

Fostering Democratic Elections: Parliamentary Elections 2012



The Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan Ambassador Andrey Sorokin and the Head of the Armenian Central Electoral Commission Tigran Mukuchyan signing a co-operation agreement to promote efficient election administration, Yerevan, 25 April 2012. (OSCE/Gohar Avagyan)

Co-operation with the Central Electoral Commission

The OSCE Office in Yerevan has worked to facilitate democratic elections in Armenia since the opening of its doors in 2000. Based on international standards and best practices, the Office's support has taken many different forms over the course of these years and as a result legislations has improved, public awareness of election-related processes was enhanced, and participation of domestic observers has increased. In 2012, the Office and the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) signed a long-term agreement in order to frame future co-operation, which includes the implementation of a EUR 1.7 million project supported by the European Union for an array of election-related support activities throughout Armenia.

In order to foster democratic elections, the CEC received technical, educational and informational support for the parliamentary elections held in 2012 and will further get support for the upcoming presidential election in 2013. So far, OSCE involvement has resulted in training course for nearly 14,000 polling station officials and a substantial upgrade of the CEC's capacities and approach to promote public information and awareness.

Strengthening the Ombudsman Institution

In the framework of the European Union funded project, the Office has helped strengthen the capacity of the Human Rights Defender's Office to respond to election related matters by expanding its activities as well as geographical coverage. As a result, the Ombudsman's Office has established six regional centres in the cities of Gavar, Vanadzor, Ijevan, Gyumri, Yeghegnadzor and Kapan in order to ensure that access to justice is available throughout the country. Each regional office employs two lawyers and one manager. In addition, the Office supported a hotline to register alleged human rights violations and established rapid reaction groups in order to ensure prompt response to citizen concerns during the elections and pre-election campaigns.

Media monitoring of electoral processes

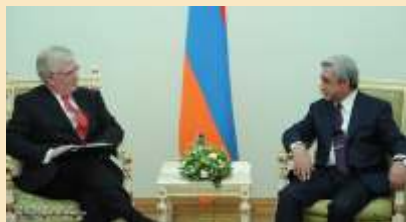
In democratic societies, mass media is the main vehicle for political entities to communicate with the electorate during the pre-election campaign period. In order to help ensure a fair and inclusive media landscape, monitoring, particularly during elections, is essential. As a means to bolster accountability, the Office supported domestic organizations in monitoring media coverage of the recent elections. The Yerevan Press Club, a local NGO, was employed to observe and to present the results of broadcast media performance in the period preceding the pre-electoral and during the official campaign period while the Armenian Public Relations Association NGO monitored print media coverage of parliamentary elections held on 6 May 2012. Moreover, on 2-3 April, the Office together with the Europe-in-Law Association organized a training for journalists on responsible, accurate and balanced reporting during elections.



OSCE and EU supported training course on elections administration for precinct election commissioners, the official opening of the Armenian Human Rights Defender's Regional Office in Vanadzor, launch of a workshop for media representatives on responsible and accurate reporting on elections. (OSCE/Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

All of these aforementioned activities are part of a 1.7 million Euro direct donor contribution to the OSCE by the EU that commenced in January, which will enhance election processes throughout Armenia in 2012 and 2013.

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office visits Armenia



President Serzh Sargsyan receives a delegation headed by the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Eamon Gilmore, Yerevan, 12 June 2012 (RA President's Office)

On 11-12 June, the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office (CIO), Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore, visited Armenia during his visit to the South Caucasus. In Yerevan, the CIO met with President Serzh Sargsyan, the Speaker of the National Assembly Hovik Abrahamyan, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian, and representatives of political parties. During his meetings, The Chairperson discussed Armenia's co-operation with the OSCE and its institutions, highlighted the importance of the Office's activities in Armenia and underscored the Minsk Group process concerning the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The CIO also visited the OSCE Office in Yerevan premises and met with the staff.

Supporting penitentiary reforms

Reforming the conditional release system and working to establish a probation system are part of Armenia's draft Legal and Judicial Reform Programme for 2012-2016. The Office, together with OSCE/ODIHR, assisted this government reform process by providing recommendations in the area of judicial independence and by offering to assist the authorities to implement the programme upon its approval.



Participants at the presentation of the OSCE-supported study on parole system in Armenia, Yerevan, 2 March 2012. (OSCE/Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

The Office also supported a study on early conditional release system in Armenia prepared by the Civil Society Institute NGO and key results and recommendations of the study were discussed in a roundtable in March. The study analyzed Armenian legislation in light of international standards and good practices and included findings from interviews with experts on subjects, such as supervision mechanisms, criteria and principles of taking and revoking decisions.



