Human Rights and Democratization
Eastern Partnership Region

Yearbook

2011 -2012

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Introduction

This yearbook provides an in-depth analysis of the status of human rights and democratisation in the six countries which make up the European Union's Eastern Partnership Region. These countries are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Section one aims to afford the reader a more informed understanding of the yearbook's findings by clarifying what is meant by the terms democracy, democratisation, and human rights. It also explores the complex and often misunderstood relationship between these concepts, while highlighting exactly why democracy (and which type of democracy) provides the best environment for the successful nurturing of a regime which pays due respect to human rights.

Section two provides an overview of the MA course in Human Rights and Democracy at Yerevan State University, which is run with the help of EU funding. This is followed by a collection of essays written by current students of the course. These essays highlight those issues which young people within the Eastern Partnership Region feel to be most important to the successful development of democracy and human rights in their home countries, as well as explaining how they believe the MA course will help them to achieve their own personal goals within this field.

Section three is comprised of individual reports for each of the countries within the Eastern Partnership Region. These reports record the progress which has been made in the area of human rights and democracy over the 2011-2012 period, while additionally highlighting the key challenges which still remain in each country. It should be noted here that the varying lengths of these reports are not reflective of the scale of the problems faced by each country. Indeed, it may well be the case that the opposite is true; in those countries which pay greater concern to the maintenance of human rights, there is, necessarily, a larger amount of freely available information with regard to their status. In less human-rights-friendly states, information regarding human rights abuses has a tendency to be suppressed.

Section four provides an overview of EU-funded projects which began, ended, or were ongoing during the 2011-2012 period. This section focuses upon only those projects which relate directly to the areas of human rights and democratisation.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

PART I

Before embarking upon an analysis of the current status of human rights recognition and democratisation in those countries within the EU Eastern Partnership Region, it is important to understand what we me mean when we use such terms. It is certainly the case that "democracy" may be realised differently in different states and cultures, and that the fact that different governments may run their respective countries in very different ways is not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that either country is undemocratic, or even less democratic than the other. Similarly, while human rights may be universal, there will remain significant and permissible variance in the ways in which each country ensures that such rights are met.

Regardless of these differences in application, it is widely accepted that human well-being is best protected through the exercise of human rights within democratic states.[1] It is for this reason that the EU has placed such concepts at the heart of its philosophy, and has focused upon promoting them within those states which might one day become member countries. As Freeman notes, "(i)t is commonly believed that human rights and democracy are mutually supportive or related to each other by definition".[2] However, despite this common tendency to group human rights recognition and democracy together, the relationship between the two is more complicated than it might first appear.

What are Human Rights?

The most important thing to note about human rights is that they are rights and, as such, respect for them is mandatory.[3] Rights in general may essentially be described as relations between two individuals. In order for me to have a right, some other person or body must have a duty which correlates to that right.[4] Rights tend to fall into two categories: claim-rights and liberty-rights. In order to respect my claim-right, the relevant duty-holder has a duty to provide me with something I need in order for my right to be fulfilled. This is known as a positive duty. In order to respect my liberty-right, said duty-holder must simply refrain from taking action which would prevent me from exercising my right. This is known as a negative duty.

Human rights tend to be conjunctions of claim-rights and liberty-rights.[5] For example, my human right not to be tortured requires the relevant duty-bearer to a) not torture me (their negative duty) and b) take action to ensure others do not torture me (their positive duty).

So who is the relevant duty-bearer when it comes to human rights? It is at this point where theory and practice diverge somewhat. In theory, every other human being bears a both negative and positive duty to respect each of my human rights simply because I am human. In practice, it is States, and not individuals, who are responsible for the protection and maintenance of human rights.

This is perhaps the primary reason as to why human rights are so often seen to be synonymous with democracy. If all individuals hold duties in relation to the human rights of all others, then, if it is ultimately government who will be held accountable for human rights violations through sanctions which will affect all those living within a State, we must be able to say that the government acted in accordance with the will of the people.

What is Democracy?

The term 'democracy' is derived from the ancient Greek term demokratia, which literally means the rule of the people by the people.[6] The basic principles of democracy are control by citizens over their collective affairs and equality between

those citizens.[7]

The key element of a democracy is the holding of free and fair elections with universal suffrage at regular intervals.[8] Such a requirement is a necessary condition for any State which claims to be a democracy. It is not, however, sufficient. While free and fair elections are the only necessary factor in establishing a procedural democracy, substantive democracies require that "…goods, services, and real opportunities are enjoyed 'democratically', that is, by the masses on an egalitarian basis".[9]

Supporters of human rights must actively distinguish between procedural and substantive democracy and fight whole-heartedly for the achievement of the latter.[10]

The Relationship between Human Rights and Democracy

The Vienna Declaration (1993) asserts that democracy and human rights are 'interdependent and mutually reinforcing'. However, whilst similar values (such as equality) may form the basis of both human rights and democracy,[11] the two are not necessarily synonymous.[12] As Freeman highlights, "democracy is concerned with who wields political authority, whereas human rights are concerned with how political authority is exercised".[13]

Throughout history, many democracies have had very poor records at protecting certain human rights of certain groups of citizens. Similarly, many authoritarian regimes have had reasonably good records with regard to protecting economic, social, and cultural rights.[14]

Of course, this should come as no great surprise. Theoretically speaking, many human rights do not require democracy in order to be enforced. Regardless of how a government came to power, there is no reason it should torture its citizens - something underlined by the universally-binding nature of the prohibition on torture under international human rights law.

Equally clear is the fact that some human rights, such as the right to free and fair elections, can only be met within a democracy. The point is that, while human rights require the existence of democracy before they can be fully realised, the existence of democracy provides no absolute guarantee that human rights will be protected.

The Tyranny of the Majority

Democracy is a collective concept. As such, it is quite possible for democratically elected governments to violate the human rights of individuals.[15] Indeed, under certain circumstances, it may actually be in the interests of a democratically elected government to do so. In a society with deep division and hostility between a majority and a minority group, it may be electorally popular for the government to suppress the interests of said minority group. As Fagan notes, "(w)here these interests concern fundamental attributes of human well-being, the ensuing action is likely to constitute human rights abuse…. There are all too many examples of this actually occurring".[16]

The Need for Human Rights

The fact that there exists a possibility for power to be misused within a democracy should not be taken as evidence that democracy is not the best form of government in the promotion of human well-being. Rather, it is simply the case that limits will need to be placed upon democratic decision-making. Providing such limits is the principal function of human rights.[17]

As a result, most democracies entrust the protection of human rights to independent courts.[18] For example, in the UK, the 1998 Human Rights Act, to some extent, affords the judiciary the power to strike down the legislation of democratically elected governments if such legislation is deemed to violate the European Convention of Human Rights.[19]

In terms of procedural democracy, this is actually undemocratic. However, if we are to pursue the notion of substantive democracy, which is key to the flourishing of human well-being, such checks and balances on the power of governments are essential. It is in this way that human

rights and democracy become mutually supportive. As has already been highlighted, democracies are the types of governmental system most suited to the realisation of human rights. Similarly, in order for a substantively democratic State to remain true to its core values of equality and ruling for the people, it will be prudent (and quite possibly necessary) for there to exist a set of certain lines which may not be crossed. If human well-being is our concern, such lines are best formed in terms of human rights.

Conclusion

For the first time in human history, the majority of people live in States ruled by democratic governments.[20] In many such States, including those within the Eastern Partnership Region, such a situation is relatively new. As such, it is crucial to remember the difference between democracy and democratisation.

Those democracies which remain in their infancy within developing nations will need to be carefully nurtured if they are to flourish. Inevitably, their growth will be a long and sometimes difficult process. Burgeoning democracies, however, also have some advantages in this respect. As Donnelly notes, "(o)nly when supported by rights-protective political attitudes and institutions will elections lead toward deeply liberal democratic regimes."[21] In regimes where both human rights recognition and democracy are still at an early stage, it will be easier to nurture both elements together so that they grow into a single, interdependent organism than would be the case in many established democracies.

PART II

THE EU REGIONAL MASTER'S PROGRAMME IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The Regional Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratization for the Eastern Partnership Region was created in 2010. The two-year long, interdisciplinary programme is one of six such programmes running across the globe and is funded with financial support from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

This unique programme is the first interdisciplinary programme in Human Rights and Democratization in the region. It is offered by four of the leading educational institutions in post-Soviet countries: Yerevan State University (Armenia), Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine), Belarusian State University (Belarus), and The University of European Political and Economic Studies (Moldova). Each of these institutions cooperates with The European Inter-University Centre in Venice.

The programme covers the disciplines of economics, political science, cultural studies, law in relation to human rights and democracy. It educates students as the theoretical and practical aspects of human rights and democracy, both in general and in specific relation to the issues faced by those living within the Eastern Partnership Region.

The programme places great emphasis on mobility. The first two semesters, which focus upon providing students with a strong foundational knowledge of human rights and democracy, are taught at Yerevan State University. In the third semester, students are encouraged to broaden their cultural horizons by travelling to one of three partner universities in order to specialise in a specific area. The political science module is taught at Belarusian State University, the legal module at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, and the interdisciplinary module at The University of European Political and Economic Studies.

The fourth semester is spent completing both an academic thesis and an internship.

The aim of the programme is to enhance both the academic and practical knowledge of students in the areas of human rights and democratisation. As such, in addition to educating students, it also seeks to expand their experience level, both by sending them abroad to study and by fostering links with domestic and international NGOs in order to develop the professional skills of students within their chosen field.

It is hoped that the assimilation of such expert knowledge, combined with the attainment of professional experience, will substantially improve the employment opportunities of those who graduate the course. This, in turn, will lead to committed, knowledgeable, young people being employed within organisations aiming to improve standards of both human rights and democracy in post-Soviet countries, thus helping to address the current skills shortage in the area.

