

PRESS RELEASE

22 July, 2016

Yerevan

of the “Corruption Risks in Local Government” Anti-Corruption Event

On 22 July, 2016, the Armenian Lawyers’ Association, in cooperation with the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia, organised an anti-corruption event entitled “**Corruption Risks in Local Government**” in Arax Hotel, Gyumri. The event was organised in the scope of the “Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion” project funded by the EU and co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. In particular, the event was aimed at revealing the corruption risks in the field and outlining respective solutions.

Mr. Karen Zadoyan, the President of the Armenian Lawyers’ Association and the Coordinator of the Secretariat of the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition said in his opening speech that the government must show successful examples of fight against corruption so that the public can feel the changes in its life. In addition, he informed the participants that in the scope of the cooperation with the Government they had presented proposals on the criminalisation of illicit enrichment and the establishment of an independent anti-corruption body in Armenia, that the proposals had already been accepted by the Government and respective bills are being elaborated at the moment to be presented at the National Assembly in the coming autumn.

Governor of the Shirak Region Mr. Hovsep Simonyan and Deputy Mayor of Gyumri Mr. Vagharshak Mkhitarian attached great importance to the fight against corruption and such anti-corruption events. However, they did not agree with the title of the event, stating that there are no corruption risks in the sector. In response to this assertion, Mr. Zadoyan noted that years ago the officials in the notary system had claimed that there were no corruption risks in that sector as well but the monitoring that followed proved the opposite as the Prime Minister mentioned in a statement that there were big corruption risks in the notary system.

Mr. Karen Hakobyan, the Head of the Penitentiary and Anti-Corruption Policy Development Department of the Staff of the RA Ministry of Justice, said that the best way to minimise corruption risks in local government is to give it greater power and to make its officers accountable not to their superiors, but to the community members.

Mr. Emin Yeritsyan, the President of the Union of Communities of Armenia, also highlighted that the head of local government needs to understand that he/she is accountable not to his/her superior but to the members of the community that has elected him. According to him, community members should possess a well-established control mechanism, a number of bureaucratic issues need to be solved and the community leaders need to ensure direct communication with their community members.

Local Expert on the “Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion” project Mr. Marat Atovmjan gave a presentation on the importance of ensuring integrity in the community service sector, including the international experience. Ms. Mariam Zadoyan, another local expert on the project, spoke about the importance and the perspectives of cooperation with CSOs towards the implementation of anti-corruption reforms in the sector. She noted the efficiency of the following processes: participation in the elaboration of strategies and decision-making, conducting oversight, running national anti-corruption public awareness campaigns, etc.

The presentations were followed by a serious discussion. Participants, including the community leaders, voiced systemic problems.

The recommendations, after being summarised in the event report, will be sent for consideration to the relevant state bodies, which will contribute to the implementation of reforms in the local government sector.

The project aims to increase the role of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in promoting anti-corruption reforms and their implementation. In the framework of the project the capacity of CSOs and the media to engage in monitoring and watchdog activities will be built. Anti-corruption training workshops will be organised throughout Armenia with the purpose of enabling CSOs and media organisations to better comprehend the issues related to anti-corruption and freedom of information. These activities aim at deepening the existing opportunities for carrying out anti-corruption activities. Small grants will be given for raising the effectiveness of public monitoring and implementation of appropriate monitoring, watchdog and investigative activities. A sustainable dialogue between CSOs and the Government will be developed with the participation of CSOs, to strengthen the anti-corruption institutional mechanisms.

The project is funded by the European Union and co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. It is implemented by the “Armenian Lawyers’ Association” NGO – Applicant and “Freedom of Information Center” NGO – Partner. The project duration is 3 years (January 2014 – December 2016) and the budget is 650,000 EUR, of which 585,000 EUR was contributed by the EU and 31,117 EUR was contributed by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Armenian Lawyers’ Association (ALA) was established in 1995 with a Mission to promote to the establishment of the rule of law, democracy and formation of the civil society in Armenia, where the people are aware of their rights and where their rights are protected. Before February 2016, ALA was called Armenian Young Lawyers Association.

Freedom of Information Center (FOI) operates over 10 years. The Mission of FOI is to promote application of the RA Freedom of Information Law, contribute to the transparency and openness of the Armenian government system and to stimulate civic society’s involvement in the governance system.

For more information please contact: Mrs. Narine Karapetyan, PR Coordinator, on business days from 9:00 – 18:00. Tel.: 540199; Fax: 580299; URL: <http://www.armla.am>.



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Delegation of the European Union to Armenia
Tel.: +37410 54 64 94
Fax: +37410 54 64 95

The European Commission is the EU’s executive body.

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The Project is co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.
Tel.: +374 10 229610
Fax: +374 10 229615

The OSCE Office in Yerevan has been operating since 1999, and its mission is to support Armenia in developing its democratic institutions and strengthening civil society, acting in the areas of legislative reform; combating corruption and trafficking; environmental activities; raising awareness for human rights; media freedom; gender equality, etc.



Armenian Lawyers’ Association
Address: 7 Nalbandyan Str.,
Suite 2, Yerevan, Armenian,
0010
Tel.: +37410 54 01 99
Fax: +37410 58 02 99



Freedom of Information Center
Address: 1/3 Buzand Str.,
Yerevan 0010, Armenia
Tel.: +37410 56 03 60
Fax: +37410 56 03 60