

Eastern Europe Office in Minsk

The Office in line with its mandate focused its activities in 2006 on assisting the Government of the host country in further promoting institution building and consolidating the rule of law and in developing relations with civil society, as well as supporting the country in addressing economic and environmental issues. It also implemented a number of projects involving the Chernobyl-affected areas and worked with authorities and civil society to raise awareness of environmental issues.

Economic and environmental dimension activities

Rehabilitation of Chernobyl-affected areas. The Office co-sponsored the international conference *Twenty years after Chernobyl: Strategy for recovery and sustainable development of the affected regions*, which took place in Minsk and the affected territories of the Gomel region from 19 to 21 April. The Office supported the scientific sessions and the publication of the *Abstracts Proceeding* of the conference.

As a founding member of the *Co-operation for the Rehabilitation of Living Conditions in Chernobyl-affected Areas*, a programme involving national and regional authorities, international organizations and non-governmental organiza-



tions (NGOs), the Office participated in the project assessment committee and the approval board held in November in the Brest Region. The Office approved three projects, but due to late registration their implementation was put forward to 2007.

Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC). The Office, in co-operation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and its ENVSEC partners UN Development Programme and UN Environment Programme, con-

ducted regional consultations in Minsk, which resulted in a draft assessment report for the Eastern Europe region on the ENVSEC initiative.

The final report includes a work programme with priority cross-border projects focusing on joint approaches to the management of water, forestry and natural reserves in the Polesie area shared by Belarus and Ukraine.

Raising environmental awareness. The Office supported training sessions on the



Deserted houses succumb to nature in the exclusion zone of the Chernobyl-affected area.



OSCE staff visit a greenhouse in Olmany, Eastern Polesie, on 15 June.



In Eastern Polesie, Office staff take stock of the situation with farmers. The Office has been supporting agro-economy projects for the betterment of living conditions and sustainable development in this mostly rural region.

Aarhus Convention at the Aarhus Centre opened under a joint project with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection in December 2005. The Office helped conduct outreach campaigns and legal consultations on ecological issues and donated the equipment provided within the joint project to the Centre.

Human dimension activities

Anti-trafficking. The Office assisted with the ODIHR/*La Strada*-run *Anti-Trafficking Assessment* project, which reviewed what referral mechanisms are in place in Belarus for victims of trafficking.

In October, the Office co-sponsored an international conference on *Co-operation between Source and Destination Countries on Trafficking in Persons with the Focus on the Demand Side*, which was organized by the Ministry of the Interior and the International Organization for Migration.

Gender issues. Within the framework of the annual global initiative *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence*, the Office co-sponsored the information campaign *Domestic Violence Should Not Become Part of Your Life*. The event included a press briefing for the relevant Ministries, NGOs and journalists; a meeting with refugees residing in Belarus to raise awareness on the issue; posters, calendars and billboards; and frequent

broadcasting of video on national television.

Monitoring activities. The Office observed court hearings related to freedom of association, the right to peaceful assembly, freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention and the right to a fair trial.

These hearings involved, among other cases, a former 2006 Presidential candidate and the members of a domestic election observation group who observed the 2004 parliamentary elections and the leader of a youth organization who were charged with criminal code provisions adopted in December 2005 that prohibit the organization or management of unregistered public organizations.

The Office followed a number of court hearings involving some NGOs, trade unions, political parties and newspapers with regard to legal registration.

The Office closely monitored the situation around the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, which has been summoned repeatedly to court in connection with Ministry of Justice and tax authorities' lawsuits.

The Office monitored the developments following the March 2006 Presidential election. The Office visited the main administration detention centre in Minsk and attended administrative hearings when access was not denied. In total, several hundred people were sentenced to an

administrative arrest of up to 15 days (no official data available), including approximately 20 journalists.

Individual complaints. The Office received approximately 80 new individual complaints of alleged human rights violations. In the main, these concerned the actions of law enforcement agencies and centred on the belief that the right to a fair trial had been denied. Where appropriate, the Office raised its individual or patterns of cases with the relevant Belarusian authority.

