

The OSCE Office in Yerevan: Ten years on the path of democracy

2010 is an anniversary year for the OSCE Office in Yerevan as 10 years ago the Office started its operations. Initially a small field operation with a staff of 10, it currently has 56 staff members, including seven international officers. The broad mandate of the Office includes support to the Armenian Government and society at different levels in implementing OSCE commitments in the politico/military, economic/environmental and human dimension.

“Assessing the ten years of the Office's operation is a challenging task. One can register successes and setbacks, both for the country's development and for the activities of our operation,” remarks Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, the Head of the Office. “But what is important is the fact that Armenia now is definitely not the country it was ten years ago. And I believe our Office has played its part in contributing to these processes.”

The Office in Yerevan jointly with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has worked to develop legislation in line with international standards and OSCE commitments. Another important direction of the Office's work has been to strengthen the professional capacities of state institutions and civil society.

In the politico-military field, long-term activities aimed at democratic development of the police are worth mentioning. The Office has helped to introduce community based policing in Armenia and works for reform of the police educational system as well as the improved democratic control of the armed forces.

In the economic arena the Office has initiated measures to promote small- and medium-sized enterprises by assisting in improving procedures and state support policies. The 15 Aarhus Centres operating in Armenia today play a crucial role in engaging especially the rural population in solving local environmental problems.

In the human dimension the Office in Yerevan has supported the establishment and operation of the ombudsperson institution, promoted



Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan (left) and Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian (right) at the concert organized on the occasion of the Office's 10-year anniversary, 15 October 2010 (OSCE)

gender equality, encouraged youth participation in democratic processes and promoted freedom of the media. It co-operates with state institutions and civil society to fight trafficking in human beings and to develop and implement an efficient migration policy. Among the main achievements of the Office in the criminal justice field were the establishment and operation of public monitoring groups for penitentiary institutions and police detention centres, jointly with the Ministry of Justice and relevant NGOs.

On the occasion of the 10-year anniversary the Office together with the Armenian Foreign Ministry organized a classical concert on 15 October by the Armenian National Philharmonic Orchestra.

Senior Police Adviser to the OSCE Secretary General visits Armenia

On 24 and 25 November, the newly appointed OSCE Senior Police Adviser Knut Dreyer visited Armenia to get acquainted with the progress of the police reform. In the course of the visit Dreyer met with a number of high officials to discuss police accountability and its democratic oversight, the challenges of educational reform, the anti-corruption measures in the law enforcement, as well as continuing introduction of community based policing.

“Without effective law enforcement and genuine respect for the rule of law and the institutions responsible for upholding it, there can be little likelihood of social, political or economic stability. Well-prepared police officers will provide a better service to the population,” Dreyer said.

The OSCE Senior Police Adviser also visited the two outreach stations opened with the OSCE's support in Arabkir district of Yerevan, as well as the Police Centre for Induction Training and the Police Academy – the two educational institutions that prepare policemen in Armenia.



Nation-wide Model OSCE organized in Yerevan

On 5 and 6 November, the first Armenian nation-wide Model OSCE Conference was organized with participation of 64 students from Armenian regions. The participants of the simulation exercise discussed migration and trafficking problems and drafted an action plan to prevent the illegal flow of labour migrants from an imaginary country. Seminars on the OSCE structure and mechanisms to combat trafficking, as well as trainings on international relations, public speaking and negotiation skills were organized for participants prior to the event. As a follow up networking tool, the students created a group in the <http://www.facebook.com>.

Transparency and accountability key in reform of Armenia's election law, participants say at OSCE-supported meeting

A high-level symposium on electoral reform was organized on 22 and 23 November. Participants from political parties, the Central Electoral Commission, civil society, other state structures and the international community exchanged views on how to improve Armenia's electoral code in advance of the 2012 parliamentary elections.