STUDENT ESSAYS

PART III

Name: **Aren Arakelyan**
Nationality: **Armenian**
Institution: **Yerevan State University**
Course: **Human Rights and Democratisation (MA)**

My reasons for entering the MA programme in Human Rights and Democratisation, which is a unique international programme in Armenia, were twofold: Firstly, I was interested in pursuing academic study in a field about which I am passionate. Secondly, I feel that the course affords its students a magnificent opportunity to become specialists in field of human rights and democratization, thus enabling them to flourish as active and useful members of society.

My dream is to live in a prosperous, developed and democratic Armenia; a country where individual citizens play a crucial role in the governance of their state, which respects the rights and freedoms of all who live within its territory. In order to reach such a level of development, there is a need for continuous and effective struggle.

In my opinion, the pioneers of this struggle must be the purposeful, active and well-versed young generation. I am happy that the majority of the members of the NGOs operating in our country are young people who are oriented to democratic values and freedoms. I am an active member of our civil society and I, along with my friends, try to make my contribution to the development, strengthening and democratisation of our country.

In my opinion, political development leads to development in economic, social, cultural and other spheres. Because of this, I decided to engage myself in social activity which promotes political development.

In 2009 I began working in two NGOs which were engaged in electoral processes, and soon became a very active member of these organisations. We think that electoral process is the most important sphere for the countries in transition. Armenia is considered to be a country in transition, and, in our opinion, it is very important for such societies to have apolitical elite which is elected freely and fairly by its citizens and accountable to them. Unfortunately - according to international organisations, NGOs, monitoring parties and (perhaps most importantly), public opinion - there have been no free, fair and transparent elections in Armenia since the country gained independence[1,2].

As such, the NGOs I work with are struggling to organise free, fair and transparent elections. We do this through fact-finding missions connected with forthcoming elections or referendums, sociological surveys, cooperation with other NGOs in this field and monitoring.

During the past three years I have many successes and disappointments. I wish focus here upon one very interesting practice which we have examined.

In 2009, some colleagues and I formed a group with the task of submitting propositions electoral monitoring. In short, this project consisted of the following aspects:

Three days before elections we organised groups of five people, each of whom travelled to the locations in which election monitoring was to take place in order to carry out "pre-election monitoring".

The task of this pre-election monitoring was to gather facts about public opinion, interested parties and expected electoral violations. We also aimed to raise awareness among voters and conduct meetings with representatives of political parties in their constituencies. We then conveyed our findings to the organisation's central office in Yerevan in order to draw a common picture surrounding the results of the mission.

During the parliamentary elections of 2009 we organised six groups of monitors which were sent to six villages in the Ashtarak marz as part of an OSCE-funded project.

It seemed that our presence in had some sort of effect, since the election results in the six villages where we were present differed to those of other villages in the region. Moreover, no electoral violations were recorded in any of the areas in which we carried out monitoring - a fact we considered to have arisen as a result of the success of our project in raising public awareness and discouraging potential violators. While our sample group was perhaps too small to draw any definitive conclusions from, I believe that the results of our experiment warrant an increase in such practices in the future.

Many other NGOs showed an interest in helping with such a project, but gaining the required funding for such an expansion is never easy. It is my hope that, by the time of the next presidential election, the number of pre-election monitoring groups will increase.

I am happy to be surrounded by active, enterprising, adventurous, patriotic young people, whose numbers continue to grow. I believe that our struggle will never stop until sustainable democracy has been achieved and respect for human rights and freedoms in Armenia has become commonplace.

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[1] Democracy on Rocky Ground, Human Rights Watch Report, section 5, 2008.

[2] Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, US State Department, 2011.

Human Rights and Democracy in the Republic of Armenia: The Role of Education in an Age of Transformation

Name: **Hasmik Harutyunyan**
Nationality: **Armenian**
Institution: **Yerevan State University**
Course: **Human Rights and Democratisation (MA)**

I was born in the same year in which Armenia declared its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is a great honour and, at the same time, a huge responsibility to be one of the first generations of the newly independent Republic of Armenia.

When looking back on my childhood, memories of deficits of electricity and heating and long lines for bread come immediately to mind. Then in my ears I hear the whispers of my parents, promising me that everything will change soon and that we all need to make sacrifices in order for this change to happen. Unfortunately, I cannot speak of an easy and happy childhood. Now, from my professional approach, I qualify those years as a time of social, economic and political hardship. The Republic of Armenia was a part of the Soviet Union for more than 70 years; a regime which did not recognise human rights, democracy, or the rule of law. Moreover, on gaining independence, the country was involved in an arm-conflict for two years[1]. As a young professional in my country I inherited these problems of human rights, the rule of law and pluralism.

For the Republic of Armenia, the beginning of the 21st Century represented a period of democratic transition. This is not an easy step and seems to be taking a long time. In the meantime, I will continue to struggle for human rights and the rule of law.

I value the role of appropriate education and knowledge as a key element of the ideological transition of our society, as well as for political reform. This approach motivated me to choose a profession which will help me to play a role in the reforms of my country as I feel obliged to make my own contribution to this process. The widespread violations, corruption and other problems are demonstrative of the need for a legal profession with a concentration on human rights and the rule of law.

First at school, and then at university, I was actively involved in different activities which gradually transformed into an active role in the practice of NGOs. I have realised that the existing problems I have been facing in our society should be addressed with ongoing education. With respect to the aforementioned discovery, after four years of higher education I became a part of the EU regional MA programme in Human Rights and Democratisation.

In 2011, I received my Bachelor's Degree in Law from the French University of Armenia with two university diplomas: one from the University of Lyon 3 in France and the other from the French University of Armenia. My academic education was followed by work experience in several human rights NGOs. Since 2008 I have been involved in one of the most famous human rights organizations in Armenia: the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly -Vanadzor office. As a volunteer in the organisation's legal department I assisted with the implementation of legal consultation before turning to legal research. During September-October 2009 I volunteered in the NGO, Civil Society Institute dealing with legislation amendment issues.

While working at HCA I faced different human rights protection problems which derived from an unsuccessful political regime, gaps in legislation and institutional inefficiency. My involve-

ment in fair trial monitoring helped me to discover the institutional and practical problems with our judicial system. On particular problem is the lack of capacity among law enforcement bodies, judges and other professionals working at courts. Though Armenia has ratified international treaties and conventions on human rights, these still have a mainly declarative nature and there is no practical use of those universal principles. This fact demonstrates that educational reforms need to be implemented not only in schools and universities, but also among legal and judicial professionals.

Since March 2012 I have been involved in the NGO Protection of Rights Without Borders where I work as a lawyer and legal expert. My practical skills and experience are now deeply developing due to the legal research I carry out as part of my role there. My work experience with this NGO has revealed many problems to me, particularly in the field of criminal justice. Specifically, there is need for separate and detailed legislation for juvenile justice and for restorative justice in general. I believe that education of European standards can help to educate specialists for these spheres.

In general, my work experience with local human rights organisations have helped to make me aware about the major obstacles to the effective realisation of human rights and democracy in my country, such as: the lack of accountability for excessive use of force; unlawful restrictions of freedom of assembly; ill-treatment of detained persons in police custody; deaths in custody; abuses of persons in the armed services; and restrictions on freedom of the media[2].

In this regard, one of the best solutions to our problems would be to study and perhaps adopt the practices of other countries which have already developed democratic regimes. Such a task, of course, should be conducted wisely, accepting the mutual legacies and case studies of similar countries[3]. I believe that this kind of transformation and further amendments can only be achieved by educated people. As to that education, it should correspond to the needs of the 21st Century, and differ from Soviet era education.

From my point of view, the future of Armenia largely depends upon skilled and motivated individuals who are armed with knowledge and have a willingness to change something. For me, this two year Master's programme has the potential to make great improvements in the areas of regional integration, democracy-building, the rule of law, good governance, and the protection of human rights in the participating countries. Through courses on human rights and democracy, the programme is able to educate those students who represent the best hope for their countries' future.

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[1] Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict, CRS Issue Brief for Congress, Carol Migdalovitz

[2] Human Rights Watch annual report, Country Summary, January 2012

[3] The Future of Democracy in Armenia: Institutional and Mass Beliefs Perspectives, Alexander Markarov

PART IV

COUNTRY REPORT:

ARMENIA

Head of State: Serzh Sargsyan

Head of Government: Tigran Sargsyan

Capital City: Yerevan

Population: 3.1 million[22]

GDP: $10.25 billion[23]

Life Expectancy: 74[24]

Under 5 Mortality Rate: 21.6 per 1000[25]

Adult Literacy: 99.5%[26]

Death Penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes[27]

Armenia is a country with a particularly tragic history throughout which its citizens have been consistently denied access to human rights and democracy. Between 1914 and 1918, 1.5 million Armenians were murdered in a genocide carried out by Ottoman Turks[28] - an event that was one of the motivating factors behind the creation of the UDHR. Shortly after this, Armenia was divided between Turkey and the Soviet Union.[29] There followed a long period of oppression and dictatorship before the country achieved independence in 1991. Since this time, the country has been engaged in an armed conflict with neighbouring Azerbaijan over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

In 2011, Forbes Magazine rated Armenia the second worst economy in the world.[30] It is this poverty that remains the primary threat to human rights in the country. A recent poll revealed that 65% of Armenians believe they have fewer and worse job opportunities than in Soviet times.[31] This has led to a problem of widespread emigration.

