



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

**Information Submitted to the
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights
as a Stakeholder in the
Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Armenia**



WARSAW, JULY 2014

The following information is submitted by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) about an OSCE participating State under consideration in the Universal Periodic Review process:

Participating: Republic of Armenia

UPR Session: 21st Session

Background

The Republic of Armenia is a participating State in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and has thus undertaken and has recently reaffirmed a wide range of political commitments in the “human dimension” of security as outlined in relevant OSCE documents.¹ The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) has been mandated by OSCE participating States, including the Republic of Armenia, to assist them in implementing their human dimension commitments. OSCE/ODIHR assistance includes election observation and assessment activities as well as monitoring and providing assessments, advice and recommendations relating to implementation of commitments in the fields of human rights, democracy, tolerance and non-discrimination, and the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area. The present submission provides publicly available country-specific information that may assist participants in the Universal Periodic Review process in assessing the situation in the Republic of Armenia and its implementation of past recommendations, as well as to formulate new recommendations that may be relevant to enhancing the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Parliamentary Elections, 6 May 2012

Following an official invitation from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and based on the findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 30 January to 1 February 2012, the OSCE/ODIHR deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 22 March 2012 to observe the 6 May 2012 parliamentary elections. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM was headed by Radmila Šekerinska of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and consisted of 13 international experts based in Yerevan and 24 long-term observers deployed throughout the country. For election-day observation, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM joined forces with delegations of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Altogether, 349 observers from 42 OSCE participating States were deployed to monitor proceedings.

According to the final report: *“The elections, which were held under an improved legal framework, were characterized by a competitive, vibrant and largely peaceful campaign, which was, however, marked by a low level of confidence in the integrity of the process. Some violations of campaign provisions by electoral contestants, including the use of administrative resources and attempts to limit voters’ freedom of choice, created an unequal playing field and ran counter the OSCE commitments. The elections were administered in an overall professional and transparent manner prior to election-day. Election-day was general calm and peaceful and undue interference in the process, mostly by party representatives, were observed. Deficiencies*

¹ Compendium of OSCE Human Dimension Commitments, vol 1 and 2; Astana Commemorative Declaration, 2010.

in the complaints and appeals process were cause for concern.” The full report, together with its recommendations, can be found at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/91643>

Presidential Election, 18 February 2013

Following an official invitation from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, the OSCE/ODIHR deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 16 January 2013 to the 18 February 2013 presidential election. Based on the findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission for the 2012 parliamentary elections, the EOM was a format similar to the one deployed for the previous elections. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM was headed by Ambassador Heidi Tagliavini of Switzerland and consisted of 13 international experts based in Yerevan and 24 long-term observers deployed throughout the country. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM joined forces with delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Altogether, 283 short-term observers from 36 OSCE participating States were deployed to monitor proceedings on election-day.

According to the final report *“The election was generally well administered and was characterized by a respect for fundamental freedoms. Contestants were able to campaign freely. Media fulfilled their legal obligation to provide balanced coverage, and all contestants made use of their free airtime. At the same time, a lack of impartiality of the public administration, misuse of administrative resources, and cases of pressure on voters were of concern. While election-day was calm and orderly, it was marked by undue interference in the process, mainly by proxies representing the incumbent, and some serious violations were observed.”* The report also noted *“a tendency of considerably better results for the incumbent in the majority of stations with above-average turnout. This indicates possible serious problems with voting and counting and raises concerns about the integrity of the electoral process.”* Full report and recommendations, can be found at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/101314>

Election-related legislation reviewed by the OSCE/ODIHR

Upon request by authorities of an OSCE participating State, the OSCE/ODIHR reviews draft or enacted legislation of OSCE participating States on electoral matters for its conformity with OSCE commitments and other international standards. The legal reviews and opinions are often produced in co-operation with the Council of Europe’s Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). In the case of Armenia, the OSCE/ODIHR reviewed the election-related legislation in 2011.

