Annex 1

ITU CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME: STRATEGIC REVIEW 2021 AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This report Œ À] Á• šZ Á}Œl }(šZ /dh À o}‰u vš ^ š}Œ[• všŒ • }(programme) during the period since 2015 and presents options/recommendations for its future. It has been prepared by the ITU Secretariat, with assistance from an external expert, in line with Resolution 73 (REV. BUENOS AIRES, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC).

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 briefly summarises the history of the CoE programme and the objectives and methodology of this review.
- Z ‰š Œ î Œ À] Á•]u‰o u vš š]}vU (Œ}u îìíñ š} îìîíU P]v•š šZ •‰]Œ U Ðv•U Œ ‰}ŒP• }v šZ2 ‰Œ}PŒ W`P [• •šŒ %vPšZ2• v

excellence strategy U [v] v • š Œ µ š š Z to carry out a major strategic review of the ITU Centres of Excellence programme after the termination of the [next implementation] cycle X [

Some adjustments were made to the strategy following a performance evaluation of the 2015-2018 cycle (see Chapter 2). In the current cycle (2019-2022), 31 Centres of Excellence were initially selected Œ } • • š Z / d h [• •] Æ Œ P] } v • ~ š Z } µ P Z } v o Ç In the first three and a half v } Á } ‰ Œ years of this cycle, these Centres delivered 232 courses t an average of 77 per year t significantly higher than the average of 45 courses per year achieved during the previous cycle.

Year	registered	trained	certified
2019	2279	Not measured	1594
2020	4147	Not measured	2958
2021	5472	2722	2276

During

x

dZ µŒŒ vš ‰Œ}PŒ uu [• •šŒµ šµŒ v }‰ Œ š]}v o u

By the time of the 2012 strategic review, the CoE programme had delivered over 950 activities with some 30,000 participants. The review was, however, critical of a number of aspects of the programme as it stood. The number of Centres had proliferated without the application of rigorous selection Œ]š Œ] š} À o] oš vš Z[XŒ ŽZ ÆŒ •µ oš U šZTU has effectively lost control U of the use of its brand/name by Centres, which poses a significant element of reputational risk.' ITU members nevertheless valued the programme and wished it to continue with improvements to its structure and operations. Changes were also required because the original financial basis for the programme, TELECOM Surplus Funds, was no longer available.

The new strategy that was applied from the programme cycle 2015-2018 implemented a number of significant changes to its operation and management. In particular:

- A competitive application and selection process was introduced, with each Centre being selected for a four-year period aligned with the cycle of WTDC meetings.
- The number of Centres was limited to a maximum of six in each ITU region. In practice, six Centres were initially selected in four regions (AFR, AMS, ARB and ASP), with fewer selected in the remaining two (EUR, CIS).
- Selection was to be associated with selected priority areas relevant to ITU expertise and needs. These were to be agreed by WTDC ahead of four-year implementation cycles, with individual Centres selected for their expertise in, and expected to focus on, one or at most two of them.
- Centres of Excellence were to be financially self-sustaining through course fees, sponsorship or a mix of both. Fees were to be collected by BDT and then redistributed with a revenue-sharing element between ITU and the Centres.
-

actually delivered per Centre was two per year in the first three and a half years of the 2015-2018 cycle, a little over three during the first (pre-COVID) year of the present cycle and five in 2020-2021.

Courses in the current programme may be face-to-face, online or blended learning. The majority are of short duration, typically five days for face-to-face courses and four weeks for part-time online courses. Face-to-face courses tend to have fewer registered participants, perhaps because the costs of travel and accommodation deter both individuals and employers.

In the period before 2014, the majority of courses were held face-to-face except in the AMS region where all courses were online. The proportion of online courses in other regions increased during the 2015-2018 cycle, though these remained rare in the AFR and ARB regions and no online courses were delivered in the CIS region. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that during the majority of 2020 and 2021 it has only been possible to hold courses online.

The transition from face-to-face to online activity has proved much easier in some regions and for some Centres than others. Some Centres have requested support from ITU in order to facilitate transition. ITU has responded by providing online tutorials and bilateral support.

A substantial proportion of courses approved at steering committee meetings has been cancelled each year, sometimes because of insufficient demand from potential participants, sometimes for financial or administrative convenience

extensively and assiduously have generally been more successful in attracting larger numbers of participants.