In an effort to improve its economic prospects, Armenia has sought to improve ties with the EU in recent years. The EU has made it clear that, before negotiations over aa "Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area" can be entered into, certain "key recommendations" must be implemented.[32] Improvements to the level of respect for democracy and human rights in the country lay at the core of such recommendations.[33]

The primary issues facing the country in 2012 surrounded the parliamentary elections of the spring, the long-standing protests in Mashtots Park, increased levels of harassment of the LGBT community, and an increasing number of cases being brought before the European Court of Human Rights surrounding state expropriation of private property.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

Repeated allegations of torture and an alarming number of deaths in custody continue to mar Armenia's human rights record.[34] In August 2011, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture released a report on its 2010 visit to Armenia which announced it had received a large number of "credible and consistent" reports from detainees who claimed to have suffered torture and ill-treatment while in custody.[35]

Such incidents primarily occur within police stations which, unlike detention facilities, are not subject to public monitoring.[36]

Of even greater concern is the fact that such incidents appear to occur with impunity.[37] Judges rarely take allegations of torture seriously - even when it is alleged that the confessions of defendants were only obtained through the use of such means.[38] Additionally, the government consistently fails to launch effective investigations into unexplained deaths in police custody.[39]

Prisons

In its European Neighborhood Policy progress report of May 2012, the EU criticised prison conditions in Armenia.[40] In response, the government issued an amnesty, releasing 590 prisoners.[41] Despite this, significant problems remain.

Overcrowding remained the key problem in Armenia's prison system.[42] Under Armenian law, pre-trial detainees may not be held in police cells for more than 72 hours.[43] As a result, Armenian prisons are filled not only with convicted criminals, but also persons who have not yet faced trial.[44]

Armenian prisons - which are frequently old and decaying nature, are unable to cope with the current number of inmates. As such, unhygienic conditions and a shortfall in adequate medical care place the rights of prisoners in jeopardy.[45]

The Right to a Fair Trial

Internal and international observers alike are quick to note the lack of independence among the judiciary as a major obstacle to the realisation of human rights in Armenia. A recent Freedom House report notes that "(t)he judiciary is subject to political pressure from the executive branch and suffers from considerable corruption".[46]

Though Armenian law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and requires judicial review of decisions to detain suspects, in practice judges are unwilling to challenge the decisions of prosecutors in such areas.[47] This is particularly concerning when coupled with the fact that Armenian law does not require suspects to be brought to trial promptly.[48]

Though Armenian law states that defendants must be presumed innocent until proven guilty,[49] a 2011 report by the Helsinki Association alleged that judges often questioned defendants in a manner which appeared to assume their guilt and dismissed the motions of defence lawyers without justification.[50]

The lack of impartiality among the judiciary is of particular concern given that almost all Armenian trials are decided by a single judge and not a jury,[51] and that, due to underfunding, state-funded defence lawyers are not always available, particularly outside of Yerevan.[52]

The Right to Privacy

The Armenian constitution prohibits unauthorised wiretaps and monitoring of communications.[53] While there have been some allegations that such things take place, of more concern is the fact that judges appear to provide such authorisation in an arbitrary manner,[54] thereby rendering the law an inefficient protection of the right to privacy.

Freedom of Movement

Freedom of movement is enshrined in Armenian law and is generally respected. There have, however, been reports that it has been restricted in relation to persons from other cities attempting to travel to Yerevan to attend political rallies.[55]

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Freedom of Expression and the Media

Restrictions upon freedom of expression have intensified in Armenia in recent years and journalists have reported experiencing harassment and intimidation by state officials.[56] While the government decriminalised libel in May 2010, the potential penalties for libel in civil cases were significantly increased,[57] leading to self-censorship from many journalists.[58]

Between July and September 2012, the Committee to Protect Freedom of Expression recorded 16 cases of violation of the right.[59] It has also noted that this is actually an improvement on the situation of earlier in the year during the parliamentary elections.[60]

There remains a significant lack of access to opposition views through the medium of television. The vast majority of television stations are owned either by the state or by companies with close government ties.[61] As such, anti-government stories are rarely aired. The government has demonstrated a lack of willingness to grant licences for channels owned by companies with whom it is not closely linked. For example, a broadcasting licence continues to be denied to the channel A1+, despite a 2008 European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruling that this continued and arbitrary denial constituted a violation of the right to free expression.[62]

Freedom of Assembly

The issue of freedom of assembly has been a key issue in Armenia in recent years. After 10 people died in clashes between police and protestors during the 2008 election period, protesting was banned in Yerevan's Republic Square.[63] In 2011, this ban was lifted with the introduction of the new Law on Assemblies.[64] The Council of Europe's Venice Commission stated that, while

this law was largely in accordance with international standards, several elements remained problematic, such as the need to for protestors to give notice seven days before an event and a broad and vague range of reasons as to why any protest could be legitimately prohibited.[65]

The first real test of the new law arrived in early 2012, when protestors set up camp in Yerevan's Mashtots Park in order to prevent the felling of established trees in order to build new commercial buildings.[66] The protests lasted for several months, during which time there were several violent clashes between protestors and police.[67] Human rights lawyer Artur Grigoryan claimed (along with many others) that both the constructions of the kiosks and the manner in which police dealt with protestors violated both national and international law.[68] In May, President Sargsyan ordered the kiosks to be dismantled.[69]

Free and Fair Elections

Ever since the country gained independence, elections in Armenia have been marred by significant irregularities.[70] In particular, the presidential election of 2008 drew major international attention in the wake of alleged electoral fraud in relation to vote counting and suppression of opposition candidates.[71] In response, the country adopted a new electoral code in 2011,[72] which was regarded as an improvement by the Council of Europe.[73]

The first major test of the new code arrived in the form of the 2012 parliamentary elections. The OSCE noted that these elections represented a significant improvement, and that freedom of assembly and expression were respected and candidates were generally able to campaign freely.[74] However, the organisation's report also noted that "stakeholders failed to implement important aspects of the new law and the manner in which complaints were dealt with undermined the right to effective legal redress".[75] Additionally, it was alleged that the election was marred by vote-buying, the enlistment of state employees to work on the campaign of the ruling party, and the fraudulent manipulation of electoral registers.[76]

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The Right to Property/Shelter

Perhaps the most pervasive and long-standing human rights violation in Armenia today is also the most unpublicised - that of unlawful state expropriation of private property.

In 2006, the country adopted a controversial new law on the "Alienation of Property for State or Community Needs".[77] This law gave the government the right to seize any property it regarded as "eminent domain" - i.e. property located in areas deemed key to the redevelopment of the nation's infrastructure.[78]

In theory, the law requires that the government must furnish any citizen whose property is compulsorily expropriated with adequate compensation. This may come in the form of a financial settlement, or a replacement dwelling of similar value. In practice, citizens have often complained of never receiving the alternative properties they were promised.[79]

The issue has given rise to a substantial number of cases against Armenia being heard at the ECtHR.[80] Unfortunately, even this has not sufficiently improved the situation.

In 2011, the court removed a large number of complainant's cases from its backlog after receiving assurances from the Armenian government that such persons would be given alternative properties within 3 months. According to the complainants' lawyer, this promise is yet to be met.81

In those cases where the court has made judgment, it has predominantly ruled against the government.[82] Unfortunately, such decisions have not served to fully rectify the damage done to victims.

This is because, despite finding in favour of the complainant, the court was unable to make an accurate estimation of the value of the properties in question since they had already been demolished.[83] As such, it is forced to rely on estimations of the value of the properties provided to it by the Armenian government.[84]

This represents a clear conflict of interests, and has, unsurprisingly, led to victims complaining that they have received inadequate compensation. For example, in the case of Minasyan and Semerjyan v. Armenia, the court, finding in favour of the complainants, demanded that the Armenian government owed them compensation of just ќ4,000 each for the expropriation of their central Yerevan flat - a property previously valued at around ќ200,000.[85]

Moreover, despite the fact that the ECtHR has consistently undervalued the properties of those complainants it has found in favour of, there have been repeated reports that the Armenian government has still refused to enact the court's judgments.

Labour Rights

Armenian labour laws provide all workers with the right to form/join trade unions,[86] a 40 hour work week with paid overtime and four weeks holiday per year.[87] In practice, labour organisations are ineffective[88] and labour laws weakly enforced.[89]

Age discrimination in the workplace is prevalent. Workers aged over 40 have great trouble finding work to match their skills and experience.[90]

Health and safety standards often go unmet and, according to a 2008 UNICEF study, 4.7% of Armenian children aged between seven and eighteen held paying jobs.[91]

The Right to a Healthy Environment

Environment-related human rights issues have featured prominently in Armenian society in recent years. There have been several public protests in response to the actions of the country's mining industry.

Residents of the town of Aliverdi have reported a severe increase in cases of respiratory disease, sterility, and birth defects.[92] Director of Armenia Tree Project, Jeff Masarjian notes that the town is home to a large copper mine and smelter, which has no controls on the emissions it produces. A study by UNEP and OSCE concluded that, as a result of the copper plant, levels of sulphur dioxide in the air are up to 20 times higher than the permitted maximum and thus represent a significant hazard to human health.[93]

In light of the problems in Aliverdi, NGOs and citizens alike have raised their concerns over proposal for a new mine in Teghut. These concerns centre around three main areas:

- Residents of Teghut were forced to sell their lands to mine owners Vallex at a fraction of market value.

- Experts fear that tailings from the mine will cause damage to human health through the pollution of both air and drinking water.[94]

- Current laws and procedures have not been adhered to in ensuring the suitability of the area for mining; president of the Socio-Ecological Association, Srbuhi Harutyunyan notes that 77 articles of various national and international laws (including the Aarhus Convention, to which Armenia is party) have been violated so far.[95]

DISCRIMINATION

Women

While Armenian law specifies equality between men and women, in practice is not implemented in a gender-neutral manner.[96] Additionally, there are no laws explicitly defining or prohibiting gender-based discrimination.[97]

Domestic violence is prevalent within the country. As with incidences of rape, most cases of domestic violence go unreported due to social stigma.[98] Victims who have reported such offences report not being taken seriously or being treated as if they were at fault by the authorities.[99]

Women also face discrimination in the field of employment, and have lesser access to decision-making roles.[100] The new 2011 electoral code aimed to address this issue, requiring that every 6th candidate must be female.[101]

LGBT Persons

While homosexuality was decriminalised in 2003, LGBT persons still face widespread societal discrimination and violence.[102] In 2012, the situation appeared to worsen significantly.