Joint Final Opinion on the Electoral Code of Armenia (Opinion No. 611/2011, issued jointly by ODIHR and the Venice Commission on 17 October 2011)

This opinion was prepared jointly by ODIHR and the Venice Commission and concluded that: *“There here have been a number of positive amendments made to the law, which address previous Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. Amendments, such as the provision of a judicial remedy for all electoral disputes, inclusion of quotas for women in the CEC and CSECs, clarification on providing assistance to voters in the polling station, and broadening the definition for what may be cause for an election to be invalidated, all improve the legal framework for elections.”* The report goes on to note that: *“Although the new code has the potential to ensure the conduct of democratic elections, legislation alone cannot ensure*

this. It is the exercise of political will by all stakeholders that remains the key challenge for the conduct of genuinely democratic elections in the Republic of Armenia." The full text of the joint opinion can be found at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/84269>

Tolerance and non-discrimination issues, including incidents of and responses to hate crime

OSCE participating States have made a number of commitments to promote tolerance and non-discrimination and specifically to combat hate crime, and the OSCE/ODIHR supports states in their implementation of those commitments. In this context, the OSCE/ODIHR produces an annual report on hate crime – *Incidents and Responses* – to highlight the prevalence of hate crimes and good practices that participating States and civil society have adopted to tackle them. It also helps participating States to design and draft legislation that effectively addresses hate crimes; provides training that builds the capacity of participating States' criminal justice systems and the law-enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges that staff them; raises awareness of hate crimes among governmental officials, civil society and international organizations; and supports the efforts of civil society to monitor and report hate crimes.

The report relies mainly on information and statistics provided by governments, since such data collection is primarily the responsibility of states, as is the responsibility to respond to hate crimes. As of 2012, 55 of the 57 OSCE participating States had appointed National Points of Contact on Combating Hate Crimes, to support ODIHR in its task of serving "as a collection point for information and statistics collected by participating States". The bulk of information for the report was gathered through the completion of an online questionnaire by National Points of Contact. The questionnaire for 2012 contained questions about the following areas: data-collection methods; legislation; reported hate crime data; and policies and initiatives.

Information concerning Armenia in the most recent edition of the annual hate crimes report covering 2012² includes the following:

Armenia³ last reported hate crime data to ODIHR for the 2008 Hate Crime Report and therefore up-to-date data on hate crimes are missing.

Armenia's hate crime laws consist of a combination of general and specific penalty-enhancement provisions.

Hate crime data are collected by the police, the Prosecutor's Office and the Ombudsman.

The OSCE Chair-in-Office Personal Representative on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination conducted a visit on 2012. During the visit, Personal Representatives met with government officials and representatives from civil society. Among other issues, they emphasized the importance of improving the collection of accurate data on hate crimes.

Roma and Sinti issues

N/A

² <http://tandis.odihr.pl/hcr2012/>

³ See Armenia's country page at ODIHR's hate crime reporting website at <http://hatecrime.osce.org/armenia>

Legislation reviewed by ODIHR (other than elections related)

Upon request by authorities of a participating State, and OSCE field operation or another OSCE institution, the OSCE/ODIHR reviews draft or enacted legislation of OSCE participating States on topics relating to the human dimension of security for its conformity with OSCE commitments and other international standards. The legal reviews and opinions, often produced in co-operation with the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, are available at www.legislationline.org.

In 2010-2014, ODIHR has issued twelve law reviews on draft/existing legislation or legislative policy of Armenia (on topics other than elections), either by itself or jointly with the Council of Europe's Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission):

*Note on the Application of Sanctions and Enforcement Measures towards Members of the Armed Forces in Armenia (23 September 2010)*⁴

The Note, prepared in response to a request by the OSCE Office in Yerevan based on discussion with the Military Prosecutor and Deputy Prosecutor General of the Republic of Armenia, aimed at reviewing the procedure of application of punishment/sanctions and other enforcement measures towards servicemen of the armed forces. First, the Note recommended that, in order to ensure the full compliance of future legislation on detention and imprisonment of military personnel with international standards, all detention and prison facilities, regardless of whether they are run by the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Defence, should provide for conditions which are in compliance with international standards and guarantee the exercise of prisoners' or detainees' rights to fair trial, an effective remedy and the right to freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment. Furthermore, it was recommended that all prisoners and detainees in all prison and detention facilities should be treated equally no positive or negative discrimination against prisoners or detainees.

Follow up: as a result of the note, ODIHR received a new request to review the draft Law on the Disciplinary Rule Book of the Armed Forces of Armenia (see below).