Head of Office:

Ambassador Ake Peterson
Revised unified budget: €874,200
www.osce.org/belarus

Mission to Moldova

The Mission focused in 2006 on defusing tensions in the Security Zone, handling the consequences of the new customs rules introduced in March covering export from the Transnistrian region, and attempting to get the political settlement negotiations back on track. The 17 September 'independence' referendum and the 10 December 'presidential' elections in Transnistria – neither one recognized nor monitored by the OSCE – shaped the political environment of this work. Other important areas of the Mission's activity included mediating the controversy over the Moldovan Latin-script schools on the left bank, combating human trafficking and promoting the rule of law and freedom of the media.

Politico-military dimension activities

Political settlement negotiations. To spur on the settlement talks, the Mission drafted in early 2006 documents that suggested: a possible delimitation of competencies between central and regional authorities; a mechanism for monitoring factories in the Transnistrian military-industrial complex; a plan for the exchange of military data; and an assessment mission to evaluate conditions and make recommendations for democratic elections in Transnistria. The Transnistrian side, however, refused to continue negotiations after the March introduction of new customs rules for Transnistrian exports,

and thus no progress could be made including on these projects. Attempts to unblock this stalemate through consultations among the mediators (OSCE, Russian Federation and Ukraine) and the observers (European Union and the United States of America) in April, May and November and consultations of the mediators and observers with each of the sides separately in October were to no avail.

The Joint Control Commission (JCC). In April, the mediators helped find a mutually agreeable accommodation which returned to Moldovan farmers from Dorotcaia unrestricted access to their land on Transnistrian-controlled territory. This suc-

cess also unblocked the work of the JCC – the body responsible for implementing the July 1992 *Agreement on Principles of the Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transdniestrian region of the Republic of Moldova* and supervising the Joint Peacekeeping Forces in the Security Zone – which had been frozen since April 2005. In September, two new JCC working groups were established. They regulate disputes between the sides on relations between Moldovan police and Transnistrian militia in the town of Bender and review the presence of unilaterally established posts in the Security Zone. The Mission, as an observer in the JCC, is deeply involved with both working groups.



OSCE/Chad McGougan

The Mission to Moldova routinely patrols the Transnistrian section of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border.



OSCE/Bernard Auesdat

Around 20,000 tons of ammunition are still stored in the Russian Federation depot at Colbasna in Moldova's Transnistrian region.

Building confidence and security while reducing threats. The Mission provided financial and logistical support to the Ministry of Defence as it destroyed surplus and outdated artillery ammunition. As part of Moldova's broader defence reforms, the Mission also worked closely with the Ministry on proposals for further assistance in the destruction of ammunition and equipment and in developing programmes to re-train and re-settle retiring military personnel.

Removal of Russian Federation arms and equipment. On 13 November, a group of 30 OSCE Heads of Delegations, along with OSCE Mission members, gained access for the first time since March 2004 to the Russian Federation ammunition depot at Colbasna, near the Moldovan-Ukrainian border in northern Transnistria. There were no withdrawals, however, of Russian ammunition or equipment from Transnistria during 2006, and more than 21,000 tons of ammunition remain stored in the region. During the year two Voluntary Fund donors, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, withdrew their contributions from the Fund.

Human dimension activities

Election and electoral reforms. The Mission and the ODIHR provided joint advice to the Moldovan parliament that considerably improved electoral legislation. With the support of the ODIHR election experts, the Mission reported on the December Bashkan gubernatorial elections in the autonomous Gagauz region in Moldova's south.

Protecting language rights. The Mission promoted and hosted negotiations on the existence and functioning of Moldovan Latin-script schools in the Transnistrian region. Nonetheless, the issue of the school building in Ribnita, which was confiscated by the local Transnistrian authorities in 2004, remains unresolved.

