

NEWSLETTER

OSCE Office in Yerevan

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INVESTMENT FORUM IN SYUNIK

The OSCE supports economic security efforts in the southern region of Syunik in Armenia, which is heavily dependent on the mining industry.

An investment forum was organized by the Syunik regional administration on 11-13 November 2013 through its local Programme Implementation Presence (PIP) to present non-mining investment opportunities to private investors and the donor community. It is hoped that fresh investment will diversify the region's economy by creating jobs and generating income in alternative industry sectors.

The forum gathered an unprecedented 172 representatives from central and local government and private businesses, including Vice Prime Minister Armen Gevorgyan and heads of diplomatic missions to Armenia. Discussions focused

on agricultural production, food processing and tourism opportunities. Felix Kumi-Ampofo, an OSCE expert from the United Kingdom, introduced economic development modelling as a tool for promoting investment to participants.

Beyond official discussions, the event also included a number of field visits to local production facilities, environmental projects and tourist attractions to provide first-hand information on the region's opportunities to participants.

Survey of Facebook users in Armenia

A survey prepared by the Region Research Centre was presented and discussed on 20 November at a conference on the role of new media and social networks in Armenian social and political life. The event was part of a project to strengthen electoral processes in Armenia in order to align them with international standards, implemented by the OSCE Office in Yerevan and funded by the European Union. Journalists, bloggers, local and international experts, parliamentarians and political figures discussed social media, civic activism, the transparency of political processes, and the correlation between traditional and new media, as well as social media and the security of information.

Intellectual game on human rights

54 high school students from Yerevan, Gyumri and Vanadzor put their human rights knowledge to the test in an interactive game organized on 17 November in Gyumri, Shirak province. The initiative was organized by the OSCE together with the Yerevan Club of Intellectual Games to mark International Tolerance Day and to raise schoolchildren's awareness about human rights. Prior to the game, schoolchildren visited the National Assembly, the Cassation Court and the Human Rights Defender's Office.

BOOSTING REFORMS

International Conference on Police Reform



For most post-Soviet countries, police reform has become a vital priority during the transition process to democracy. It has been widely accepted that law-enforcement agencies should strive to be a more transparent and accountable service, respecting the rights of all citizens. That said, this is recognized as a challenging and demanding process which requires systemic changes, greater professionalism of police officers, and, most importantly, a change in mindset towards providing an effective service responsive to public needs.

The official launch of police reforms in Armenia began on 1 April 2010. Since then the OSCE has been supporting this process, focusing on promoting democratic policing practices in Armenia, specifically in the areas of police education and of stronger police-public partnerships.

The international conference organized on 26-27 November 2013 constituted another joint initiative of the OSCE and the Armenian Police, which was aimed at presenting Armenian police reforms to a wider audience, including civil society, mass media and the international community. The conference acted as a forum for

exploring the experience of other countries with a similar background and for discussing their achievements and challenges, as well as for exchanging ideas for further improvements to policing.

The conference brought together representatives from the Armenian Police and relevant governmental, civil, international and regional partners to discuss a wide range of issues related to police reform, such as accountability and transparency, educational reform, and public trust in the police.

Representatives from Georgia, Estonia and Kyrgyzstan shared their experiences of police reform.

Wrapping up elections

Following the two cycles of national elections in 2012 and 2013, the OSCE Office organized the **Assessing performance of electoral stakeholders** conference on 7-8 October 2013. The event was aimed at discussing the lessons learned through the two polls and provided a forum for post-election analysis and self-evaluation of the performance of various stakeholders. A wide range of public institutions and civil society organizations attended the conference and discussed how to further improve regulations and how to address loopholes in practical implementation.

Extra-judicial solutions to media disputes

On 5-6 July 2013 the OSCE Office organized a seminar for journalists, media lawyers and judicial experts to discuss the role of the Information Disputes Council (IDC) in resolving disputes. Participants talked about improved implementation of the civil defamation law, alleged violations of the presumption of innocence in the media, and draft copyright legislation. Since 2011, the IDC has made 35 expert analyses on defamation cases involving the media and has acted as a mediator for out-of-court resolutions.

Reform to the General Prosecutor's Office

The visit of an international expert to analyze reforms taking place in the General Prosecutor's Office was commissioned through the co-operation agreement between the OSCE and the General Prosecutor's Office. The expert exchanged ideas and views on certain recommendations contained in the report and the parties agreed to further co-operate on their implementation.