Some m

Chapter 3: Analysis and recommendations

The Centres of Excellence programme has been running, with variations, since 2001. It has both strengths and weaknesses, which are described in Chapter 2. Among the former:

- It has delivered thousands of training opportunities to participants from the telecommunications/ICT community, building expertise in a wide range of aspects of telecommunications/ICT particularly among participants from governments and regulatory bodies.
- Its courses receive a generally positive response from their participants and are clearly valued by ITU members.

At the same time, however:

- The scope and scale of the programme have been insufficient to attract many potential Centres, particularly those with established global reputations, because of the limited added value that the current strategy affords them.
- High c v o o š] } v Œ š • v U] v • } u • • U o } Á ‰ Œ š]] ‰ š] } v Œ š • Z Á] o] š Ç š } o] À Œ (µ o o Ç P] v • š / d h [• l t d [• Æ ‰ š š] } v • X

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020/2021 has substantially affected delivery of the Centres programme during its current four-year cycle (2019

Recommendation 3.1:

The programme should have a clear strategy for achieving its objectives within the overall programme of work of the ITU. Its Centres should become training delivery partners for ITU priorities and programmes.

The programme •Z}µo]vš PŒ š v U]u‰}Œš všoÇU }}Œ]v š Á]šZ š mandate, programmes and thematic priorities, both globally and regionally. It should not support activities that do not fall within the mandate or thematic priorities. It should be linked to the capacity development activities carried out across all three ITU sectors.

^Çv ŒP] • •Z}µo À o}‰ šÁ v šZ ‰Œ}PŒ uu v /dhl d[• Centres to become training delivery partners for the broader mandate, programmes and priorities. This will require more engagement with other parts of BDT in its development and oversight.

The programme should consider packaging training courses according to the needs of different target audiences, e.g. offering a regulators package, operators package, or SME package. This will make it easier for beneficiaries to identify the core training courses that are relevant to them.

The programme should seek to maximise the value added to the ITU and its Members from available resources (ITU staffing and the capabilities of the selected Centres).

Recommendation 3.2:

It should therefore focus on issues:

- that are high priorities for Member States, particularly those with limited resources for capacity development;
- in which the ITU has special responsibilities or expertise; and
- in which there is a limited supply of equivalent high-quality training available from alternative providers at a cost affordable to (all) Members.

The proposals in this chapter set out a framework for achieving this. The review recommends that this should be developed during the first half of 2022, drawing on expertise across the BDT and wider ITU, pending revision of Resolution 73 (which called for a major strategic review) at WTDC (scheduled for June 2022) and introduction in January 2023. Discussions concerning its development should include:

- ITU staff concerned with the current programme and wider capacity development work;
- thematic priority leads; and
- regional offices (including regional focal points for the current programme).

It should include assessment of capacity development needs and priorities (see below).

4. Programme schedule

Recommendation 4.1:

The programme should be continuous, rather than tied to the WTDC cycle.

Recommendation 5.2:

An initial overview assessment should be undertaken in early 2022, and annual overviews of needs should be included in annual programme reviews.

An overview of needs specific to the scope and capabilities of the ne

participants also prefer face-to-face activity, sometimes because they consider online courses inferior or feel that they offer a less substantial t rather than different t learning experience.

While accommodating face-to-face or hybrid courses where hands-on experience is required, the new programme should

The current programme is most used by personnel from government departments and regulatory agencies, who are more familiar with the ITU (and the ITU Academy) than those in private sector businesses. This is likely to continue, but more can and should be done to broaden the range of participants, not leas š µ • • µ Z] À Œ •] š Ç] • v ( ]] o š } š Z o Œ v] v P v À] C

8. Priority areas

Recommendation 8.1:

The programme should retain identified priority areas but focus these more clearly on areas of high demand that are consistent with the thematic priorities of ITU/BDT.

The current programme includes 14 priority areas at both global and regional levels t considerably more than was envisaged at the last review in 2012. These differ between regions. Individual Centres were invited to select up to three priorities from those adopted for their region during the selection process.

This opportunity to deliver courses in three, rather than fewer, priority areas has not proved successful. The average number of courses that has been delivered per Centre in 2019-2021 has been 8.5, which has been insufficient to deliver activities on more than two priorities in the majority of cases. Demand for

Needs within these broad themes should and will vary significantly betw

10. Attracting and retaining Centres

Recommendation 10.1:

The ITU should actively encourage high-quality institutions to apply for Centre status.