In May 2012, D.I.Y., a "gay-friendly" bar in Yerevan was firebombed by an ultra-nationalist group and then, in a second attack, daubed with swastikas.[103] Two Armenian citizens were arrested and admitted committing the crime as a reaction against the sexuality of the owner and patrons of the bar.[104] In response, Vice-Speaker of the Armenian Parliament, Eduard Sharmazanov, publicly stated that he found the attack "completely right and justified".[105]

Later that month, a demonstration attended by refugees, LGBT persons, and ethnic minorities was held to mark World Cultural Diversity Day. The march was disrupted by nationalist persons singing anti-gay songs and small skirmishes broke out.[106]

Ethnic Minorities

In its April 2012 report, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination urged the Armenian authorities to do more to combat racial discrimination in the country.[107] While overt or violent discrimination is rare, members of ethnic minorities have reported difficulties in obtaining education in their native languages and occasional harassment by the authorities.[108]

Persons with Disabilities

While Armenian law prevents discrimination on the grounds of disability, this law is not effectively enforced in practice.[109] Disabled Armenians often lacked access to public buildings, inhibiting their ability to obtain healthcare, education, and employment.[110] In practice, disabled persons rarely leave the home due to social stigma.[111]

TREATMENT OF NGOS

National and international NGOs are generally able to operate freely,[112] although registration requirements are complex and time-consuming.[113] There are, however, occasional instances of government harassment of NGOs.[114] Allegations of such mistreatment are rarely effectively investigated.[115]

OTHER ISSUES

Refugees

There is an inadequate amount of job opportunities and housing for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Armenia.[116] That housing which is available is predominantly of a substandard condition.[117] Asylum seekers entering the country illegally are handed prison sentences which must be served in full, even after their applications for asylum have been properly registered.[118]

The Armed Forces

Armenia employs a system of conscription requiring all males under the age of 27 to serve in the armed forces for a period of two years. An alarming number of non-combat deaths occur within the military each year.[119] There are also widespread reports of ill-treatment and hazing.[120] For example, For example, in February 2011, TorgomSarukhanyan, 21, died of an allegedly self-inflicted gunshot wound. Three servicemen were subsequently arrested on charges of incitement to suicide.[121] According to NGOs, such an occurrence is unusual, as such abuses within the military are generally carried out with impunity.[122]

COUNTRY REPORT: AZERBAIJAN

Head of State: Ilham Aliyev

Head of Government: Artur Rasizade

Capital City: Baku

Population: 9.3 million[123]

GDP: $63.4 billion[124]

Life Expectancy: 71 years[125]

Under 5 Mortality Rate: 33.5 per 1000[126]

Adult Literacy: 99.5%[127]

Death Penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes

Azerbaijan is a post-Soviet country which is currently engaged in a war with Armenia over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. It has witnessed great economic growth since gaining independence from the USSR in the early 1990s. In 1994 the country signed an oil contract worth $7.4 billion with a Western consortium. Since then, a great deal of further wealth has been attained through the exploitation of the country's oil and gas reserves.[128] This wealth, however, has not filtered down evenly throughout society. Indeed, Transparency International rates Azerbaijan 143rd out of 183 countries in its Corruption Perceptions Index.[129]

Furthermore, the country's strong economic position has not led to a widespread increase in human rights recognition. Despite committing itself to the European Neighbourhood Action Plan, the UN Human Rights Charter, and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),[130] overall respect for human rights has steadily decreased over the past few years.[131]

Azerbaijan has close ties with both the European Union (EU) and the United States (US). While both have strongly criticised the country's human rights record, both have failed to condition their engagement with Azerbaijan on concrete improvements to the human rights situation.[132]

In 2012, the capital city, Baku, hosted the Eurovision Song Contest. Many human rights defenders, both internal and external, seized this opportunity to draw international attention to the government's widespread abuses of power.[133]

CIVIL RIGHTS

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

In 2007, Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs openly admitted that the country's police officers do occasionally use torture when investigating criminal suspects.[134] The situation does not seem to have changed in the proceeding five years. Torture and inhuman treatment remained a widespread phenomenon in Azerbaijan throughout 2012. Abuses most often involve suspects in police custody in police custody.[135]

The independent prison monitoring group The Azerbaijani Committee Against Torture received 89 complaints in the first half of 2011 alone.[136] During the same period, 2 suspects died in police custody.[137]

Perhaps more concerning than the number of violations, however, was the fact that such actions appear to be committed with impunity. Human Rights Watch noted in their annual report that allegations of torture and inhuman treatment were not thoroughly investigated by the Azerbaijani authorities.[138]

In January, Elvin Askerov died in police custody. The authorities claimed that his death came as a result of injuries which he sustained in the chase which lead to his arrest. His family alleged that he was beaten in Baku's Nizami District police station. Despite the family's request, no investigation followed.[139]

Political Prisoners

Imprisonment of citizens on politically-motivated charges continues to be a problem in Azerbaijan.[140] The government continues to incarcerate significant numbers of individuals who are considered "prisoners of conscience" by international civil society. Many of these persons were originally arrested in connection with their protests during the country's 2010 general elections.[141]

There has however, been some recent progress in this area. On 26 May 2011, Eynulla Fatullayev, who had been arrested on charges described as "trumped up" by Amnesty International, was released by presidential pardon after significant international pressure.[142]

On 26 December 2011, opposition youth activist Jabbar Savalan was also released following a presidential pardon. He had been arrested in February of the same year after using the internet to encourage people to begin anti-government protests and re-posting an article which was critical of the current regime. His arrest warrant, however, stated that he had been arrested for drug possession, something he alleges that he only confessed to after being beaten in police custody.[143]

The government continues to deny access to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly rapporteur on political prisoners in Azerbaijan.[144]

The Right to Privacy

The right to privacy is not absolutely respected in Azerbaijan, particularly for those persons who are critical of the government. Although statistics are unavailable, it is widely believed that citizens' internet usage is monitored to some extent. In addition, it is alleged that the authorities are willing to violate their citizens' privacy more directly on occasion.

In February 2012, Journalist, Khadija Ismayilova, received photographs of her and her boyfriend having sexual intercourse, which had been taken without her knowledge or consent, along with a note demanding that she ceased her investigations into alleged government corruption. When she failed to do so, the photographs appeared on the internet, along with accompanying video footage. Two pro-government newspapers printed links to the video. Ms Ismayilova believes that the incident occurred on the instructions of somebody within the government. The government, however, has denied involvement, stating that it considers the right to privacy to be "fundamental", and that it has launched an investigation into the incident.[145]

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Freedom of Religion

In 2009, a dataset published by the human rights organisation Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) concluded that severe restrictions upon freedom of religion existed in Azerbaijan.[146] Since that time the situation has, if anything, worsened.

Amendments to national law made in June 2010 tightened the restrictions placed upon religious groups.[147] In addition to substantially raising the fines imposed for "unauthorised religious activity", the government now require all religious groups to seek prior government authorisation before gathering.[148] The new laws also required all practicing religious groups to re-register with the government.

In June 2011, government forces dissolved religious meetings of Baptists in Sumgait and Jehovah's Witnesses in Ganja on the grounds that proper permissions had not been obtained.[149] The latter has unsuccessfully attempted to register at least twice since this time.[150] Such difficulties have been reported by several other religious organisations, who complain that the registration process is highly bureaucratic and time-consuming and decisions upon the success of such applications often appear arbitrary.

Freedom of Expression and the Media

Freedom of Expression and the Media are severely restricted by various elements of government legislation, including the criminalisation of libel and defamation.[151] In January 2011, government forces arrested Movsum Samadov, the leader of an outlawed Islamic Party, after a video in of him denouncing the president was posted on YouTube. He was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for an attempted coup.[152] The Council of Europe (COE) has subsequently urgently called upon Azerbaijan to bring its legislation on media freedom and freedom of expression into line with international standards.[153] While the number of government initiated libel cases against journalists and other critics has since decreased, attitudes towards such individuals remain hostile.[154]

In addition to legislative measures, free expression is further curtailed by fear of reprisal and government influence over media outlets.[155] The Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety reported that more than 50 journalists were harassed or attacked in 2011.[156] Such incidents were highlighted as an area of significant concern by the European Parliament.[157]

- In November 2011, a journalist who was critical of the government was murdered in Baku.

- In March 2012, Seymur Haziyev, a journalist for an opposition newspaper, was reportedly abducted and beaten by six masked assailants who warned him against writing articles which criticised the president.[158]

- In April 2012, another of the publication's writers, Ramin Deko, had a similar experience.[159]

To date, no individual has been held responsible for any of the above incidents and the thoroughness of the investigations into them has been called into question.[160] The resulting fear of both official and unofficial reprisal has led to widespread self-censorship among Azerbaijani journalists and media outlets.[161]

Freedom of Assembly

The right to freely assemble is continuingly and consistently ignored by the Azerbaijani authorities. The harsh government crackdowns on the protests which sprung up around the 2008 general elections brought the issue of free assembly in Azerbaijan to the attention of the international community. This attention, however, failed to result in a resolution to the problem. Indeed, the situation has since worsened. In response to these previous protests, national law was amended to effectively prohibit public gatherings by affording the police the power to arrest and detain peaceful protestors.[162]

These new laws, however, have failed to entirely stop the occurrence of protests within the country. March and April 2012 saw a series of protests against the government in Baku.[163] Each of these were rapidly and violently dispersed by the police, with around half of all participants being arrested and detained.[164] Many of these persons were subsequently taken to trial and given prison sentences of between 5 and 10 days.[165]

Those seen to have organised the protests faced much greater punishments. 13 activists were charged with "organising and participating in public disorder" and handed sentences of up to 3 years imprisonment.[166] In addition, other protest organisers were found guilty of different, apparently unrelated offences by the courts.[167]

On 22 July, Shahin Hansali was sentenced to two years imprisonment for possession of pistol bullets in an investigation which began directly after he had organised a protest. On 18 May, Bakhtiyar Hajiyev, an opposition activist who had attempted to encourage people to protest online, was handed a two year sentence for evading military service.[168]

According to international observers, the evidence used to convict each of the above persons was, at best, flimsy and in most cases entirely absent.[169]

Free and Fair Elections

Heydar Aliyev became the first president of Azerbaijan after the country gained independence from the USSR. In 2002, he was succeeded by his son, Ilham, who still rules today. It is widely accepted that this on-going dynasty is not the result of the family's popularity with the people, but, rather, of an unfair electoral process.