Human Rights Officer of the OSCE Yerevan Office Vladimir Tchountoulov, President of Civil Society Institute Arman Danielyan and Deputy Minister of Justice of Armenia Aram Orbelyan at the OSCE supported workshop on probation standards, Yerevan, 30 April 2012 (OSCE/Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

Subsequently the Office and the Civil Society Institute NGO organized a workshop in April on international standards on probation, experience and good practices of OSCE participating States. The workshop featured a detailed outline the vision of state bodies and civil society organizations on the future structure of Armenia's probation service. The Office, in co-operation with the Hungarian Ministry of Public Administration and Justice, further organized a four-day study visit to Hungary in order to explore the functions and organizational modalities of Hungarian probation service. Representatives of the Armenian Ministry of Justice, Criminal-Executive Department and Law School, and civil society participated in this study visit.

Education and vocational training of young offenders

In January, the results of a study on access to and quality of education and vocational training for juveniles in custody were presented. This study was conducted by the Social Justice NGO with the support of the Office. Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, Criminal-Executive Department of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights Defender's Institution discussed the recommendations for improving education and vocational training for juveniles in the Abovyan penitentiary.

Within the framework of co-operation with the Ministry of Justice, the Office also supported arts and crafts training courses for convicted juveniles in the Abovyan penitentiary. This effort assisted the penitentiary service staff prepare juvenile offenders for re-entry into society by providing specific skill training course in such areas as woodcarving and pottery making so the released juveniles would have a chance to earn income upon their release.

In March, the Office also assisted in the running a workshop on child-friendly justice standards in the light of the newly elaborated Criminal Procedure Code. This was jointly organized with UNICEF, Penal Reform International and Civil Society Institute.

Inspection reforms are supported in Armenia

The Office is providing support to the Inter-agency Inspection Reform Council. The Council was established in 2011 and is chaired by the Prime Minister and it is comprised of representatives from the relevant state authorities and business associations. Overall, the Inter-agency Inspection Reform Council seeks to reduce requirements and lengthy inspection procedures at 26 oversight bodies in Armenia. The Office, in conjunction with other international organizations such as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, support the Council's activities.

City-wide community policing is launched in Yerevan

The Office continues to support the introduction and implementation of the community policing model in an effort to enhance democratic policing practices in Armenia which began a few years ago with the setting up of a community policing programme in the Arabkir District of Yerevan. As a result of this programme's success, community policing as a practice was officially adopted for the entire city of Yerevan on 1 June. It envisages to establish community policing units with around 300 police officers throughout the city. The OSCE Office also supported a three-week intensive practical training earlier this year for the police officers involved in this effort.



The training courses supported the capacity development of Armenian police officials dealing with public order management, Yerevan, 27 April 2012 (OSCE/Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

Cybersecurity is discussed in a two day workshop in Yerevan



Ambassador Andrey Sorokin, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, alongside Artashes Avoyan, the Chief of Staff of the Armenian National Security Council, during a two-day OSCE-supported workshop on global issues of cyber, information and communication technology security, Yerevan, 24 May 2012 (Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

Global issues of cyber, information and communication technology security were discussed during a two-day workshop held in Yerevan in May. Organized by Armenia's European Regional Educational Academy and the University at Albany of the State University of New York with the support of the OSCE Office in

Yerevan, the event sought to expand co-operation amongst national bodies and international actors dealing with cyber and ICT security and cybercrime.

Participants talked about the impact of social networks on political processes; security and privacy issues in social networks; threats to critical infrastructure, privacy and security policies; as well as the technological and legal aspects of forensics analysis, such as network forensics, email and internet tracing, wireless and handheld forensics.

A special session on e-passports was held as Armenia was planning to introduce biometric passports later in the year. Representatives from the Armenian State Tax Administration, Armenian Police Department of Visa and Registration, the Vienna-based OSCE Secretariat's Department on Addressing Transnational Threats, private institutions, civil society organizations and academia attended the workshop.

The Office further plans to support a three-week course on information security for the Academy's students and government officials in August 2012.

The Office supported Centre on Sustainable Development to provide environmental expertise

In March 2012, a Centre on Sustainable Development under the Geology and Geography faculty was established by the Office in partnership with the Yerevan State University Geology and Geography faculty. The Centre aims to raise awareness on the UN Sustainable Development activities that support the development of environmentally sound management principles of development. It engages the University staff and supports the provision of expertise on different environmental topics related to development with the goal of enhancing capacities of the Government and civil society to understand and work with these issues. The Centre also serves as a resource hub to support researchers in the field.

