

NEWSLETTER

OSCE Office in Yerevan

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ENGAGING YOUTH ON A LARGE-SCALE

The OSCE was engaged in youth promoting activities in different fields.

Model OSCE Conference



Around 60 young “Ambassadors” practiced their public speaking, international relations and negotiation skills in the Model OSCE conference, which is a simulation of the OSCE's core decision-making body – the Permanent Council. Participants tried hard advocating their agendas over a hypothetical conflict of rights of national minorities and self-determination of nations.



Students' Debates



OSCE continued its support to the Jinishian Memorial Foundation to organize the national debate contest among university students from 6 Armenian regions related to vulnerability to trafficking of men, women, and children. Over 40 students gathered in Yerevan in November to compete in debating, public speaking and researching skills.

Anti-corruption Education

Twenty five young people learned investigative journalism, photo reporting, participated in interactive games and debates in a four-day workshop on anti-corruption organized by Future is Yours NGO with OSCE support. Within the same framework five-day training on integrity and good governance was conducted by the Armenian Young Lawyers' Association for young practicing lawyers and law students from various universities across Armenia.



National Minorities Youth Camp



A one-week youth camp for national minorities brought together 35 young people aged 10 to 19 year old with diverse ethnic backgrounds. The initiative organized by the World Independent Youth Union with OSCE support aimed to promote intercultural dialogue and co-operation with Armenian peers through human rights education, volunteerism principles and familiarization with cultures.

BOOSTING REFORMS

Penal Reform



The OSCE helped members of the Expert Council on Prevention of Torture adjunct to the Human Rights Defender's Office (HRDO) to carry out monitoring visits to penitentiaries and other closed institutions throughout Armenia. Members of the group are representatives from civil society and the HRDO's staff. Their monitoring report contains practical recommendations to relevant state institutions regarding treatment of detainees, including healthcare and conditions in detention facilities.

On the occasion of Human Rights Day an art exhibition was held with OSCE support at the newly-opened penitentiary institution in Armavir, highlighting the need for rehabilitating and reintegrating convicted people into society. The exhibition entitled *Borderline Reality* included art works by the artist Samvel Saghatelyan and convicts from Sevan, Kosh and Abovyan penitentiary institutions.

Ensuring better co-ordination and collaboration among different state and non-state agencies dealing with juvenile offenders was the main objective of Office's supported forums held during May-July 2014 in Yerevan and in Armenian regions. Initiated by the Children's Support Centre the discussions aimed at mapping of all social services in Armenia provided to juvenile offenders and engaging them in reforms. The OSCE also organized a seminar on child friendly justice standards in European criminal law.



Promoting local democracy

The OSCE worked together with the Armenian Ministries of Justice and Territorial Administration and the Central Electoral Commission to develop a new concept and a draft law on Local Referenda. The local referendum is an important democracy tool allowing citizens' direct participation through voting on issues of local importance. The current law on Local Referenda does not provide an adequate framework for local decision-making through voting. With OSCE support a study visit to Switzerland and Germany was organized for state officials and civil society to learn about the practical application of local referendum laws.

Dialogue on Environmental Issues

The OSCE promoted a dialogue between the Armenian Ministry of Nature Protection and civil society representatives on various environmental issues. The two areas of concern highlighted by environmentalists were mining and hydro power stations. Through Aarhus Centres, the Yerevan State University's Centre on Sustainable Development as well as the Centre on Economic-Legal Analysis NGO, supported by the OSCE, a series of trainings, seminars as well as surveys were conducted containing recommendations mainstreaming good environmental governance and environmental justice.

WORKSHOPS

International Workshop on OSCE Document



The OSCE and Armenia's Ministry of Defence, in partnership with the NATO Building Integrity Programme, organized an international workshop on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security on 16 to 17 October in Yerevan. Participants shared their knowledge and experience on the Code's commitments, best practices on security sector governance and reforms, human rights in armed forces, civilian control of the security sector and synergies between NATO and OSCE commitments. The Code is a unique OSCE mechanism promoting the co-operative and comprehensive nature of security helping countries to develop mechanisms of democratic civilian control.

Partnership on domestic violence

The OSCE helped the Social Justice NGO to develop and promote partnership model between the Police and other stakeholders for effective prevention of and reaction on domestic violence. This pilot project was implemented in Kanaker-Zeitun, Avan and Nor Norq communities of Yerevan and in Vanadzor. The three realistic models of community-based domestic violence response were developed based on over 70 meetings and workshops held in pilot districts as well as on the analysis of the best international practices in multiagency responding models to domestic violence cases. The need for legislative regulation of the domestic violence field, expanding the functions of police officers in that field, training of designated police staff, elaboration of relevant manuals and guidelines were among the recommendations presented by the Project team.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Human Rights in the Armed Forces

6 four-day train-the-trainers courses on human rights were conducted by the Protection of Rights without Borders NGO with OSCE support for Armenian Armed Forces personnel in 3 regions of Armenia during September-December. The aim of the course is to strengthen protection of human rights in the Armed Forces. The training methodology was based on OSCE/ODIHR's Handbook and the teaching manual developed by the Office.

Reporting on Penal System

Some 15 journalists and camera operators from Yerevan and regional media outlets discussed the rules of accurate reporting on issues and cases related to people in detention or imprisonment. There was a particular focus on journalistic ethics related to covering media items on juveniles and life-term prisoners. The workshop was organized by the Helsinki Committee of Armenia with OSCE support.

EVENTS / PUBLICATIONS

Environmental Education Network



On 18 November Ambassador Andrey Sorokin, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Education Network. The Memorandum will create a platform for enhancing Armenian Government's efforts in promoting and ensuring environmental education at all school levels and communities. The initiative envisages co-operation among 15 NGOs and four supporting international agencies including the OSCE.



Compilation of Cassation Court's Decisions

On October 10 the Office in co-operation with the Cassation Court organized a presentation of compilation of the decisions of the Cassation Court and their interpretations to guarantee the unified application of the law and promote judicial reform in Armenia. The fifth edition of 54 Criminal Chamber decisions from 2013 and the second edition of legal interpretations by an expert group were designed to serve as a reference tool for judges and lawyers.

Report on Digital Switchover

The report produced by the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression with OSCE support analyzes the process of transition from analogue to digital broadcasting that will take place in Armenian from 1 July 2015. It focuses on legal, technical and social aspects of the switchover.

Survey on Use of Social Media

The OSCE supported preparation of a survey on how Armenian journalists use information from social media. Authored by the "Region" Research Centre of Armenia it includes interviews with 100 media professional from print, TV, radio and online media providers and monitoring of nine mainstream media outlets, including five online and one print, as well as six programmes of three TV channels.

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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