

Police Reform gathers speed in Armenia

Since 2009 the OSCE Office in Yerevan has been involved in assisting the police undergo a major reform process which involves the introduction of a new democratic policing approach. The reform gained renewed impetus in April 2011 when the practical work started in several directions.

Based on the new co-operation agreement, several joint OSCE-Police working groups have been established to work on the implementation strategies of the new police education system, a community policing



Public Outreach Station at Komitas str. 35/3, provides 24-hour service to the citizens of Arabkir community(OSCE/Gohar Avagyan)

model throughout the country, and new public order management techniques. All changes undertaken serve one ultimate goal – the police providing a service to the “people” rather than acting as “state” representatives.

The reasons for launching these ambitious reforms were highlighted in a 2008 opinion poll conducted in Yerevan which indicated that people did not feel that the police treated them with respect and that they failed to serve the interest of the public. The poll also helped to identify the current shortcomings in the system. Clearly there was a lack of trust between the police and the system needed substantial reformation.

With the assistance of the Office, a pilot community policing project was successfully accomplished in Arabkir police department. As a result, two outreach stations were built in the heart of the community, which are manned 24/7 by community officers, equipped with new technologies and training as well as a radical new approach to policing. Local inhabitants are encouraged to drop by to ask for information or to ask for help in times of need. This is complemented by the Citizen's Advisory Group, an assembly of citizens which takes place on a regular basis within the district, a market place of ideas where community solutions to problems can be discussed.

The modernization of the police education system is another area where the OSCE has been providing support to the Armenian authorities. The new concept based on the European long life learning model was developed by an OSCE expert. It envisages a 4-layer education (instead of the previously existing 2 layers), including a 6-month basic police training course for cadets, 2 years secondary education for all officers, followed by another 3-year Bachelor's and 1-year Master's degree for leadership positions. The new model will come into force from 1 October.

Road Safety Week in Armenia

The month of May saw a series of public events take place in Yerevan, aimed at promoting road safety. The events were jointly organized by the OSCE Office in Yerevan, the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI) and the Armenian National Road Safety Council (NRSC) as part of a worldwide campaign launched to mark the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. The campaign's goal is to raise awareness of road safety rules among drivers and pedestrians, with a special focus on schoolchildren.

Over the course of the month Armenian schoolchildren together with road police officers gave advice to pedestrians on road safety, distributed various flyers and promotional gifts. The children were also given the chance to participate in repainting a pedestrian crossing area in Yerevan. At the end of the Week 48 schoolchildren were able to test their knowledge of traffic rules in an interactive team quiz game called “What? Where? When?”



Schoolchildren help re-paint a pedestrian crossing in H.Kochar street in Yerevan (OSCE/Gayane Ter-Stepanyan)

Tajik Officials learn Armenian experience of developing renewable energy resources

Fourteen government officials from Tajikistan visited Armenia from 20 to 25 June to learn about Armenia's experience with designing policy priorities and a legislative and institutional framework for developing its renewable energy potential. The visit was organized by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

The participants of the study tour included members of the inter-ministerial working group established with the support of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan and the Norwegian Foreign Ministry.

During the course of the visit, the participants met government officials as well as representatives of the independent regulatory commission, research and development institutions, and the private sector. Discussion topics included such issues as renewable energy policy, attracting private investment, tariff policies and hydropower potential

assessment methods.

The Tajik representatives also learned about Armenia's experience with the Clean Development Mechanism established by the Kyoto Protocol, which allows countries to earn and trade certified emission reduction credits. The OSCE Office in Yerevan supported Armenia's participation in the mechanism.



Tajik delegation gets acquainted with the operation of the small hydropower station at Aghstev river, June 2011 (Bilorom Saidova)

OSCE Office contributes to the Aarhus Convention implementation in Armenia

Since 2002 the Office has supported 15 Aarhus Centres which cover almost all the regions of Armenia. These centres have become one of the main enforcement bodies of national legislation through contributing to environmental good governance and creating conditions for effective public participation.

In 2011 the Office continued to provide support to the Government to help address implementation challenges of the Aarhus Convention. A round-table discussion which was held in Yerevan on 20 May to evaluate the progress of its implementation in Armenia was organized by the Transparency International Anti-Corruption Centre and the Armenian Association of Investigative Journalists with the Office's support. Representatives of civil society, state institutions, the Aarhus Convention Secretariat, and international and diplomatic missions

participated in the discussion. Participants were eager to join their efforts to contribute to the implementation of the Convention and ensure that members of the public are afforded appropriate opportunities to participate effectively in environmental decision-making processes.



