

## NEWSLETTER

OSCE Office in Yerevan

No. 9

July 2014



## PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

The OSCE raised wider public awareness on the draft Concept Paper on Constitutional Reform. The OSCE Office, together with partners from the USAID Support to the National Assembly Programme, the European Union Delegation and GIZ, organized a series of discussions around the draft Concept.

Three public discussions involving civil society actors were conducted in May, focusing on the issues of human rights, the judiciary and the separation of powers. Members of the Specialized Commission on Constitutional Reform,

including the Chairman of the Constitutional Court, presented proposed reform options. Another debate was organized for the leaders of major parliamentary factions and extra-

parliamentary forces in June. The event focused on the reasoning and necessity of constitutional reform and on the governmental and electoral systems being considered.

## Universal Rights Award



The OSCE, US Embassy, EU Delegation, British Embassy, Council of Europe, UN and Counterpart International honoured individuals working to promote various aspects of human rights in Armenia at the Universal Rights Awards Ceremony on June 19 in Yerevan. William Hanlon, the Deputy Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, presented the "Government Reformer" Award to Davit Tonoyan, the First Deputy Minister of Defence (on the photo), in recognition of his efforts to promote human rights in the army. Other awardees included lawyers Artak Zeynalyan and Ara Ghazaryan (Freedom Defender), "We are not paying 150 Drams" initiative (Civic Activism), Lara Aharonian from the Women's Resource Centre (Woman of Courage), Hetq.am (Media Excellence), Head of Karahunj Community Lusine Avetyan (Local Government Reformer), and Laura Movsisian, the Director of the Paediatric Rehabilitation Centre (Community Service).

# BOOSTING REFORMS

## Regulatory Guillotine: Progress



**The Office continues to support the reform initiative - the Rapid Regulatory Guillotine. The objective of this project is to significantly reduce and simplify the rules and regulations in Armenia in order to promote economic development, reduce corruption risks, and provide a better system of overall governance.**

The first phase of the project was successfully completed in April 2014. Nine key sectors of the economy have been reviewed and these included: tax and customs, entrepreneurship, culture, foreign affairs, transport, healthcare and social issues and public utilities. As a result, legal requirements for businesses have been cut which translates to approximately 60 percent reduction in the costs of doing business, about AMD 25 billion (€44 million). This can represent some 0.6 percent boost to Armenian GDP if the reforms are fully implemented by the government. The second phase has

just been launched with a plan to review the remaining eight sectors of the economy.

On June 2-4 a series of OSCE-supported training sessions for civil servants of several ministry and state agencies were organized to promote the involvement of Armenian ministries in the Regulatory Guillotine project. Participants learned about the current reform process and were trained on the Guillotine methodology. They also explored common regulatory mistakes that hamper the market environment and good practices in regulatory consultation.

## Climate Change and Security

The Office organized a National Consultation Workshop as part of the *Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus* project implemented within Environment and Security Initiative to examine recent analyses of the trends and impacts of climate change in Armenia. Government and civil society representatives discussed and reviewed the background paper on climate change issues prepared for South Caucasus countries, and provided recommendations for reducing the potential security risks posed by climate change. The results from these discussions will feed into a report on climate change and security to be further discussed at regional consultation workshops later this year.

## Learning Swiss experience

A delegation of Armenian police officers visited Switzerland from March 31-April 4 with OSCE support. They met with the Director of The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF) Ambassador Winkler and his Deputy Dr. Philipp Fluri, to discuss co-operation priorities. The delegation also met DCAF experts on trafficking, migration, asylum and gender issues, and visited the Chablais municipal police division in Aigle to familiarize themselves with the daily activities of the Swiss police. The Armenian representatives also visited the Savatan Police Academy to study their educational programmes and training courses. A co-operation programme was agreed upon by the Armenian Police and the DCAF, which envisages holding a number of OSCE-supported events that will contribute to further development of the Armenian police system.



## People with Special Needs

A roundtable discussion was organized on April 30 by the OSCE, National Tempus Office in Armenia, and the Bridge of Hope NGO to identify the needs and challenges of people with disabilities.





## Reporting on judicial proceedings

A two-day training session for media representatives was organized on February 15-16, in cooperation with the Armenian Judicial Department. The goal was to promote transparency of the judicial system in Armenia through professional reporting. Some 25 participants looked at the specifics of professional media coverage of the judiciary, ways to better present the work of the courts to the public, challenges in covering judicial cases, and means to foster public trust in the courts.

## Promoting tolerance

Training courses on the freedom of religion were organized in April and May. The first one, organized in co-operation with the Council of Europe, focused on Articles 9 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights and its relevant case law. Local experts also gave presentations on Armenian legislation and judicial practice.

The second two-day training event targeted journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders and were conducted in co-operation with Collaboration for Democracy NGO to discuss the inter-relationship between freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief. The event highlighted the state of religious tolerance and freedom of religion or belief in Armenia. It also strengthened the capacity of lawyers and human rights defenders to protect and cover religious issues in the courts, the media and society.

# CAPACITY BUILDING

## Training on information security



Two training courses were organized by the OSCE on June 9-20 to enhance the capacities of the police and other relevant bodies in countering and investigating cyber-crimes. Around 25 participants from different departments of the Police, the Ministry of Defence, and other bodies of the security sector participated in the training session led by an expert from the United States. The course covered both the fundamentals of information security and advanced approaches in tracing and reacting to cyber-attacks. Participants gained the technical skills needed for effective security implementation, as well as for analyzing cyber-incidents and countering threats.

## Moot court competition



High school students from Ijevan participated in simulated court proceedings organized by the Office in co-operation with the Armenian Cassation Court and National Centre for Legal Research NGO. The exercise raised awareness on Armenian legislation and judicial procedures among high school students from Armenia's regions. One group of students acted as the defence and the other team as the prosecution in criminal case hearings and the scenario was developed by the NGO experts on the basis of a precedent decision of the Cassation Court. The competition was followed by a discussion between students and judges on the case law of the Cassation Court.

# EVENTS / PUBLICATIONS

## Guidelines on Combating Human Trafficking

A publication for Armenian consular officers was prepared by the staff of the OSCE anti-trafficking project to help define presumed cases of trafficking and the initial identification of victims.

## Communication and Negotiation

The OSCE supported the development and publication of a Communication and Negotiation brochure used during a training course for 140 community policing officers.

## Litigation for public interests

The Office organized a workshop on March 24 to discuss national and international standards on the right of NGOs and civil society organizations to apply to the courts to protect public interests. A follow-up civil society initiative, with support from the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Department, will conduct research and present a model that could serve as a basis for amendments to corresponding legislation.



## Photo exhibition



"Freedom of the Press: the Right to Know" is the theme of an exhibition that opened in Yerevan on May 5 to mark World Press Freedom Day. This is the fourth year that the Freedom of Information Centre, in co-operation with the EU Delegation to Armenia and the OSCE Office, has sponsored the exhibition. The exhibition reflected the challenges and opportunities of exercising citizens' right to information. More than 70 photos and caricatures displayed in the exhibition will be published in a special catalogue devoted to World Press Freedom Day.

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.

For more information, please contact the OSCE Office in Yerevan at Sundukyan 64/1, tel. (00 374 10) 229610/11/12, e-mail: [yerevan-am@osce.org](mailto:yerevan-am@osce.org), web-site: <http://www.osce.org/yerevan>