As noted above, the potential value added by the programme to the institutions hosting individual Centres is usually marginal. They derive and will derive far greater turnover and revenue from their other work. As a result:

- the current programme has found it difficult to attract or retain institutions which have very high status in their fields of expertise (these will gain little added value from Centre status); and
- institutions that apply for Centre status often see the primary benefit to them in the reputational value to them of association with the ITU.

The programme would benefit from the involvement of more high-quality institutions which have global reputations or are seen as leading training ins

Recommendation 11.2:

The new programme should appoint Centres through a process built around expressions of interest and discussion with BDT staff.

Recommendation 11.3:

A request for expressions of interest in Centre status should be made during the second quarter of 2022, following the needs assessment overview described above. Expressions of interest should be welcomed

As noted above, it is desirable that the range of Centres in the progr

- international and regional communications agencies (*e.g.*, within the current programme, relationships with the International Telecommunications Satellite Organisation, ITSO, and the African Telecommunications Union, ATU);
-]vš Œv š]}v o µ•]v •• • v µ•]v •• ••}] š]}v• ~(}Œ]v•š v U d|
  •µ‰‰}Œš }( ]P]š o dŒ v•(}Œu š]}v všŒ •U d •U v /dh[• }}‰ Œ
- universities, research centres and relevant non-governmental organisations.

Partnerships along these lines with international organisations and businesses or business associations could add significant value in three ways:

- building the reputation of the Centres brand and encouraging participation as potential Centres by higher-status institutions;
- providing content, resources and experts for inclusion in course delivery; and
-

courses whose availability and timing are negotiated between Centres and BDT staff. This should improve both flexibility and administrative efficiency for both Centres and the BDT. Resulting courses should be u Œ l š u } Œ Œ P µ o Œ o Ç v ((š] À o Ç š } š Œ P š µ] v • ~ • Z D C

Online training requires investment in online resources and training of staff in effective use of online training methods. Some existing Centres have found it difficult to adjust.

Recommendation 13.3:

The new programme should require Centres to have experience and high standards in online training as a requirement of inclusion.

Centres within the current programme that do not yet meet this requirement may be continued into the new programme provided that they commit to ensuring that they can deliver online training to high standards within the first year of appointment. Sharing of experience within the network may be helpful in this context.

Quality assurance in the selection of Centres should be improved by the inclusion of evaluation visits by regional ITU staff to prospective C v š Œ • v Ç Œ À] Á } (‰ Œ } • ‰ š] À v š Œ • [} v o during the selection process.

Recommendation 14.3:

BDT Thematic priority leads should continue to review course content.

In recent years, BDT thematic priority leads have been asked to review and approve (or disapprove) proposed course outlines that have been submitted by Centres prior to preparation of course catalogues. d Z] •] • À o µ o Z l } v š Z ‹ µ o] š Ç v Œ o À v } (} µ Œ • } v š v š U core roles and is time-con0 gdin l77u0(mi41(d)3(p)-5(r)212 634(y)5(f)-22(ev)-6v-4(iew.(r)12(3(l77uRtio)ie)11(w)-145(a2

15. Marketing

Recommendation 15.1:

the ITU may collect fees on their behalf but should charge a fee doing so, in order to cover its administrative costs.

Proposed changes to governance arrangements (see below) obviate the need to hold face-to-face meetings of regional steering committees which have been supported by the revenue-sharing arrangement.

Recommendation 16.4:

The first global meeting of Centres that was held online in 2021 provided a valuable opportunity to share experience and identify opportunities across the programme. A global meeting along these lines should become the principal mechanism for dialogue within the programme.

It should be a more substantial event than current regional steering committees and include separate sessions concerned with a) thematic and b) regional priorities as well as reviewing experience in the programme overall and considering methodological issues. Presentations from organisations with global expertise, such as Programme Partners, and demand-side stakeholders from public and private sectors, should be included in order to diversify discussion and participation.

This global meeting could be held online or offline. The former would be more cost-effective and more likely to maximise participation. Offline meetings could be held within the framework of ITU Capacity Development Symposia if these continue to be held in person.

Recommendation 17.3: