maintained.
- Provision of equipment is perceived by partners as a key enabler for continued operational capacity but will also need maintenance over time.

In several cases, stakeholders highlighted that results driven by local actors and embedded within national systems are the most likely to endure.

Sustainability is strongly linked to the level of institutional ownership and integration into national systems, where results are integrated into formal structures (policies, SOPs, institutional mandates), sustainability prospects are higher. Several partners emphasised that government approval and management decisions/approval of outputs (e.g., SOPs) is critical for long-term use and institutionalisation.

A major concern amongst programme partners, except Türkiye, is financial sustainability. Lack of stable funding for training, maintenance, and operations is consistently identified as a key risk. Continued functioning of systems (e.g., USAR teams, EMT structures) depends on national budget allocations, incentives for personnel and volunteers and resources for equipment maintenance and deployment. Partners stressed that without long-term financing mechanisms, achievements such as trained teams and procured equipment risk becoming underutilised or unsustainable.

Sustainability is also challenged by human resource constraints. Limited availability of trained personnel in some programme partners, particularly for specialised roles was raised as a challenge. Staff turnover disrupt continuity and knowledge retention. In volunteerism, difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers, especially younger participants, is a recurring issue.

A critical determinant of sustainability is whether outputs are used in practice. For SOPs and procedures, sustainability depends on testing through exercises, regular updates, and integration into daily operations. For technical tools (e.g., platforms), sustainability requires clear institutional ownership, user capacity, and operational relevance.

Overall assessment

Sustainability is moderate but uncertain at this stage. At mid-term, IPA CARE has laid the groundwork for sustainability but significant risks remain, and sustained effort in the second half of implementation—particularly regarding institutional ownership, financing, and operationalisation—will be critical to ensure that achievements are maintained beyond the programme period.

2.4 Progress on integration of cross-cutting issues (CCIs)

The mid-term review finds that a solid foundation for the integration of the cross-cutting issues (CCIs) - including gender equality, inclusion, environment, and

climate change - has been established within the programme. Policies, an overarching vision and desired long-term effects, defined roles and responsibilities, as well as tools and an M&E framework are in place. There is also clear commitment and ownership among programme management, cluster leads, and local coordinators to advance on the CCI objectives. Among programme partners, there is a general interest and buy-in regarding the importance of integration of the CCIs into the programme and capacity strengthening efforts.

The programme management team, experts and local coordinators demonstrate a high level of engagement and willingness to advance on the CCI objectives. However, variations in capacity and experience across staff continue to necessitate targeted technical guidance from CCI advisors to ensure commitments translate into concrete, operational practices. The concept of shared responsibility - where experts lead the integration of CCIs into their respective work streams and clusters - is recognised but not yet fully realised in practice. Established CCI tools have had varying applicability in activities, and documentation of CCI results is yet only noted on ad hoc basis.

While many partners report that the programme is progressing in advancing on the overarching gender equality and inclusion-related objectives (CCI effects) for the programme, less progress seems to be noted related to environment and climate change. The review finds that there is a general need among clusters and partners to more clearly identify specific entry points and practical intermediate objectives for CCIs related to each cluster. This includes the need to outline a clearer path and realistic steps that can be taken within the framework of the programme, which in turn would contribute to the more overarching CCI effects that the programme seeks to contribute to.

In many clusters, a dialogue between experts and partners have been initiated related to gender representation and increasing the participation of women in operational forces and programme activities. The focus on enhancing operational capabilities to systematically consider gender, age, disability and other inclusion aspects, as well as environmental sustainability, is expected to increase during the second half of the programme. This will be achieved through the strengthening of standard operating procedures (SOPs), and trainings and exercises for USAR teams, EMTs and volunteers, and in seismic risks scenario analysis.

At this stage of the programme, progress towards achieving CCI effects is being made. Most observable results are related to promoting gender balance and a broad participation of stakeholders in programme activities. As many activities in the cluster have focused on establishing a foundation and building momentum for upcoming work, more substantial results for CCIs are expected as the programme enters a more operational phase, including the development and testing of SOPs, delivery of equipment, training and exercises.