Pollution from mining activities remains in the focus of Office's attention, Alaverdi, December 2010 (ENVSEC/Viktor Mello)

Anti-corruption student campaign in Yerevan and Gyumri

The Office-supported Anti-Corruption Student Working Group concluded the first round of an awareness raising campaign in universities. The group organized a number of presentations for the student community on the findings of a recent survey on perception of corruption. The presentations were followed by a discussion on corruption, higher education reforms and the implications of the Bologna process in Armenia. The anti-corruption student working group is now preparing for a slogan contest and a comprehensive student anti-corruption campaign planned for the fall of 2011.

The Economic and Environmental Dimension is one of the three dimensions in which the OSCE operates. Economic prosperity is one of the cornerstones of stability and environmental hazards do not respect borders. These facts put the work of this dimension at the very heart of security. This dimension's activities include such initiatives as support and co-operation between the OSCE states on the strengthening of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), fight against corruption and money laundering, management of natural resources, disposal of toxic waste and environmental awareness and encouraging citizen's participation in taking decisions.

Civic Action for Security and Environment (CASE)

Over the past year the Office in Yerevan has been supporting 17 CASE projects across Armenia, ranging from "Public Awareness raising on Environmental Problems" in Goris to "Environmental Impact of Strong Earthquakes" in Yerevan. CASE is a small grants programme for civil society organizations to help them address environment and security challenges, in co-operation with their governments. It is supported by the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC).

Promoting effective state regulatory system in Armenia

In response to the Government request, the Office invited a leading international expert in regulatory reform Scott Jacobs who carried out a rapid assessment of Armenia's business environment and tools for creating better state regulatory management system. He presented key findings at a series of workshops with participation of Government representatives, think-tanks and business community. Mr. Jacobs concluded that there are many outdated and contradictory regulations that impede business development in the country and that a regulatory guillotine should be performed in Armenia. The regulatory guillotine is a reform that counts, reviews and simplifies the national regulatory framework and ultimately facilitates a more business friendly environment. The guillotine has been performed in many countries world wide and has resulted in an increase in business activities and foreign direct investment.

OSCE promotes Women's Resource Centres in Armenia

The OSCE Office in Yerevan continues to support Women's Resource Centres (WRC) in Goris, Kapan and Meghri as part of its objective to create a sustainable regional network of active centres to serve as a meeting space for women and as service centres promoting entrepreneurship. Each of the centres has been busy during the first half of 2011.

Goris was a hive of activity. The centre expanded the activities of their Handicraft Club by involving more women and developing new products. They also opened a crisis centre, established a blog and succeeded in publishing a number of articles as well 30 video reports.

Meanwhile Kapan's Women's Resource Centre developed a unique traveller's guide entitled "Discover Kapan," opened their business and conducted several educational courses for their beneficiaries.

In Meghri the centre organized several community mobilising campaigns including: "Let's Return to Our Roots," "Stop Smoking," "International Children's Day," and "Women and Cancer." Meghri WRC also established a journalists' club, completed trainings for 5 female tourist

guides, developed 3 sightseeing tours in Meghri and recruited 2 new board members.

During this period two coordination meetings of the WRCs took place which allowed the centres to share information and develop joint activities. Also, two representatives of the centres took part in the Open World Leaders Programme in 28 March – 7 April in US and a representative from Goris WRC was involved in the Emerging Leaders Programme 29 April - 15 May in US.



Women participating in a handicraft workshop in Kapan, 2011 (OSCE/Kapan Women Resource Centre)

Co-operation with Yerevan municipality

The Office continued co-operation at the level of local administration and, by request of the new Mayor, provided international advisory support to the Yerevan municipality. This included a three-month secondment of an international municipal expert to advise on a wide range of issues pertaining to recycling, condominiums, financial oversight, economic development, public-private partnership, asset management and procurement.

Yerevan Mayor Karen Karapetyan appreciated the co-operation with the OSCE Office and added: "Programs addressing the professional growth of municipality staff, developing their skills and abilities are

very important to us. They have already given positive results and we expect continuation of our co-operation in the future, in other areas as well"

One of the core elements included a comprehensive staff training-needs assessment, which will lay the foundation for development of further training schemes for municipal staffers. The series of training courses as well as experience exchange opportunities are planned for 2011-2012.

In addition, the Office has arranged for coordination of donor assistance to the Yerevan municipality and organized a joint meeting of potential donors with the Mayor.



(Photolur photo agency/Melik Baghdasaryan)

International Children's Day

On the occasion of International Children's Day on 1 June the OSCE Office in Yerevan donated medical equipment to Yerevan State Medical University's Mouratsan Hospital, which specializes in treating children with haematological problems.