A recent note composed compiled by rapporteurs from the Council of Europe specifically highlighted Azerbaijan's electoral code and laws on political parties as major areas of concern, stating that both fall far below European standards.[170]

The two major opposition parties (Musavat and the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party) are not represented in parliament, and have reportedly been the victims of intimidation and harassment in addition to possessing far from equal levels of opportunity in relation to electoral campaigns.[171]

The Venice Commission found such complaints to be valid, further noting that the electoral code is substandard in relation to both legal remedies regarding complaints surrounding the electoral process, and the composition of electoral commissions.[172]

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The Right to Property/Shelter

In Azerbaijan, just as has been the case in many countries in the Caucasus in recent years, urban redevelopment and rejuvenation projects have frequently been carried out with little or no regard for the property rights of those individuals currently occupying sites identified for new construction work.

In the run up to the Eurovision Song Contest of 2012, hundreds of Azerbaijani citizens were forced out of their homes in order to make way for a new concert hall.[173] The government paid homeowners around 1,500 Manats (about $1,900) for each square metre of their homes.[174] According to Zohrab Ismayil, chairman of the Public Association for Assistance to Free Economy, this was less than half the market value for property in that area of Baku.[175]

Moreover, those who refused to accept the government's offer were subjected to harassment and oppression. Supplies of electricity, water, and gas were cut off despite freezing winter temperatures. Those persons who still refused to leave claim that they were subjected to threats that the police would find reasons to arrest their teenage children, and that those who were state employees would lose their jobs.[176]

The European Parliament noted that those persons who remained despite such threats were subjected to forced eviction.[177] For instance, in November 2010, police forcibly removed 8 persons from their homes and detained them for 9 hours while their homes were bulldozed. In other cases, demolition work began while residents were still inside their houses.[178]

DISCRIMINATION

Women

Ever since the country gained independence, Azerbaijani women have failed to be treated on an equal basis with men. Throughout the country's existence, the use of the systematic rape of women as a weapon of war has been commonplace.[179]

Although the state remains secular, Azerbaijan is a predominantly Muslim country. This has led to various further abuses of women's rights. In terms of society, honour killings continue to occur.[180] In terms of the state, in December 2010, a law was introduced banning the wearing of headscarves in schools.[181] This has led many Muslim women to drop out of the education system, effectively preventing them from holding equal rights with men to be educated and to practice their religion as they see fit.

LGBT Persons

While not overtly illegal, homosexuality is highly socially unacceptable in Azerbaijan. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons routinely face discrimination in the employment market and harassment from both the general public and the police. Many LGBT persons feel it necessary to hide their sexual identity due to fear of reprisal.

In its 2012 resolution regarding the human rights situation in Azerbaijan, the European Parliament strongly condemned threats by radical Islamist groups and individuals within the country which were aimed at LGBT participants of the Eurovision Song Contest.[182]

TREATMENT OF NGOS

Throughout 2011-2012, NGOs working on issues of democracy and human rights in Azerbaijan faced increased levels of harassment and political pressure.[183] Several organisations were subjected to forced eviction from their premises with no apparent legal basis.[184] Others were simply closed altogether for allegedly failing to comply with the country's highly complex registration process[185] (the laws on which were further tightened in 2009).[186]

Of equal concern is the fact that both the Council of Europe and Human Rights Watch have noted repeated cases of Azerbaijani human rights lawyers repeatedly facing disbarment and even criminal charges on politically motivated grounds.[187] The concern is that such a hostile atmosphere will discourage other qualified professionals from championing human rights cases.

COUNTRY REPORT: BELARUS

Head of State: Alyaksandr Lukashenka

Head of Government: Mikhail Myasnikovich

Capital City: Minsk

Population: 9.6 million[188]

GDP: $55.14 billion[189]

Life Expectancy: 70 years[190]

Under 5 Mortality Rate: 12.1 per 1000[191]

Adult Literacy: 99.7%[192]

Death Penalty: Retentionist

Of all the post-Soviet countries, Belarus has arguably made the least progress towards democracy since declaring its independence and, in 2009, was subject to a UN resolution condemning its record on human rights.[193] This was followed by a further 4 similar resolutions from the European Parliament in 2011 alone.[194]

After centuries of operating under the rule of first Poland, then Russia, and finally the USSR, Belarus finally achieved independence in 1991. The country's first president, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, then promptly pursued a policy of reunification with Russia - a country with which Belarus continues to maintain close ties.[195]

The Belarusian government controls approximately 70% of the country's economy, and corruption is pervasive.[196] This fact, combined with Russia substantially reducing its level of subsidisation of Belarusian energy supplies, has meant that the global economic downturn has hit the country hard. The value of the Belarusian Ruble has plummeted, while unemployment and inflation have continued to rise, with goods shortages becoming commonplace.[197] As a result, there were increasing levels of social unrest and protest among the public. These were met increased levels of legal restriction and violent oppression.[198]

CIVIL RIGHTS

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

Torture is widely reported to be commonplace in Belarus, although the lack of a presence of independent monitoring organisations within the country means that both statistics and concrete individual examples are hard to come by. It is believed that pre-trial detention facilities are the primary location for instances of torture, and that victims are most typically opposition activists and journalists. In May 2011 the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning this situation.[199]

Political Prisoners

Human rights defenders and, indeed, any persons criticising the government run the risk of being imprisoned in Belarus. Criticising the government is not, in itself, illegal in Belarus, but individuals doing so are frequently subject to politically-motivated arrest, ostensibly for having committed some other crime or misdemeanour.[200] The most famous case of this in recent years is that of Ales Bialiatski.

Bialiatski, a renowned human rights defender and head of the NGO Viasna, was arrested in August 2011 on charges of tax evasion. Human Rights Watch claims that these charges were politically motivated.[201] In January 2012, his appeal was rejected by the Belarusian Supreme Court, and he will now serve a four-and-a-half year prison sentence.[202] Amnesty International considers Bialiatski to be a prisoner of conscience, and has demanded his unconditional release.[203]

The Death Penalty

Despite immense international pressure, Belarus remains the only country in Europe to retain the death penalty.

In July 2011, Belarus executed two men found guilty of murder. The executions took place despite requests from the United Nations Human Rights Committee for them to be postponed until they had the chance to review the cases. Both defendants maintained their innocence, claiming that their confessions had been obtained under torture.[204]

In March 2012, Dzmitry Kanavalaw and Uladzislaw Kavalyow were executed for allegedly carrying out a bomb attack on the Minsk metro the previous year. Again the UN Human Rights Council requested that the executions be suspended until it had reviewed the case. Again such requests were not adhered to. Several international NGOs and local observers expressed concern at the fairness of the trial. In response, the Council of Europe issued a statement signed by all 47 member states, condemning the executions and calling on Belarus to implement a moratorium on its use of the death penalty.[205]

The Right to a Fair Trial

Ostensibly speaking, the Belarusian constitution affords each citizen the right to a fair trial and demands judicial independence. In practice, courts are subject to significant influence from the executive and the standard of fairness defendants receive at trial is often called into question, particularly in cases with political overtones (see the case of Ales Bialiatski, above).[206]

Those persons arrested in connection with the demonstration which took place on 19 December reported that they were frequently denied access to lawyers, and those meetings which did occur were often not carried out in private.[207]

Freedom of Movement

While legal amendments made in 2010 removed the stipulation that citizens should acquire a permit before embarking on foreign travel, freedom of movement remains restricted. Many citizens have been refused the right to travel abroad for various reasons, such as their being in possession of state secrets, pending legal cases, or outstanding financial obligations.[208]

In practice, it seemed that the motivation behind banning certain individuals from leaving the country was often political. For example, on 6 June 2012, former-presidential candidate Andrei Sannikov and his lawyer were prevented from crossing the border into Lithuania.[209] The reasoning behind their denial of passage was not made clear.

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Freedom of Expression

Belarusian law applies severe restrictions to freedom of expression.[210] Criticism of the government and acts of protest are frequently miscategorised as acts of violence or hooliganism.