"All stakeholders' participation in the process of amending the election code is crucial to ensure that the public accepts the code and trusts the electoral process", said Ambassador Sergey Kapinos, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Hovik Abrahamyan, the Chairman of the Armenian National Assembly, acknowledged several problems that need to be addressed by electoral reform and among them the lack of public confidence in the electoral process.

Experts from the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and other international bodies provided examples of international best practice on election administration, political and campaign finance, the use of administrative resources, electoral disputes

and their adjudication as well as the prevention of election fraud.

It is expected that the conclusions of the meeting will be reflected in the amendments to the Election Code that are to be presented to the National Assembly before the final adoption of the Code planned for early 2011.

The event was jointly organized with the United States Agency for International Development, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Delegation of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Armenian National Assembly and the Central Electoral Commission.



Ambassador Sergey Kapinos (left), Hovik Abrahamyan, Chairman of the Armenian National Assembly (middle) and Mari Yovanovitch, US Ambassador to Armenia (right) opening the symposium, 22 November 2010 (IFES)

Enhancing cyber-security

On 8 December the Office together with the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) organized a national expert workshop, which addressed cyber-security in a comprehensive manner by focusing on

terrorist use of the Internet, cyber crime and related threats. Participants included staff from the National Security Council, National Security Service, the Police, Central Bank and several ministries. They looked at the impact of potential attacks and discussed countermeasures, pertinent legal frameworks and lessons learned and best practices, especially in protecting critical infrastructure. A number of international and local experts shared their practices and highlighted the importance of co-operation with Internet service providers and other private sector actors in the fight against cyber crime. As a result of the workshop a set of recommendations has been prepared and an inter-departmental task force will be set up to implement them.



OSCE assists justice reform in Armenia

A series of seminars was organized aimed at implementation of recommendations laid down in ODIHR's trial monitoring report, which concerned the trials after the post-election violence in Yerevan in March 2008. In co-operation with ODIHR the Office provided international legal expertise on the concept for the new criminal procedure code and organised a number of workshop discussions. The Ministry of Justice presented a concept for the new criminal procedure code

prepared by a working group led by the Minister. The OSCE recommendations call for the improvement of human rights safeguards in criminal proceedings and strengthening the role of the defense in legal proceedings.

The new code is to be submitted to parliament in March 2011.

An expert assessment of crime data collection by the Prosecutor's Office was commissioned with a view to streamline the process and prevent procedural mistakes.

IN BRIEF

OSCE Office helps develop Armenia's State Migration Concept

Aware of the importance for Armenia of having a migration strategy the Office selected a national expert to work with the Government on the revision of the Armenian State Migration Concept Paper. The main objective is to help the country to develop a multi-year plan of action to anticipate migration flows and facilitate the Government's response.

OSCE Office provided legislative expertise on broadcast digitalization

On 30 September the Office organized a seminar on the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting, where an OSCE expert from Latvia presented that country's experience in the field, the pitfalls and the ways to avoid them. Another discussion was held on 13-15 October by the Ombudsman led working group established on the initiative of the Armenian President where experts from the OSCE and the Council of Europe reiterated their recommendations to improve the current broadcasting legislation.

Tolerance day marked by the OSCE Office

Around 100 students from secondary schools, children from night care centres and from Abovyan penitentiary institution participated in training courses on human rights, ethics and aesthetics and professional orientation in film-screening and handicrafts. The participants' work was exhibited at a fair on 16 November and the winners of painting and essay contests were announced. The project, implemented by the 'Future is Yours' NGO aims to contribute to rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and socialization of children from night care centres through educational, social, human rights awareness and capacity-building activities and development of teen-agers' skills of various social backgrounds.

Rock for Human Rights

"Speak Up, Stop Discrimination" was the slogan of a rock concert and a human rights fair organized on 10 December with the support of the OSCE Office in Yerevan to mark international Human Rights Day in Armenia. The event, co-organized with the UN Department of Public Information (UN DPI) and Armenia's Human Rights Defender's Office was aimed at raising awareness among young people in Armenia about human rights and to actively stand up for them. Human rights activists and defenders, NGOs from Yerevan and regions of Armenia presented their activities and distributed information on human rights to the general public. Four rock bands, "Degh", "An Gordonach!", "Vordan Karmir" and "The Beautiful Project" performed at the event.