A key constraint identified is, however, the challenge to match the programme's high ambition to integrate CCIs across all areas, and the available resources. The breadth and complexity of the programme make it challenging for CCI advisors to

provide comprehensive and timely support across all clusters, work streams and partners. This has in some cases resulted in missed opportunities, particularly where short timeframes or limited availability constrained engagement.

While positive steps have been observed in promoting safe and inclusive learning environments in programme activities, there is a need to strengthen efforts to reduce environmental footprints - such as minimising food waste and improving planning of logistics.

3 Recommendations

To maximise the likelihood of achieving intended outcomes and ensuring sustainability, the programme should prioritise the following four strategic areas during the remaining implementation period:

1. Institutionalisation and ownership

Accelerate the formal adoption and integration of programme outputs (e.g., SOPs, systems, coordination mechanisms) into national frameworks, mandates, and operational procedures.

2. Operationalisation and practical application

Ensure that developed tools, procedures, and capacities are systematically tested, validated, and used in practice through exercises and training.

3. Sustainability and financing

Strengthen long-term sustainability by supporting programme partners in establishing financing for developed capabilities, clarifying institutional responsibilities, and ensuring continued capacity beyond programme support.

4. Integration of cross-cutting issues (CCIs)

To strengthen the impact of CCI integration, adopt a focused and strategic approach that reinforces dialogue between experts, CCI Advisors and programme partners, while prioritising key entry points and setting realistic goals for the remaining programme period.

3.1 Recommendations to clusters

Overall

- Continue adapting to partner specific needs and contexts and alignment/adaptation to partners systems and organisational structures.
- Continue ensuring quality of activities, but also plan for further involvement of partners in the implementation of activities, for example in a facilitation role.
- Strengthen the coordination, integration and information sharing across clusters.

- Focus the CCI integration per cluster and programme partner through a clearer prioritisation and a more strategic approach. Strengthen dialogue with programme partners to ensure contextual relevance, ownership, and prioritisation of key CCI entry points with realistic goals for the remaining programme period.
- Improve advisory support by strengthening internal planning and coordination where clusters identify needs and requests in advance. Continue to build experts' capacity to independently integrate CCIs through better tools, regular communication, and strong Team Leader oversight.

For cluster-specific recommendations please refer to Annex 1.

3.2 Recommendations to programme partners

- Maintain active engagement and involvement of leadership to support timely decision-making, approval, and resource allocation.
- Ensure formal approval and integration of SOPs, strategies, and coordination mechanisms into disaster risk management systems and organisations.
- Enhance the dialogue with cluster experts to strengthen contextual relevance of the integration of CCIs into programme activities. Together with experts, select a few priority entry points and set realistic goals for the remaining programme period.
- Strengthen sustainability through exploring and advocating for funding that can cover future training and exercises, equipment maintenance and replacement and operational deployment.
- Integrate the functionality/outputs of the seismic platform into the overall work and the risk management processes/civil protection systems (Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo*² and North Macedonia).

3.3 Recommendations to the consortium

- Support the development of a sustainability plan/strategy for each programme partner, including defining actions that can be supported by the programme during the remaining implementation period.
- Ensure that ownership and maintenance responsibilities are clear prior to handover of equipment.

² The designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

- Ensure continuation of the local coordinator positions and utilize them to support if communication challenges arise.
- Review and adjust the M&E plan and processes to optimise measurement of programme impact.
- Prioritise and sequence the allocation of CCI advisory support more strategically. Concentrate efforts on selected clusters and key periods to maximise impact, based on identified needs and demand.
- Continue to prioritise CCI advisors' involvement in regional activities and exercises, where outreach can benefit multiple partners.

3.4 Recommendations to the EC

- Consult all relevant stakeholders, especially potential beneficiaries, prior to the formulation of future programmes funded by the EC.
- Ensure that future EC funded programmes have a realistically calibrated scope, expected outcomes, and areas of work that are in alignment with available resources.