In February 2012, Siarhei Kavalenka was sentenced to over two years imprisonment for violating the conditions of his supervised release. His original sentence had been handed down to him in May 2010 after he had hung an alternative version of the Belarusian flag upon the main New Year's tree in Vibetsk in January of that year.[211]

In recent years the government has taken steps to curb freedom of expression on the internet. An assessment by Open Net Initiative states that selective censorship of websites on political grounds occurs in Belarus.[212] In addition, the government heavily monitors the online activities of its citizens - an action which is made easier by the fact that the country's sole internet service provider is state-owned. In order to stop opposition activists avoiding detection by using public access points, a presidential decree was issued in June 2010, requiring owners of internet cafes to identify all users and monitor their activity.[213]

Freedom of the Media

Press freedom is systematically curtailed in Belarus.[214] In 2008, a law was passed which affords the state a monopoly over all information regard political, social and economic affairs. In addition, libel remains both a criminal and civil offence.[215]

Both national television and most newspapers in the country are state-owned.[216] Those independent media outlets which remain continue to be subjected to frequent harassment.[217] A trend has emerged under which opposition journalists are frequently arrested and detained on spurious grounds of "hooliganism" or "swearing in public" in order to discourage their activity.[218]

In March 2012, journalist Andrzej Poczobut was charged with "insulting the president" and "libelling the president" in relation to articles he had written for the Polish newspaper, Gazeta Wyborcza.[219]

Freedom of Assembly

Belarusian law implements severe restrictions upon the right of free assembly.[220] The occurrence of anti-government protests had begun to become more frequent in Belarus, though such

demonstrations were frequently disrupted through violent means.[221] In an attempt to curtail such demonstrations altogether, new rules were introduced requiring protestors to gain prior permission from local authorities. Such permission may be arbitrarily denied.[222]

In an effort to circumvent these new restrictions, protestors began adopting novel new tactics, such as silent protests involving mutual hand-clapping or mobile phone ringing, in the belief that such actions could did not constitute illegality under Belarusian law. Such events gained immense popularity, involving thousands of people across 30 countries at their height.[223]

In October 2011, parliament adopted further restrictions to the Law on Public Assemblies in order to curtail even these silent protests. Police were afforded the power to record such protests, restrict entrants to them, and carry out body searches. Furthermore, official permission is now required for any pre-planned public gathering and organisers must report all financial sources for such an event.[224]

Freedom of Religion

The constitution of Belarus guarantees religious equality.[225] However, the CIRI Human Rights Dataset rates the restrictions upon the freedom to practice one's religion in the country remain severe.[226] Various religious groups face continuing discrimination - much of which is backed by the government.[227]

In 2002, the government adopted legal amendments which placed firm restrictions upon the activities of religious groups who had been active in Belarus for fewer than 20 years.[228] In addition, these amendments allowed for government censorship of religious publications and prohibited foreign citizens from leading any religious groups within Belarus.[229]

Free and Fair Elections

Alyaksandr Lukashenka remains Belarus's first and only president since it gained independence. During the two decades of his reign, periodic elections have been consistently held. As of yet, none of these elections has been considered free or fair by the international community. He was last re-elected on 19 December 2010, in what was described as "a deeply flawed election".[230] In its aftermath, 3 of the candidates who had stood in opposition to Lukashenka were imprisoned on questionable charges.[231]

In 2012, parliamentary elections were held in Belarus. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) declared that these elections were neither free nor fair.[232] They concluded that the "elections were not held in an impartial manner" and that "prominent political figures who might have played a role in this contest remained imprisoned or were not eligible to register due to their criminal record". The organization further noted that the "electoral process deteriorated considerably during the count".[233]

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Labour Rights

The widespread control of the Belarusian state over the country's economy severely limits the economic freedom of its citizens.[234] The lack of competition in the market has also had a negative effect on workers' rights.

No new independent trade unions have been created in Belarus since 1999. Members of those that remain frequently face harassment, with their leaders often being fired, and even prosecuted on questionable charges.[235]

Over 90% of Belarus's workforce is employed on fixed-term contracts, meaning that they can be dismissed without reason or explanation at the expiry of their contract.[236] Such a situation promotes great insecurity and perturbs workers from raising grievances with their employers when their rights go unmet.

DISCRIMINATION

Women

Whilst there is little to no de jure discrimination against women in Belarus, levels of de facto discrimination remain high.

Within the professional sphere, significant discrepancies remain in income levels between the sexes, and women are severely under-represented in governmental positions.[237]

Within the social sphere, domestic violence remains prevalent[238] and little is done to address the issue. Additionally, as is the case in many countries within the Caucasus region, numbers of women being trafficked out of the country as part of the international sex trade remain worryingly high.[239]

Ethnic Minorities

Ethnic Poles, Roma, and Jews are frequent targets of discrimination in Belarus, at both the governmental and societal levels.

In 2010, police raided the Union of Poles' headquarters, seizing property and arresting activists. In May 2011, Uladzislau Tokarau, head of the Vitebsk branch of the organisation, fled the country for fear of further reprisals.[240]

Belarusian Jews report that they are frequently subjected to verbal and physical attacks. Additionally, their religious sites are often vandalised. While there is no evidence to demonstrate that such behaviour is carried out by or on behalf of the Belarusian authorities, little is done by such bodies to investigate or prevent such crimes.

TREATMENT OF NGOS

The aforementioned case of Ales Bialiatski represents just one example of the harassment faced by NGOs and their members in Belarus. While the relationship between NGOs and the state has never been ideal, the level of repression against the former by the latter has reached unprecedented levels in recent years.[241]

Internally, NGOs face many legislative restrictions which prevent them from functioning effectively. New rules meant that more than 100 of the country's most prominent organisations were forced to close between 2003 and 2005. In 2005, participation in an unregistered or dissolved NGO was made a criminal offence.[242] This fact, combined with a complicated and apparently arbitrary registration process and relatively frequent closures of overly critical organisations by the government, means that most currently operating Belarusian human rights defenders risk jail sentences of between 6 and 24 months simply by carrying out their activities.[243] The Council of Europe's Venice Commission declared such a law to be "incompatible with a democratic society".[244]

Additionally, independent legal professionals who, without being members of NGOs, have chosen to defend victims of human rights abuses have suffered government harassment. For example, many of the human rights lawyers who opted to defend the cases of the organisers of the protests surrounding the December 2010 parliamentary elections have since been disbarred.[245]

With regard to international human rights organisations, the situation in Belarus has significantly worsened in recent years. In 2011 alone, the state expelled or banned from entering Belarus an unprecedented 13 foreign human rights defenders.[246]

In early 2012, all EU ambassadors were recalled from Minsk by their home governments in response to the Belarusian state's unacceptable treatment of the Polish ambassador and the head of the EU delegation.[247]

In January 2011, Belarus discontinued ties with the OSCE after the organisation's criticism of the December 2010 elections.[248] In late 2012, the EU council banned those it deemed responsible for violations of international electoral standards from travelling to member countries.[249]

COUNTRY REPORT: GEORGIA

Head of State: Mikheil Saakashvili

Head of Government: Nikoloz Gilauri

Capital City: Tbilisi

Population: 4.5 million[250]

GDP: $14.37 billion[251]

Life Expectancy: 73 years[252]

Under 5 Mortality Rate: 29.1 per 1000[253]

Adult Literacy: 99.7%[254]

Death Penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes

Renowned human rights scholar Andrew Fagan notes that, "Of all the former Soviet Republics, Georgia appears to have made the most progress towards establishing democracy".[255] Perhaps unsurprisingly then, it also has perhaps the most envious human rights record of all the countries in the Caucasus. Much of the countries success in the areas of democratisation and human rights can be attributed to its strong ties with powerful international actors, and the economic support it receives from such bodies.

The Annual Action Programme for Georgia was adopted by the European Commission in July 2011. The programme commits over $70 million to support the country's conflict resolution efforts, internally displaced persons, and criminal justice system.[256] Additionally, the US has recently committed over $90 million to support democracy and good governance in Georgia.[257] These are just two examples of the ever-deepening economic ties between Georgia and the EU and US. Many further deals have been struck which are concerned not with human rights and democratisation, but with solely economic matters.

Despite these rapid and significant improvements in the status of human rights and democracy in recent years, significant problems remain. Indeed, Human Rights Watch and other international organisations have been critical of the failure of bodies like the EU and the US to use their weight to seek greater improvements in Georgia.[258] It is noted that, while both parties have raised concerns over certain failings in the area of human rights by the Georgian government, neither has conditioned its financial support on concrete commitments for the improvement of human rights.[259]

Thus, while improvements have been made, many problems remain. In 2011, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled against the Georgian state on three separate occasions.[260] Moreover, the Human Rights Centre reported an increasing trend within the country of the authorities strongly discouraging citizens from taking their cases to the EctHR in the first place.[261]

In addition, despite the improvements in the undisputed area of the Georgia, concern for human rights in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains high.[262]

CIVIL RIGHTS

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

The use of torture and inhuman treatment within the Georgian prison system became a hot issue in the country in 2012 after a video footage showing grave abuses of inmates by prison guards was aired on national television.[263]

In its annual report on the Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia for 2010, the country's Public Defender's Office reported that torture was frequently used on inmates in Georgian prisons.[264] Of even greater concern was the fact that the report alleged that the authorities investigation of such incidents remained superficial in "almost all cases".[265]

It seems, though, that the public uproar which followed the airing of the aforementioned videos may have caused a turnaround in this trend of impunity. In the wake of the videos' release, public protests erupted in major cities across the country.[266] In response, President Saakashvili acknowledged that abuse of prison inmates was a systemic problem and replaced former Penitentiary Minister, Khatuna Kalmakhalidze with current ombudsman, Giorgi Tughushi, giving the latter a mandate of the thorough reform of the penal system.[267]

The Right to Privacy

In November 2010, the Georgian government adopted amendments to the Law on Operative-Investigative Activity. These amendments force communication companies to allow law enforcement officials unlimited access to all online communications, including private emails.[268]

Prisons

Georgia has received widespread international criticism regarding the treatment of prisoners.[269] In addition to the widespread use of torture mentioned above, the criticisms centre upon the "dangerously substandard" conditions in which prisoners are held.[270]

Many of these problems arise as a result of overcrowding.[271] Due to the lack of appropriate facilities, administrative detainees are frequently forced to remain in small holding cells, designed for imprisonment of persons for less than 72 hours, for long periods.[272]

The country's public defender noted that the lack of ventilation and adequate healthcare in many facilities caused conditions to deteriorate to a level which it considered to be life-threatening.[273] 140 prisoners died within the prison system in 2011. The primary cause of death was Tuberculosis.[274]

In its 2010 report, the Public Defender's Office asserted that funding inequalities between healthcare for prisoners and that afforded to the general population violated international standards.[275]

The Right to a Fair Trial

The extremely low acquittal rate of Georgian courts has led many international observers to question the independence of the judiciary and the professionalism of prosecutors within the country.[276]

In April 2012, the ECtHR ruled that Georgia had failed to carry out an effective investigation into the murder of Sandro Girgvliani. The court stated that the investigation lacked "independence, impartiality, objectivity and thoroughness". It further noted that the Ministry of the Interior, the Prosecutor's Office, the domestic courts and the President had acted to "prevent justice from being done".[277]

There have been frequent reports of evidence in favour of defendants being overlooked or simply ignored. In January 2012, police arrested 11 protestors on charges of disobedience and hooliganism. All were found guilty without available video evidence being viewed by the courts.[278]

Political Prisoners

The Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, Thomas Hammarberg, has noted that a significant number of Georgian prisoners were sentenced on political grounds. The majority of these were sentenced after partaking in opposition protests. He also cast doubt upon the credibility of both the charges against such persons and their convictions.[279]

There have been no complaints from domestic or international bodies concerned with political prisoners to suggest that the government has prohibited them from visiting such persons.[280]

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Freedom of Expression and the Media

In 2010, the Georgian government passed a law affording greater transparency regarding media ownership.[281] Regardless of this fact, access to independent media sources within the country remains limited.[282] Nationwide television broadcasting is limited to the state-owned Public Broadcaster and two further pro-government stations.[283] Journalists working for such corporations routinely practice self-censorship of anti-government stories.[284]

Those journalists working for independent, oppositional media organisations reported being placed under surveillance, unequal access to government buildings and anonymous telephone threats.[285] They were also subjected to consistent harassment and violence from the authorities.