Monitoring human rights. The Mission responded to a large number of individual human rights complaints. These were predominantly from criminal defendants protesting violations of procedural rights during pre-trial detention, poor detention conditions and lack of adequate medical assistance. The Mission monitored several high-profile court cases which involved

issues such as the right to a fair trial or torture. The Mission also devoted special attention to the remaining two imprisoned members of the Ilascu group, convicted by Transnistrian authorities of alleged crimes during the 1992 conflict, and later ordered released by the European Court of Human Rights.

Capacity-building through promoting human rights. In 2006, the Mission supported small-scale projects aimed at promoting human rights and tolerance across the Dniestr/Nistru river. For example, the 'Rebuilding Bridges' concert in August brought together rock musicians and their fans from both banks of the river and was a major success.

Promoting freedom of the media. The Mission helped build capacity in the media sector and supported reform of Moldova's broadcasting legislation. With help from the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Mission provided legal and technical expertise which improved the draft broadcasting law. Financial support for the training of journalists and the newly created Moldovan School of Journalism are expected to heighten professionalism in the Moldovan media. The Mission also began a comprehensive programme to assess the state of regional media.

Preventing human trafficking and promoting gender equality. The Mission hosted regular technical co-ordination meetings in Chisinau as well as in the regions and a special donor meeting on anti-trafficking activities. In autumn, the Mission and *Winrock International* launched

a new website, called the Anti-Trafficking and Gender Network. It is accessible in English, Romanian and Russian at www.atnet.md.

The Mission also organized training courses aimed at increasing the capacity of governmental and civil society actors in the fields of combating trafficking in human beings, preventing domestic violence, promoting gender equality, as well as protecting and assisting victims of trafficking or domestic violence. It supported the authorities' anti-trafficking activities and a number of projects aimed at protecting the vulnerable.

In the legislative sphere, the Mission's work focused on advocating for the *Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*, which entered into force in March. The Mission also provided extensive expertise and advocacy for a bill on domestic violence.

Trial monitoring programme. In March, the Mission and the ODIHR, in partnership with the American Bar Association's *Central Europe and Eurasia Legal Initiative* and the Institute for Penal Reform, began a *Trial Monitoring Programme*. A network of national trial observers attend, observe, and systematically collect data on hearings and trials in the national courts of Moldova in cases concerning issues such as trafficking human beings or arms.

Head of Mission:

Ambassador Louis O'Neill
Revised unified budget: €1,622,500
www.osce.org/moldova



'Rebuilding bridges' was the motto of an OSCE-sponsored rock festival at the Vadul-lui-Voda resort near Chisinau on 12 August. Bands from both banks of the Dniestr/Nistru river performed.

Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine

The Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine focused in 2006 on projects aimed at assisting Ukrainian authorities in adapting legislation, institutions and policies to the requirements of heightened democratic standards and in strengthening the rule of law. The field presence also helped to re-train hundreds of laid-off military personnel, clean up the Novobohdanivka ammunition explosion site as well as attract investments to and stimulate small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development in Ukrainian regions.

Politico-military dimension activities

Helping demobilized soldiers. The Ministry of Defence is downsizing its armed forces. In co-operation with the Ministry, the Project Co-ordinator helped to provide soon-to-be discharged military officers with employment options. It has developed and delivered practical retraining courses on various topics including small business development, management and marketing to more than 800 officers in 20 cities. Specialized retraining for military pilots, engineers and navigators is also available and all discharged personnel are entitled to professional assistance with job searching, developing interview skills and resume writing. As a result, more than 78 per cent of participating officers have found employment.

The Project Co-ordinator also assisted the Ministry in establishing a Resource and Career Centre for discharged military servicepersons. Through seminars and publications the Centre has helped increase Ministry staff awareness of the rights of discharged military personnel on important issues such as pensions, re-training, housing and employment.

Destruction of munitions. The Project Co-ordinator began work with the Ukrainian Ministry of Emergency Situations to safely clean up the Novobohdanivka ammunition depot which has been the site of several explosions since 2004. The Project Co-ordinator provided equipment requested by the Ukrainian partner, such as protective vests, Kevlar helmets and mine and ferrous metal detectors. It began training Ukrainian experts on appropriate techniques and use of equipment



in order to detect and retrieve unexploded ordnance.