Exchange of experience

An Armenian delegation participated in the UN Conference on Competition Policy in Geneva with the Office's support

The conference, held from 8-12 November in Geneva aimed at reviewing multilaterally agreed principles and rules for the control of restrictive business practices. The development of competition law and policy, international cooperation and exchange of best practices, including the provision of technical assistance and capacity building for interested member countries were the issues discussed during the Conference. The OSCE Office in Yerevan supported the participation of a high-level Armenian delegation headed by the Minister of Economy. Participants addressed the problems

arising from monopolization and defined the types of national and international measures needed to ensure that anti-competitive practices do not impede the benefits from liberalization of trade and investment in developing countries. In the course of the conference the results of a voluntary peer-review of Armenian competition law and policy, prepared together with the Office, was presented. The Head of Office, Ambassador Kapinos, delivered a key note speech outlining the current status, development needs and opportunities to support the Armenian competition policy framework.

Training for municipal staff

Following the first Yerevan municipal elections in 2009 and within the framework of its capacity building activities, the Office has embarked on supporting the newly elected Yerevan City Council and the municipality in building professional capacities of its staff. As a pilot project the Office initiated a three-week training course for 20 staff members of Yerevan municipality and its regional districts. The Office commissioned the renowned Institute for Housing and Urban Management (IHS) of Rotterdam, The Netherlands, a comprehensive needs assessment which outlined the thematic scope and target audience of the course. On the basis of this assessment, the modules of the training were planned jointly with the Office.

Three training modules were conducted in the course of October and November. They addressed the issues of overall urban management and strategic planning, local economic development and finance through presenting contemporary approaches and best practices from other cities.

“Worldwide, big cities face challenges which cannot be solved and financed by the authorities alone: involvement of the private sector, non-



governmental organizations and the community at large require new skills in resource mobilization, participatory strategic planning and action planning, while the public administration has to become more performance oriented, transparent and communicative,” explained Hans Teerlink, the IHS expert who visited Yerevan for the needs assessment.

The programme is planned to continue in 2011. Selected participants of the training course will participate in exchange visits to European municipalities which represent good practice.

The OSCE-established *Anti-Trafficking Support and Resource Unit (ATSRU)* continues strengthening national anti-trafficking capacity

In summer the ASTRU organized a study tour to Warsaw and Prague for state and civil society representatives to learn from good practices in the field of mutual co-operation on victim assistance.

In order to promote civil servants' understanding of the phenomenon of human trafficking in the context of human rights and to improve the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) the ATSRU has supported the development of a comprehensive anti-trafficking training module for civil servants. As labour trafficking is a priority issue for Armenia, training for labour inspectors will be an important segment of the follow up training activities.

The final draft of the module has been submitted to the Armenian Civil Service Council for adoption and incorporation in the civil servants training curriculum.

In the course of 2010 ATSRU specialists conducted seminars and training courses for law enforcement and social anti-trafficking actors and held a national forum in December to discuss ways for effective co-operation and implementation of the NRM.

Community based policing to penetrate Armenian provinces with OSCE support

The Office supported the creation of a pilot community based policing model in Arabkir district of Yerevan in 2007-2009. One of the components of the Government's police reform is the cascading of community based policing throughout Armenia on the basis of the experience from Arabkir district. The Office helps a police working group to develop a national wide model of community policing and a deployment strategy.

In support of these endeavours the Office organized a series of awareness-raising roundtables in the provinces of Armenia. The meetings help to bring the public and the police together to discuss the general principles of democratic policing, its practical implementation, good international practices and the findings of the survey conducted by the Office to identify the prevalent attitude of the public towards the police. The public is encouraged to form citizen's advisory groups to identify the most pressing security-related problems in their respective communities and discuss them further with their police officers. This initiative helps to bring closer the public and the police and show the benefits of this undertaking.