Training for penitentiary servants

Training on international human rights standards and domestic legislation for penitentiary servants and civil society organizations monitoring penitentiary institutions was held on 17-20 October 2013 by the OSCE in co-operation with the Helsinki Committee of Armenia and Penal Reform International. Representatives from Armenia's 12 penitentiary institutions exchanged experiences on promotion and protection of the rights of detained or imprisoned persons in compliance with legislation and international standards. The training for the new members of the Penitentiary Monitoring Group and members of the National Preventive Mechanism under the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture was aimed at improving monitoring of the treatment and conditions of people in detention in line with international standards on prevention of torture. Participants also discussed issues on life sentences and women and juveniles in detention, focusing on their specific needs, rights and abilities.

Teaching human rights in the army

The OSCE has conducted human rights training for trainers for selected groups of armed forces personnel. This project was designed and elaborated in close co-ordination with the Armenian Ministry of Defence, and was implemented in co-operation with Protection of Rights without Borders NGO. The OSCE/ODIHR and DCAF Handbook on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Armed Forces Personnel translated into Armenian along with a teaching manual elaborated by the OSCE Office were used as a resource material during the training sessions.

HUMAN RIGHTS



Reporting on the penal system and judicial proceedings

A workshop for journalists on the principles of reporting about penal system was held on 28-29 September 2013 by the Helsinki Committee of Armenia with OSCE support. 20 journalists and press officers from the Armenian Justice Ministry and Penitentiary Department discussed responsible reporting with due consideration of the rights of detained persons and prisoners and journalistic ethics. On 16 November, 25 journalists took

part in a two-day training course organized by the OSCE and the Armenian Judicial Department. Training sessions were provided by judges, independent experts and media specialists, and explored media coverage on trial proceedings and civil and criminal cases, as well as judicial accountability and independence, disciplinary proceedings and rules of ethics for judges.



Strengthening defence lawyers

On 20-22 November 2013 representatives of the Chamber of Advocates made a study visit to the Paris Bar Association, supported by the OSCE. During the visit, a memorandum of co-operation was signed between the two institutions, and the possibility for Armenia to adopt the French model of the CARPA system to regulate financial issues was discussed. Led by the Chairman of the Chamber, the group established better lines of communication through meetings with the President of the Paris Bar and a number of peer-to-peer meetings with French lawyers. The visit also served to solidify the position of the Chamber of Advocates in international processes.

EVENTS / PUBLICATIONS

Educating youth

Training on human rights, social inclusion and advocacy tools for 20 young activists and bloggers from five regions of Armenia was organized on 5-6 October 2013 by the Eurasia Partnership Foundation with the OSCE support. Media and human rights experts led discussions on how to explore social problems, accommodate the concerns of different groups through social media and photography, and reach out to broader audiences focusing public attention and generating positive change.

On 14-15 November the final event of the national university debate club competition took place. Students from 7 universities from all over Armenia participated in the event, which was supported by the OSCE. The contest was held within the framework of the project on promoting civic participation of youth, implemented jointly with the Jinishian Memorial Foundation.

On 18-21 November a group of young professionals took part in a study tour to the OSCE Secretariat within the framework of the Norway-funded Model OSCE project.

Monitoring the execution of ECtHR decisions

The results from monitoring the implementation of 48 decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, prepared by Armenian advocates and independent legal experts, were presented and discussed on 19 December 2013. Participants also discussed the role of third-party briefs in domestic and international instances.



Photo exhibition on Human Rights Day

An OSCE-supported campaign entitled **Raise Your Voice to Protect Your Human Rights!** culminated on 10 December 2013 with the marking of International Human Rights Day. The campaign included a photography competition and exhibition, a debate on human rights, and a theatre performance. The campaign, which principally targeted youth, was organized by the OSCE, the United Nations, the EU Delegation, and the Council of Europe, as well as the Armenian Foreign Ministry and the Human Rights Defender's Office.

Guidebook for online journalists

The **Best in the Net** guidebook was launched by Journalists for the Future NGO with OSCE support. The guidebook provides both theoretical and practical knowledge on creating high-quality online media and offers guidelines on how to make information secure.

Police integrity toolkit

The OSCE translated and published the **Toolkit on Police Integrity**, developed by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces. It focuses on the organizational impact of police corruption as well as on values and ethics in police services.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) works for **stability, prosperity** and **democracy** in its 57 participating States through political dialogue on shared values and through practical work that makes a lasting difference.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan was established in 2000 to assist Armenia in the implementation of its OSCE commitments in all three aspects of security: politico-military, economic and environmental and the human dimension.

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