In particular, those covering the protests of May 2011 reported verbally and physically assaulted by the police, in addition to having their equipment confiscated and/or destroyed.[286] The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe representative on freedom of the media, Dunja Mijatovic, expressed his concern at such events.[287]

Freedom of Assembly

Public protest has become an established feature of life in Georgia - particularly in Tbilisi.[288] Many such protests were met with violent oppression by the security forces.

During the previously mentioned protests of 26 May 2011, police moved to disperse protestors using rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons 15 minutes after the rally permit expired. Four people were killed during the protests, including one police officer. More than 100 people were arrested and detained for resisting the police. Their families were only informed of their whereabouts two days later.[289]

Freedom of Religion

The protection of religious minorities in Georgia has significantly improved over recent years.[290] According to the CIRI Human Rights Dataset, government restrictions upon the freedom to practice one's religion in Georgia are "practically absent".[291]

Indeed, the government has taken a number of legal steps to improve the status of religious freedom within the country. In 2010, parliament adopted a law permitting a broad range of religious groups besides the Georgian Orthodox Church to register as legal entities.

In December of the same year, prisoners and detainees were afforded the right of religious worship, although Muslim leaders reported that incarcerated members of their community still lacked appropriate space to worship.[292]

Free and Fair Elections

1 October 2012 witnessed a historic day for Georgia; for the first time since its independence, the country's government was changed via democratic election.[293] Before this date, changes in the executive had only ever come about through armed coups or revolutions.[294]

The elections, however, did not occur without incident. During the pre-election period, it was reported that the then government used oppressive and violent methods against the eventual winners, Georgian Dream, as well as abusing the use of state resources in order to support their own campaign and making legislative amendments designed to provide unreasonable obstacles to the opposition.[295]

During the election process itself there were many reports of irregularities. These included persons voting using fake ID cards, and political campaigning within polling stations.[296]

Despite these reported problems, the very fact that the government was changed via popular vote suggests that the election process was freer and fairer than in previous years. International organisations appeared to concur with such an assessment, concluding that Georgia had passed a "successful test of democracy".[297] Assen Agov, the head of the NATO parliamentary assembly claimed that the elections underlined the Georgian people's aspiration for a Euro-Atlantic democratic structure.[298]

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Labour Rights

Despite significant improvements in Georgia's economy, the country's increased wealth did not guarantee improvement in the income and working conditions of its citizens.

Minimum wage levels in Georgia remain a significant concern. Employers may legally pay private sector workers just $68 per month for a 48 hour working week. For public sector workers, this drops to just $54 per month, despite the Georgian government's assertion that the official subsistence level was $82.[299]

The combination of low wages and a growing economy has seen an increase in trade unions and labour movements in recent years. Such things have frequently been met by violence and repression, with their leaders reporting harassment and unfair dismissal.[300]

Worker conditions also remain a concern. The Public Defender's Office listed the failure to ensure safe conditions for workers as one of the major deficiencies of labour code implementation.[301] Since the Labour Inspectorate was abolished in 2006 there has been no body responsible for monitoring conditions in the workplace.[302]

Economic Freedom

Corruption remains a significant problem in Georgia. Many internal and external observers have noted a lack of transparency with regard to business ownership.[303] It is widely recognised that a number of key companies are owned by friends or relatives of current or former government officials.

Indeed, in some cases, current government officials own such companies. For example, Transparency International noted that the head of the Georgia National Communications Commission (GNCC), charged with regulating electronic communication, owned a major advertising agency, which represented a direct conflict of interest.[304]

Education

Standards of education vary considerably due to geographic location. School facilities in rural areas were often inadequate, lacking heating, libraries, and blackboards.[305] Additionally, registering children for school can be a difficult process for noncitizens, causing a lower rate of enrolment among such groups.[306]

The Right to Property/Shelter

Many Georgians have had their homes requisitioned by the government with little or no financial compensation.[307] The forced evictions of such persons violated international standards.[308]

Such abuses primarily affected persons displaced after the armed conflicts of the 1990s and 2008.[309] In June 2010, in light of rising property prices in Tbilisi, the government began of programme of removing such persons from state-owned properties in the capital to rural areas.[310] Many of these persons were unhappy at such an idea due to the lack of employment opportunities outside the capital. NGOs report that the government failed to provide evictees with legal support, not locate them adequate alternative housing or compensation.[311]

In addition, ordinary citizens had trouble registering property which had been owned by their families for generations. Much of this land was sold by the government to land developers at unfairly low prices.[312]

DISCRIMINATION

Women

In recent years, the Georgian government has taken several steps to improve the situation of women in the country, including the 2010 Gender Equality Law and the 2011-13 National Action Plan on Gender Equality. Despite this, Georgian women continue to face discrimination.

According to the World Bank's Gender Equality and Development 2012 report, during 2011 women in the country earned on average 60% as much as men engaged in similar work.[313] Moreover, women were primarily confined to low paid, low skill jobs and were severely underrepresented in elected office.[314]

Despite legislation aimed at combatting domestic violence, this continued to be a problem. It is widely believed that such incidents, along with those of rape, largely go unreported due to social stigma.[315]

Ethnic Minorities

Georgian language skills continue to be the main impediment to ethnic minority groups since access to many public services and employment opportunities requires such a thing. The law

requires that members of ethnic minorities learn Georgian as a second language.[316]

In recent years, the government has increased its programme of Georgian language education and access to higher education among minority groups has improved.[317]

There are low rates of birth registration among Romani communities. This fact causes obstacles for such persons when they try to access public services such as healthcare or education.

LGBT Persons

Social Prejudice against LGBT persons remained strong. Such persons reported being victims of verbal and physical violence. Such incidents often go unreported due to homophobic attitudes within the police force.[318] The Georgian Orthodox Church strongly and publicly condemns same-sex sexual activity.[319]

TREATMENT OF NGOS

Internal NGO members reported being victims of harassment. They also claimed the authorities used legal mechanisms to silence critical voices.[320]

International NGOs were largely unimpeded in their work, and were able to freely publish their findings. They did, however, report that, in some cases, government officials were uncommunicative and that their views were ignored.[321]

OTHER ISSUES

Abkhazia and South Ossetia

Little information is available the situation of human rights and democracy within the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, recognition for such concepts in these regions is believed to be poor.

Presidential elections were held in each of these regions during 2012. Their legitimacy was unrecognised by both Georgia and the international community at large. NGOs reported increased violence and harassment of opposition activists in these regions during the election period.[322]

Internally Displaced Persons

The right of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their original places of residence in Abkhazia and South Ossetia continued to be denied by the de facto authorities in those regions.[323]

The housing rights of IDPs living within Georgia continued to be violated. In addition to the aforementioned forced evictions, those IDPs who remained in government housing often lived in squalid, substandard conditions.[324] Such persons reported unequal and inadequate access to employment opportunities and social services, such as healthcare.[325]

In2011 the government undertook a broad review of its IDP action plan in consultation with the UNHCR and other NGOs. It estimated that providing adequate shelter for all IDPs in the country would cost around $348 million.[326]

COUNTRY REPORT: MOLDOVA

Head of State: Marian Lupu (acting)

Head of Government: Vladimir Filat

Capital City: Chisinau

Population: 3.5 million[327]

GDP: $7 billion[328]

Life Expectancy: 69 years[329]

Under 5 Mortality Rate: 16.7 per 1000[330]

Adult Literacy: 98.5%[331]

Death Penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes

Recent years have witnessed numerous legal reforms relating to human rights in Moldova. Despite this fact, their level of recognition remains poor.[332] This observation is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that there are currently over 4000 cases against the country pending at the ECtHR.[333]

Having said this, the Moldovan government has taken some action to bring its human rights record into line with international standards. International and national NGOs have noted that ECtHR decisions have become much more likely to be enforced by the Moldovan authorities in recent years.[334]

In addition, Moldova has developed closer ties with Western Europe and the EU. In 2010, it began negotiating an Association Agreement with the latter.[335]

In January 2012, The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court entered into force in the country, although no measures have as yet been taken to bring national law into line with the statute's provisions.[336]

CIVIL RIGHTS

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

The use of torture by the Moldovan authorities is widespread and systematic.[337] Torture predominantly occurs in prisons and pre-trial detention facilities and is used both as an interrogation technique and a form of punishment.

In 2006, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture claimed that one third of the persons it interviewed made credible allegations that they had been victims of torture.[338] While this figure appears to have lowered in recent years according to government figures, this may have come as a result of victims being unwilling or unable to voice their experiences. In addition, a number of those cases which do reach the courts are often downgraded to lesser offences and thus do not appear as torture in official figures.[339]

As concerning as the overall level of torture witnessed was the fact that such incidents appeared to occur with almost total impunity.[340] In 2011, anti-torture prosecutors received 200 complaints from alleged victims. Due to resource shortages, only 28 of these cases were brought to trial. Of the 11 of these which were against police officers, seven were acquitted, two received suspended sentences, and two received prison sentences which were later overturned.[341] NGOs put the low conviction rates down to the close relationship between prosecutor and police and long delays in the legal process which meant that physical evidence of abuse had often faded before it could be recorded as evidence.[342]

The Right to Privacy

The primary issue with regard to the right to privacy in Moldova in recent years has been the widespread use of wire taps and property searches by the authorities.