Economic and environmental dimension activities

Supporting local business development. Implemented in partnership with the Eurasia Foundation, the field operation's main project in this area co-

operates with local employment centres in supporting small businesses with advisory services and training and works with local government on policy issues to help create favourable conditions for entrepreneurs.

In 2006, 50 households in the southern part of the Odessa region, near one of Europe's most famous nature reserves, started up eco-tourism activities after training in hospitality and tourism management. During the 2006 holiday season,



Munitions disposal experts from the OSCE Secretariat, the European Commission and the German Armed Forces conduct joint assessments of the Novobohdanivka ammunition depot in August.

Courtesy of Ukrainian Ministry of Emergency Situations

the project participants hosted more than 1,500 tourists.

Assisting Ukrainian regions in attracting foreign direct investment. In 2006, after establishing a Rivne regional investment promotion agency a year earlier, the Project Co-ordinator developed an investment profile of the region, including industry and company profiles. As a result of the promotion of the agency's activities, the Rivne region was chosen by the Financial Times group's fDi Magazine as the 2006/07 *Region of the Future* for the western Commonwealth of Independent States, and both the city of Rivne and Rivne Region were among the nominees for the title of most cost-effective location in Europe.

In autumn, the project expanded its activities to the Chernihiv region and assisted the national investment promotion agency InvestUkraine in research which provided the representatives of regional administrations with information and strategies on the establishment of industrial zones and best practices in attracting foreign investment.

Human dimension activities

Good governance and strengthening of democratic institutions. At the request of the Ukrainian authorities and with the support of the ODIHR, the Project Co-ordinator placed special emphasis on further strengthening the country's election procedures. It assisted Ukraine in improving its legislative framework related to elections, improving voter lists and developing manuals for institutions responsible for conducting elections. The most demanding task this past year was to assist in establishing the electronic central voter registry in preparation for the parliamentary elections in March. With the Project Co-ordinator's assistance, approximately 1.3 million inaccuracies were deleted from



Shots from the TV Public Service Announcements against trafficking in persons developed by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine in cooperation with the Ministry of Ukraine for Family, Youth and Sports and the Ukrainian Eurovision-2004 winner Ruslana

the voter lists, contributing significantly to the internationally acknowledged adherence of these elections to recognized democratic standards.

Anti-trafficking support. To help Ukraine combat trafficking in human beings, the Project Co-ordinator extended a nationwide awareness-raising campaign on the problem, featuring the Ukrainian singer and winner of the 2004 Eurovision Song Contest, Ruslana. To support the important role of government officials in detecting and preventing trafficking, the office compiled publications on different aspects of the issue, and conducted training seminars for relevant officials and organizations. The Project Co-ordinator also continued to assist the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities in the implementation of a pilot project on economic empowerment for Ukrainian orphans.

Supporting the rule of law. The Project Co-ordinator partnered with Ukraine's newly created Administrative Courts and European administrative justice experts to suggest amendments to the country's draft Administrative Procedure Code and other legislation related to the courts in order to improve definitions of administrative offences and application of new legislation. To support this legislative work, the Project Co-ordinator is also working with the Academy of Judges to create a training curriculum on administrative issues for new and practicing judges. At the request of the Ministry of the Interior, the Project Co-ordinator established a project aimed at monitoring detention facilities to ensure that human rights are being respected. Together with lawyers, government representatives and NGOs, the Project Co-ordinator developed a guide for the work of mobile monitoring groups, which will be included in the internal regulations of the Ministry. Training sessions for four mobile groups were held in October.

In the area of human rights, the Project Co-ordinator provided expert assistance to the Ukrainian Parliamentary Committee on European Integration by conducting independent reviews of draft laws, evaluating their conformity with international human rights standards and European standards of law.

Website. The OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine launched a Ukrainian-language website (<http://www.oscepcu.org>) to inform citizens, state authorities, civil society and journalists about the Co-ordinator's activities.

Project Co-ordinator:
Ambassador James F. Schumaker
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www.osce.org/ukraine