*Note on Modifications to Armenian Criminal Legislation Related to Acts of Contempt of Court (23 September 2010)*⁵

The Note, prepared in response to a request by the OSCE Office in Yerevan based on discussion with the Ministry of Justice, aimed at reviewing the legislation pertaining to acts of contempt of court and related sanctions. It recommended in particular to specify the types or levels of contemptuous behaviour which would give rise to responses by the competent judge under the Judicial Code and which types or level would be considered sufficiently severe to warrant criminal proceedings. It further noted that in criminal proceedings involving acts of contempt of court, the offender should benefit from all rights guaranteed to him/her by the ECHR and the ICCPR, in particular fair trial rights and the right to liberty.

⁴ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16050>.

⁵ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16018>.

Follow up: the recommendations were communicated to the government and were taken into consideration when reviewing the Criminal Procedure Code (see below).

*Note on the Concept Paper on the Reform of Criminal Procedure Legislation in Armenia (4 November 2010)*⁶

The Note, prepared in response to a request by the OSCE Office in Yerevan based on a request originating from the Ministry of Justice, first noted that the Concept Paper constituted a progressive and well-drafted policy document which for the most part met international standards on the protection of human rights in criminal proceedings. It further recommended though introducing habeas corpus proceedings and further discussing the respective roles of all actors of the criminal proceedings. It also noted the need to provide detailed and effective safeguards of all participants in proceedings, particularly as regards the use of simplified preliminary investigation and the rules regarding detention.

Follow up: the recommendations were presented at a roundtable organized in Yerevan in November 2010 and based on the Note; the Armenian authorities prepared a new version of the Concept Paper.

*Opinion on Draft Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia (12 November 2010)*⁷

The Opinion, prepared in response to a request by the Ministry of Justice forwarded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan, reviewed the draft Law of the Republic of Armenia on “Introducing Changes and Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia”. It noted in particular the need to reconsider or clarify the provisions regarding detention of suspects as well as the questioning of witnesses.

Follow up: the opinion was presented at a roundtable organized in Yerevan in November 2010 and the authorities informed that the recommendations will be taken into account when drafting the New Criminal Procedure Code.

*Joint Opinion on the Law on Making Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and on the Laws (...) of the Republic of Armenia (22 December 2010)*⁸

The Joint Opinion by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission was prepared in response to a request by the Ministry of Justice of Armenia to review the Draft Law on Making Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations, as well as draft amendments to the Administrative Offences Code, to the Criminal Code and to the Law on Charity. To ensure full compliance with international law of the reviewed legislation, the Joint Opinion recommended in particular to guarantee freedom of conscience, religion or belief to everyone regardless of citizenship, to expressly recognize the freedom to change religion or belief and to expressly guarantee the freedom to manifest religion or belief in public or private, and to act according to one's religion or belief in daily life.

⁶ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16072>.

⁷ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16073>.

⁸ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16086>.

Follow up: the recommendations were discussed together with the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission and the Ministry of Justice took the decision to prepare a new draft law. In 2011, the Armenian authorities drafted an entirely new “Draft Law of the Republic of Armenia on Freedoms of Conscience and Religion” which was also the subject of a joint review in 2011 (see below).

*Joint Opinion on the Draft Law on Assemblies of the Republic of Armenia (22 December 2010)*⁹

The Joint Opinion by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission was prepared following the request by the Armenian Human Rights Defender and the Office of the President of the Republic of Armenia. The Joint Opinion noted the revisions of the Draft Law reflecting earlier recommendations made in November 2010 but recommended further amendments, particularly regarding the limitations as to the location of an assembly, the notification procedure, the regulation of judicial review procedure of restrictions imposed by regulatory authorities. Moreover, the Joint Opinion recommended to clearly define and limit “the use of special means” connected with keeping the peace and security during assemblies that can be taken by the police.

*Opinion on the draft Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Disciplinary Rule Book of the Armed Forces (17 January 2011)*¹⁰

The Opinion, prepared upon request of the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Defence, National Security and Internal Affairs of the National Assembly of Armenia reviewed the draft Law on the Disciplinary Rule Book of the Armed Forces in Armenia. While the Opinion noted positively the balanced approach to disciplinary matters in relation to members of the armed forces, it further recommended to clarify the nature of the disciplinary breaches and their consequences and ensure that the right to a fair trial is guaranteed to members of the armed forces.