Training on third party interventions is organized by the Office and the Chamber of Advocates

In June the Office, in conjunction with the Chamber of Advocates, organized a two-day training workshop for some 25 lawyers and human rights defenders on third party intervention (*amicus curiae*) in constitutional and international human rights procedures. It aimed to further the efficiency of the judiciary by sharing the legal arguments pertaining to relevant cases which may have effected people other than the parties to the case. As a result, a group of lawyers will draft *amicus* briefs to be submitted to the Armenian Constitutional Court and the European Court on Human Rights on selected cases.

Police Open Days are held in several regions of Armenia

To augment Armenia's police reform process the Office, jointly with the police and the National Centre for Legal Researches NGO, organized police open days in the local police department in the regions of Armavir, Ararat, Tavush, Shirak and Aragatsotn. The events seek to familiarize high schools with the work and functions of the Police. Schoolchildren visited their local Police Departments, familiarized themselves with special means of protection and rode in police vehicles. In addition, interactive lectures and information were given on Police objectives and activities and on the problems related to the trafficking in human beings, drug abuse and corruption in order to raise awareness. Police Open Days are being covered by local TV channels, and school children share their experiences by preparing articles for local school newsletters and other social networks.



Police open days enhance the trust between the police and the public in the regions of Armenia. (OSCE/Laura Hayruni)

NEW PUBLICATIONS/STUDIES

Rights of National Minorities

The Office presented a compilation of the rights of national minorities at a workshop organized on 27 April. The compilation, translated into Armenian, was produced in co-operation with the Government Staff Department on National Minorities and Religious Affairs and the Foreign Ministry and it presents an overview of the provisions of the rights of national minorities based on international treaties ratified by Armenia as well as soft law documents and extracts from domestic legislation, including the recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Representatives from national minority communities, Presidential Administration, Human Rights Defender's Office and other state structures dealing with minority issues discussed further measures aimed at strengthening the awareness of national minority rights among politicians, the media and the general public. Participants at the workshop also discussed the use of minority languages in dealing with the administrative authorities, the correlation between the awareness of minority rights and improved legislation and practice, and the role of the Human Rights Defender's Office as an important remedy of minority rights. On 12 June, the Office jointly with the Council of Europe also supported a follow-up meeting of the Advisory Council in the context of a third monitoring cycle on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM).

Guidelines for Operational Police Involved in Community Policing

The Office supported the preparation of the *Guidelines for Operational Police Involved in Community Policing*. These guidelines were developed by a community policing expert invited by the Office to conduct trainings and develop relevant documents on both public order management and community policing. The booklet is intended to be an easy-to-use tool, including practical examples, for understanding best international practice in community policing within the context of policing in Armenia.

Training Manual for Combating Trafficking

On 10 February, the Office promulgated the publication of a comprehensive manual of training courses on combating trafficking for law enforcement personnel. The manual was prepared by four national experts as part of a multi-year regional project implemented by the OSCE Office in Yerevan in co-operation with the International Labour Organization and funded by the European Union. The training of trainers methodology prepared by the same group of national experts in 2011 helped equip Armenia's Law Enforcement academies with training materials to conduct anti-trafficking education.

AWARDS/COMPETITIONS

Students promote action to fight corruption

On 10 May, after the successful completion of an online / social media competition, the Office supported an awards ceremony in order to acknowledge merit in promoting anti-corruption in higher education. Approximately 30 people attended the event, which was organized in conjunction with the Office's Anti-corruption Student working group. Based on the number of "likes" on the Anti-corruption Student Working Group's Facebook page, designers of the top four most "liked" submissions gave short presentations of their work and received recognition on behalf of the OSCE.



One of the works submitted for anti-corruption student competition, painting by Hasmik Tonapetyan, 3rd place winner.

Promoting gender equality in Armenia

On 10 February, the fourth annual Na/Ne media award ceremony was organized by the Office in conjunction with the British Council, the British Embassy in Yerevan, the United Nations Population Fund and other supporters in the spirit of promoting better reporting on women's issues and women's achievements in Armenia. The contest received more than 225 contributions from 136 media outlets, journalists and other organizations. The selection committee, comprised of representatives of media, civil society and international organizations, selected the best works in the categories of TV and radio broadcasting, print, online, blog, photo story, and social and commercial ads.



The award ceremony for the Na/Ne (S/HE) annual competition recognizes the promotion of gender equality in the media, Yerevan, 10 February 2012. (OSCE/Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

About the OSCE

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) works for **stability, prosperity and democracy** in its 56 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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