The donation, which also includes toys and stationary items, was made possible by the proceeds from the OSCE Charity Ball.

The medical equipment included a perfusor with systems, a water bath for plasma, an oximeter and a haemoglobin-meter.

Visitors

Audronius Ažubalis
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania
OSCE Chairperson-in-Office

17-19 March

Petros Efthymiou
President, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

9-11 May

Janez Lenarčič
Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

9-10 March

Trainings

PR at the MoD

On 26 & 27 April, the Office organized training on public relations for the Information Service of the MoD which included interactive and practical exercises on interaction with media and public at large.



Freedom of Assembly

Some 50 representatives from political parties, municipalities and judges participated in three workshops on freedom of assembly from 20 to 22 June.

Civil Service Training

The Office supported the annual training of civil servants based on the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Guidelines and Training Module.

Events

On 17 February the Office co-hosted a discussion on Armenia's legislative reform on freedom of religion or belief.

On 22 February a discussion on human rights protection in the army and the international practice in the field was co-organized by the Office.

On 10 March an international conference was organized with ODIHR to review implementation of recommendations made on the trials related to 2008 post-election violence in Armenia.

OSCE-supported monitoring report outlines recommendations for Armenian Detention Centres

On June 20th representatives of the Armenian police and various civil society groups attended a discussion at the Congress Hotel in Yerevan organized by the Open Society Foundations-Armenia. The focus of the discussion was a report by the Group of Public Observers (GPO), a group established by a decree of the Head of the Armenian Police back in 2006.

The GPO's role is an important one; they are a significant part of efforts to bring Armenian police detention centers in line with national legislation and international human rights standards. In particular their work consists of a series of assessments, carried out in detention centers throughout Armenia, assessing detention conditions as well as medical services all of which is brought together in an annual report.

The discussion was held to present the GPO's 2010 annual report which outlined a number of problems, including an absence of medical staff, insufficient food rations and poor conditions in terms of humidity, ventilation and lighting in some premises. Yet it is important to note that the report also



noted some improvements such as repairs and improved heating in some police detention centers.

The resulting discussion provided an opportunity for both the police, and the civil society groups represented, to respond to the report's findings through interacting with its authors and providing the civil society groups with an opportunity to ask the police representatives about some of the reports findings. The police took the opportunity to welcome the report and insisted that many of the issues had either already been resolved or would be improved shortly.

The OSCE/ODIHR and DCAF Handbook on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Armed Forces Personnel was translated into Armenian and published by the Office with the OSCE/ODIHR support.

A study to review the state and progress of implementation of European Court on Human Rights judgements was implemented by the Chamber of Advocates and independent experts and supported by the Office.

The sociological study "Gender Dimension of Civic and Political Participation in Armenia" was translated into English and published with support from the Office.

Media reform in focus of OSCE

Last year the Government of Armenia decriminalized defamation which was a significant step towards greater media freedom in the country. Yet over the past few months there have been growing concerns over the number of defamation court cases resulting in the warding of large sums in damages. Indeed in March the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media raised concerns at some specific cases where amounts of up to 12,500 Euro have been awarded to claimants.

To remedy the situation the OSCE Office supported a two-day training workshop in Yerevan in June, organized by the Europe in Law Association (ELA) together with ARTICLE 19 (UK). The workshop aimed to build the knowledge and capacity of some 20 Armenian journalists from electronic and print media and equip them with the essential legal expertise to be able to protect their right to freedom of expression in Armenian and international court proceedings.

The broadcasting legislation remained in the focus of the Office's attention. OSCE media expert who provided several reviews of Armenia's broadcasting legislation visited Armenia in April to introduce his main findings and discuss the newly proposed draft to the Broadcasting Law, developed by the NGO community. The new package is now in the Parliament.

Acknowledging the growing impact of blogging and new media technologies, the Office supported a series of trainings for educators and journalists from the regions on new media tools and techniques.

Ambassador's Farewell

"Almost four years since I became Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan have certainly been eventful", said Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan who is completing his mission in Armenia in fall 2011. "I believe that during this time we have accomplished much and yet there are still many areas where further work remains. I wish my successor and the Office staff continued success in their efforts to strengthen all the three dimensions of security in Armenia."



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.

For more information, please contact the OSCE Office in Yerevan at **Sundukyan 64/1**, tel. (00374 10) 229610/11/12, **email: yerevan-am@osce.org**, **Web-site: <http://www.osce.org/yerevan>**