Follow up: OSCE/ODIHR attended a parliamentary hearing on the draft Law and met with various government representatives to present the recommendations. OSCE/ODIHR also shared some samples of disciplinary codes from the UK and Canada to serve as good practices in this respect.

*Opinion on the Draft Law of the Republic of Armenia on making Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Alternative Service (8 September 2011)*¹¹

Following a request from the Standing Committee on Defense, National Security and Internal Affairs of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, the OSCE/ODIHR prepared a legal review of the Draft Law on Making Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Alternative Service, which would bring several changes to the alternative service in Armenia. The review, completed in September 2011, assesses the Draft Law's compliance with international standards and puts forward several recommendations for amendments.

⁹ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16186>.

¹⁰ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16242>.

¹¹ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16643>.

*Joint Opinion on the Draft Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religion and other Amendments of the Republic of Armenia (17 October 2011)*¹²

The Joint Opinion was prepared by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission based on a request by the Ministry of Justice and analyzed a completely new draft law (after previous reviews of draft legislation carried out in 2009 and 2010). It noted a marked improvement compared to both the Current Law and previous draft laws from 2009 and 2010, with several previous joint recommendations having been reflected in the new draft. However, it also pointed out the need for further improvements regarding in particular the freedom to manifest religion or belief, the provisions of the criminal code pertaining to “proselytism”, the rules governing registration and organization of religious associations as well as their financing, reporting and liquidation.

Follow up: the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission presented the recommendations to the Ministry of Justice and the National Security Committee and were informed that the government will prepare a new draft after April 2012 elections.

*Opinion on the Draft Law of the Republic of Armenia on Making Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Alternative Service and to the Law on the Enforcement of the Criminal Code (2 May 2012)*¹³

The Opinion, prepared in response to a request from the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, analyzed the draft amendments to the current Law on Alternative Service. The Opinion concluded that the respective amendments, if adopted, would overall enhance the current Law's compliance with international standards on the right to conscientious objection to military service. At the same time, the Opinion outlined a few remaining provisions that would have to be amended in order to ensure the Law's full compliance with international standards, in particular as concerned allowing conscripted servicemen to seek a replacement of their military service with alternative service on grounds of conscientious objection; removing the time-limits for requesting replacement of prison sentence with alternative service, and for expunging criminal records; and several other issues.

Follow up: the OSCE Office in Yerevan informed the OSCE/ODIHR that most recommendations were taken on board during the adoption of amendments to the Draft Law.

*Opinion on Selected Issues Regarding the Admissibility of Appeals to the Cassation Court of the Republic of Armenia (29 November 2012)*¹⁴

The Opinion, prepared in response to a request by the Chairman of the Cassation Court of Armenia forwarded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan, focused on two main issues i.e., the legal admissibility requirements of appeals to the Cassation Court and the legal requirements as to the reasoning of decisions issued by the Cassation Court after appeals proceedings and provided of good international practices in that respect.

¹² Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/16663>.

¹³ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/17123>.

¹⁴ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/17704>.

*Opinion on the Draft Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia (23 April 2013)*¹⁵

The Opinion, prepared in response to a request by the Minister of Justice, noted a number of novel and progressive institutions and procedures introduced by the draft Code, such as the judicial deposition procedure. It also recommended several revisions to ensure conformity with Armenia's international obligations, particularly as regards the provisions regulating the right to a public hearing, the principle of equality of arms, the rules on the removal or disqualification of judges, the legal reasoning in handing down decisions on detention and certain rights of the defence.

Follow up: the government thanked the OSCE/ODIHR for the recommendations and inform that they will be considered as part of the revision process.

Basic information about the constitutional system and legislation of Armenia is available on www.legislationline.org.

**Country-specific ODIHR monitoring, assessment, co-operation and assistance activities
(Other than elections)**

Rule of Law - Trial Monitoring and Judicial Reform

In Armenia, ODIHR conducted a number of activities in the reporting period to assist the authorities in strengthening the rule of law through judicial reform. In particular, ODIHR conducting trial monitoring and expert roundtables with a view to providing findings, recommendations and policy advice for criminal justice reform and judicial independence.