Co-operation with the National Assembly

The Office jointly with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Centre for OSCE Research in Hamburg (CORE) organized a research competition on comparative policy matters among Parliamentary expert staff. Fourteen staffers took part and wrote essays on issues such as corruption risk analysis, protection of political minorities, social security and parliamentary ethics. The winners were announced and awarded at a ceremony at the National Assembly in October.

With a view to enhance international experience of the National Assembly staff and foster inter-parliamentary exchange, the Office supported a study visit of a group of parliamentary staffers to Slovenia in November. In Ljubljana they got acquainted with the organizational aspects of the parliamentary work in Slovenia as well as practical insights into the work of the commissions and the skills involved.



OSCE Office supported public monitoring of conditions in Armenian Defence Ministry's disciplinary isolators and penal battalion

The results of a study implemented by the 'Civil Society Institute' NGO were the focus of a discussion organized on 20 July with participation of representatives from the Defence Ministry, the National Assembly, civil society and international organizations. In the course of 2009 the monitoring team visited all disciplinary cells and the penal battalion, observed the conditions and treatment of persons deprived of their liberty, reviewed relevant legislative acts and suggested a number of recommendations.

In particular, the report proposed bringing detention conditions in line with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and European Prison Rules, as well as introducing legislative amendments to ensure long-term visits to convicted persons in the battalion. It also discussed in detail the use of isolation as a form of disciplinary sanction.

The publication was supported by the OSCE Office in Yerevan to promote the human rights of the persons deprived of their liberty and the armed forces personnel.



Anniversary publication of 3 key OSCE documents

In the anniversary year 2010 the official Armenian translation of the three principal documents of the OSCE -- the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, Charter of Paris for New Europe of 1990, Copenhagen Document of 1990 -- was prepared and published by the Office jointly with the Armenian Foreign Ministry.

Survey on the perception of corruption in Armenian universities

The Office supported a survey on perception of corruption among university students from Yerevan and Gyumri. As one of the components of the students' campaign against corruption the survey aims at promoting discussion about a common issue of concern and at mobilizing the students to stand for their rights and promote transparency in universities.

Study on improving notary services and addressing corruption risks

The report prepared by the 'Young Lawyers' Association' NGO with the Office's support analyzes the regulatory framework and practice and addresses citizens' concerns related to procedures, fees and notaries' professionalism. The recommendations are aimed at enhancing transparency and public oversight of notaries.

Supporting the Ombudsman's Office

The Office supported publication of the Ombudsman's annual report and the report of the National Preventive Mechanism under OPCAT. An assessment of public policy in respect of national minorities was also supported to build the capacity of Ombudsman's Institution to effectively advocate for the protection of their rights.

Promoting effective customs system in Armenia

On December 10 the Office, in co-operation with the *Armenian Brokers' Association*, introduced the results of a needs assessment which analyzed existing practice of the customs regime and looked at ways to strengthen customs brokers' skills and foster co-operation between state bodies, customs organizations and business community. At the same time the revamped website of the *Brokers' Association* was launched to create an on-line knowledge and consultancy platform that will provide accurate and timely information to both entrepreneurs and average citizens dealing with the customs. Increasing the effectiveness and accountability of the customs service management is one of the key topics of the Government's 2009-2012 Anti-corruption Strategy.

Upcoming events/announcements

Na/Ne Annual Media Award

The OSCE Office together with the British Council and the British Embassy has announced the Na/Ne annual media competition that highlights and rewards journalistic contributions to gender equality. Journalists from print and online media as well as TV and radio companies are encouraged to submit their publications that feature activities and achievements of women in political, economic and social spheres. Materials must have been published or broadcast within the period from January to December 2010. The best contributions will be announced and awarded in January 2011.



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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