In the aftermath of the post-election violence following the March 2008 Presidential elections in Armenia, ODIHR initiated a Trial Monitoring project to observe the adjudication of trials related to disputes on electoral events. The project was undertaken to systematically gather information about compliance of the monitored trials with relevant domestic and international fair trial standards, as well as to identify possible shortcomings in the criminal justice system. For this purpose, between April 2008 and July 2009, the project staff monitored 93 criminal cases involving a total of 109 defendants and prepared a Final Report on the Trial Monitoring project¹⁶ in 2010 which points out systemic shortcomings. Specifically, many of the monitored cases revealed shortcomings with regard to a genuine procedural equality of arms between the prosecution and the defence as in some trials, systematic denial of defence motions to introduce and/or examine additional evidence seriously undermined the possibility to present the case for the defence. The analysis also highlights a concern with the reliance on written witness testimonies in favor of the prosecution when these testimonies could not be meaningfully verified at trial. In addition, the information gathered during the project gives rise to concerns about existing legislation and practices that affect the right to liberty. Judicial review of arrest and detention was not always in line with the relevant international standards and national legal requirements. Custody decisions were not reasoned properly and did not address the facts in the individual cases, but rather contained standard general phrases. Notwithstanding the principle that pre-trial custody should be the exception rather than the rule, custody was habitually extended for the maximum possible period, and alternative

¹⁵ Available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/17930>.

¹⁶ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/41695>

measures of restraint were seldom explored, frequently leaving the respective defence motions unaddressed. On the basis of these findings, the Final Report offered recommendations to the entire justice system. Recognizing that the trials have taken place amid high public tension and received special public attention, the Armenian authorities could have invested more efforts to ensure their fair and impartial adjudication.

Thereafter, ODIHR organized various follow-up activities to promote the implementation of the Final Report's recommendations in light of Armenia's reform of its criminal justice system. In March 2011, OSCE/ODIHR organized a conference to review progress and discuss the continued relevance of the recommendations made in ODIHR's Trial Monitoring Final Report published in 2010. The Armenian authorities described the process of developing a new Code of Criminal Procedure (CPC) - including forming a government-led Working Group in charge of drafting the new CPC - and welcomed ODIHR's input. Lawyers and civil society representatives in attendance emphasized that the authorities should do more in following up on ODIHR's recommendations, especially when it comes to using alternatives to pre-trial detention and carrying out investigations into ill-treatment in custody. In March 2013, ODIHR organized another follow-up expert workshop to promote the 2010 Final Report's recommendations related to evidentiary rules and evidentiary defence rights in light of the foreseen changes on evidence collection and access to evidence in the draft Code of Criminal Procedure. The Final Report's recommendations and the Conclusions from the expert workshop¹⁷ further supported ODIHR's opinion on the draft Armenian Code of Criminal Procedure¹⁸ issued in May 2013.

Currently, the draft CPC prepared by the Working Group is scheduled to be presented to the Parliament before the end of 2014.

In April 2013 OSCE and ODIHR organized a roundtable in Yerevan on the "Implementation of the 2012-2016 Strategic Programme for Legal and Judicial Reforms in the Republic of Armenia" jointly with the Council of Europe. The event provided a platform for dialogue on planned judicial reforms and exchange of good practices related to the independence, accountability and professionalism of judges, and gathered around 50 participants, including the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, representatives from governmental and judicial authorities, civil society and other stakeholders of judicial reform. The conclusions developed at the event enriched the continuing reform debate which ultimately led to the adoption of a new law to strengthen judicial self-governance and the independence of individual judges.

The roundtable in 2013 was a follow-up to an earlier expert meeting the OSCE and ODIHR had organized in June 2011 on the OSCE/ODIHR Kyiv Recommendations on Judicial Independence in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia¹⁹ and their relevance for resolving challenges to judicial independence in Armenia. This 2011 roundtable was addressed by the Minister of Justice and attended by judicial policy makers and senior practitioners. The discussions focused on issues relevant in the context of ongoing judicial reform efforts in Armenia, such as the composition and competence of bodies of judicial administration and self-governance, random case assignment, and disciplinary responsibility of judges.

¹⁷ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/101736>

¹⁸ <http://www.legislationline.org/topics/country/45/topic/8>

¹⁹ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/KyivRec>

Other assessments and recommendations contained in ODIHR reports on thematic human issues

Migration

In 2013 upon request of the Armenian authorities ODIHR in co-operation with the Migration Policy Group, conducted and published an assessment of migrant integration measures for Armenia, according to the internationally recognized Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) methodology. The MIPEX Assessment includes findings in relation to Armenia's migration policies, including that its current legal framework is halfway favourable for integration. Overall, its legal framework scores 44-out-of-100 points and ranks alongside other 'new' immigration countries in the MIPEX (e.g. South Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Serbia). Immigrants to Armenia can benefit from several favourable policies: inclusive requirements for reunited families and permanent residence, local voting rights for foreigners, and the acceptance of dual nationality. Several of Armenia's policy weaknesses are also shared with other 'new' destination countries in Europe. Immigrants to Armenia face highly discretionary procedures for family reunion, permanent residence and access to nationality and lack targeted state support to find the right job, improve the education of their children, and organise themselves to be heard in political debates. Furthermore, Armenia's policies fall below international, EU and other European legal standards and national practices on family reunion and permanent residence procedures, the absence of immigrant consultative bodies, and, most notably, the absence of a dedicated anti-discrimination law and independent equality agency.

The MIPEX assessment was presented and discussed by ODIHR with the national authorities at a roundtable in Yerevan, which was followed by ODIHR training on best practices in integration of migrants in line with the OSCE commitments for the national authorities and civil society actors.

Armenia was also among seven OSCE participating States, whose national government representatives participated in the two-day regional capacity building training on gender-sensitive labor migration policies organized by ODIHR in co-operation with the Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEAA) in Warsaw in July 2014.

Gender Equality and Democratic Governance

The Commemorative Declaration adopted by OSCE participating States at the 2010 Astana Summit reaffirms their commitment to democracy that applies equally to all. ODIHR's democratization work aims to assist all 57 participating States in meeting OSCE commitments related to democratic principles. These include democratic governance, developing multiparty landscapes and political party regulation, strengthening parliaments, and promoting gender equality and women's political participation.

In Armenia, ODIHR provided policy advice and assistance in building the capacities of democratic institutions to help them become more responsive, responsible to and representative of their citizens. Currently, women's representation in the parliament of Armenia stands at only 10,7 per cent, which is significantly below the 1995 UN Beijing Platform for Action target of 30 per cent women in decision-making and below the Council of Europe

recommendation for a minimum 40 per cent representation of women in parliaments and other elected assemblies by 2020. In turn, ODIHR implemented activities in the following areas:

- In late 2013, ODIHR started to implement its Project “Strengthening Women’s Participation in Political Parties in the OSCE Region”, aiming to build the capacity of political stakeholders – in particular, political party members and female candidates for elected public office – to apply measures to increase women’s political participation in five pilot countries, including Armenia.
- Within the framework of the project, ODIHR held preliminary consultations with political party representatives and international/national stakeholders in Armenia in March 2014. ODIHR met with three parties, including Vice Speaker of the Parliament, Hermine Naghdalyan, representing the Republican Party of Armenia, the Armenian National Congress and the Rule of Law Party. Discussions were also held with local gender expert, Jemma Hasratyan, the EU delegation and USAID to discuss broader programming in the sphere of democratic governance, parliamentary support, and women’s political participation.
- In May 2014, ODIHR conducted consultations on gender equality with political parties in Armenia, securing participation of Andriy Shevchenko, Member of Parliament of Ukraine and Jemma Haratyan, Director of the Gender Studies Centre of Armenia, in the consultation process. Consultations were held with six political parties represented in the National Assembly of Armenia, including the Republican Party of Armenia, the Rule of Law Party, Heritage Party, the Prosperous Armenia Party, the Armenian National Congress and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation party. Using a political party gender audit methodology, ODIHR’s team explored party commitment to gender equality as expressed in party statutes and chapters, party processes such as candidate selection and resource allocation, and women’s representation in decision-making bodies. On the basis of the findings, ODIHR offered to continue working with interested parties to develop Party Gender Action Plans to address existing gender inequalities and enhance efforts to support women’s political advancement. All six political forces expressed interest in further co-operation with ODIHR.