Moldovan law states that wiretaps may only be used in the investigation of serious crimes. In practice, their use is pervasive. The ECtHR has stated that the law is vague on when wiretaps may be used and provides inadequate safeguards against the abuse of such a power.[343]

Prisons

The Moldovan government allows the independent monitoring of prisons by local and international observers. In addition to the aforementioned use of torture, such organisations raised significant concerns over poor sanitation, low access to healthcare and overcrowding.[344]

In 2012, the lawyer of inmate, Vasilii Cristioglo raised several complaints about the conditions in which his client was being held. In response, the local prosecutor admitted that "hygiene regulations were ignored; there were no provisions for refrigeration and preparation of food, nor any facilities for washing dishes or for personal hygiene".[345]

The Right to a Fair Trial

While Moldovan law specifies the right to a fair trial and prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, such guidelines are often not followed in practice.[346] 25 per cent of all complaints received by the Moldovan Human Rights Ombudsman's office concerned unfair trials.[347]

According to the Ombudsman, the most frequently raised concerned; failure to examine cases within a reasonable time; limited access lawyers; non-enforcement of court decisions; and violations of procedural rules by courts.[348]

Such issues are widely thought to arise as a result of corruption. While Moldovan law provides for an independent judiciary, there have been repeated reports of politicians influencing judges' decisions, and of judges accepting bribes.[349] Such actions seem to occur with impunity. No judge has been struck off as a result of investigations into corruption in recent years.[350]

A 2011 EU progress report raised a number of these endemic problems within the country's judicial system.[351] In response, parliament adopted the Law on the Justice Reform Strategy for 2011-2016 in November of the same year.[352] Observers suggest that this programme is yet to bring about substantial changes in the field of practice.

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Freedom of Expression and the Media

While certain restrictions remain with regard to freedom of expression and the media in Moldova,[353] Freedom House has noted that the situation in the country has considerably and consistently improved since 2009.[354] This is largely due to the adoption of the Law on Freedom of Expression and the Law on the Denationalization of Public Periodical Publications by the Moldovan Parliament.[355] Additionally, 75% of all media outlets officially adopted a new Code of Ethics of Moldovan Journalists in 2011.

Despite these improvements, while individual citizens were generally able to criticize the government without fear of reprisal,[356] journalists report that they are at times still subject to harassment and intimidation.[357]

A lack of diversity in the field of media ownership led to the censorship of opposition views. The Moldpress News Agency (which is government owned), and local government bodies subsidised a total of 22 newspapers, in most cases influencing their reporting. Reporters working for such agencies tended to practice self-censorship for fear of dismissal.[358] Additionally, lawsuits made by government officials against journalists and their publications whose work criticised them caused further unwillingness to report on alleged corruption.[359]

Freedom of Assembly

In 2008, the Moldovan government, in co-operation with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, adopted laws which brought the country's domestic legislation on freedom of assembly into compliance with international standards.[360] Despite this, such rights were sometimes restricted in practice, particularly in relation to so-called "gay pride" events organised by the LGBT community.[361]

Freedom of Religion

The CIRI Human Rights Dataset states that moderate restrictions exist on the freedom to practice one's religion within Moldova.[362] In September 2012, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief reported that members of religious minorities faced intimidation by followers of the Orthodox Church. Such intimidation often goes unpunished in the absence of preventative legislation.[363]

There are, however, some signs of improvement in this area. In March 2012, a Muslim organisation successfully registered with the government for the first time in the country's history.[364]

Free and Fair Elections

Parliamentary elections have been a frequent factor in recent Moldovan history. Elections were held twice in 2009 and once more in 2010 as a result of the almost even division among voters between pro-Western parties and the Communist Party.[365]

External observers reported that these elections met the majority of OSCE and Council of Europe requirements. Some problems were noted, however, such as isolated cases of intimidation and hate speech, misuse of administrative resources, and bribery.[366] In addition, the Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections, raised concern at the fact that the electoral code was amended after first the election had been declared.[367]

As well as the election process itself, concerns were raised over the crackdown by the security forces during the post-election protests of 2009. This resulted in several incidents of torture and abuse of power, and one case of murder. International observers criticised the lack of urgency with which the Moldovan government investigated such cases.[368]

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Labour Rights

Moldovan law affords employees (with the exception of police officers and members of the armed forces) with the right to form and join trade unions. Such laws were not always respected in practice and not all unions were able to acquire legal status.[369]

Additionally, it is estimated that between 30 and 40% of employees work for unregistered, black market organisations, and as such are not afforded the protection of the law in their jobs.[370] The OHCHR has noted its concern at this fact, as well as at the high level of unemployment within the country and the fact that the national minimum wage is "not sufficient to provide workers with a decent living for themselves and their families".[371]

Moldova has a significant problem with child labour. A UNICEF study revealed that 18.3% of Moldovan children are involved in child labour, 63% of these persons were between 5 and 14 years old. The vast majority were from rural areas.[372]

Education

Primary education is free for all Moldovan children, and is compulsory until the age of 14.[373] In practice, many children fail to attend school, and the OHCHR has noted its concern at the fact that overall enrolment rates have witnessed a steady decline in recent years.[374]

The primary reason for this decline is poverty. While education is free, many underfunded schools (primarily those in rural areas) charge parents for school supplies and textbooks.[375] Such charges are felt most strongly among underprivileged communities. Romani NGO Ograda Noastra estimated that as many as 50% of Romani children fail to attend school.[376] The OHCHR determined that the low enrolment rate among Romani children is the result of a number of factors, including poverty, a lack of nearby facilities, and anti-Roma discrimination within educational institutions.[377]

Health

Moldova operates a compulsory health insurance scheme. Unfortunately, a significant proportion of the population remains uninsured (including 25% of the Romani population).[378]

The quality of medical care available to those citizens who do have insurance is far from uniform. Those in rural areas are negatively affected by a lack of family physicians, and by slow response times of ambulances and their unwillingness to attend calls from Romani communities.[379] Such a fact has had significant impact upon the number high rate of infant mortality in Moldova.

In its latest report on the country, the OHCHR raised a number of further concerns in relation to the right to health;

- Patients HIV/Aids status is often divulged to third parties by medical professionals.

- Children with epilepsy are placed in psychiatric care. Psychiatric care is, in general, underfunded and inadequate.

- All courses on sexual and reproductive health rights have been withdrawn from the national curriculum.[380]

DISCRIMINATION

While Moldova has some legislation in place which is aimed at preventing discrimination, this is severely deficient in terms of its ability to be enacted.[381] In February 2011, a draft anti-discrimination law was submitted to the parliament, but is yet to have been adopted.[382] One in three Moldovans believes that levels of discrimination in the country have increased over the past five years.[383]

Women

Moldovan women seldom suffer from de jure discrimination; indeed, in a recent report, the OHCHR commended the Moldovan government on its recent efforts in creating laws to protect women. In the private sphere, under the country's laws, rape (including spousal rape) is a crime, as is domestic violence.[384] As well as the possibility of imprisonment, persons accused of domestic violence may be legally prohibited from sharing a residence with their victim, regardless of who owns said residence.[385] In the public sphere, sexual harassment is a criminal offence, and the law considers women to be equal to men in all areas, including employment.[386] In reality, many of the above laws are not adequately enforced, and Moldovan women continue to suffer from the burdens of inequality.

In the field of employment, it is widely noted that women earn an average of 75% of the wages of their male counterparts for doing the same work.[387] In addition, while women experience higher rates of overall employment than men,[388] they are predominantly confined to low-paid jobs and are severely under-represented in decision-making roles, whether in the public or private sector.[389]

Sexual harassment continues to be a common problem in the workplace.[390] While Moldovan law provides a maximum sentence of two years imprisonment for such an offence, criminal investigations in this area are carried out highly infrequently.[391]

While many measures exist to protect women from domestic violence, UNICEF has reported that protective orders are often slow to be issued, and that their enforcement is decidedly sporadic.[392] In addition, NGOs note that complaints of domestic violence are often met with indifference by the authorities, and the help available to women in such a situation is not widely advertised.[393]

Persons with Disabilities

Moldovan law prohibits all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities, particularly in terms of employment, education, health care, and access. In practice, these laws are rarely enforced. As such, the government recently adopted a roadmap aimed at improving levels of social inclusion for disabled persons.[394]

Unemployment remains a key problem for disabled Moldovan citizens. Many employers avoid taking on disabled persons.[395] Additionally, many older, privately-owned buildings remain inaccessible to persons with disabilities.

LGBT Persons

LGBT persons face widespread discrimination in Moldova. Current Moldovan legislation fails to prohibit discrimination against sexual minorities.[396] The suggestion that such a provision should be adopted was the primary reason for the delay to the acceptance of the new anti-discrimination law.[397] The Moldovan Orthodox Church is strongly opposed to homosexuality and held large-scale demonstrations against the adoption of the proposed legislation.[398]

LGBT persons in Moldova currently face high levels of social stigma, and are often held back in the field of employment due to their sexuality. Transsexual persons are unable to officially change their gender status.[399]

Roma Persons

NGOs estimate that there are around 250,000 Roma living in Moldova. The marginalisation of and discrimination against Roma persons is widespread. In addition to the aforementioned problems regarding healthcare and education, Roma persons suffer from high levels of unemployment, have no representatives in elected office, and are over four times more likely to live in highly sub-standard housing than other Moldovans.[400]

TREATMENT OF NGOS

NGOs and their members are generally able to operate without being subject to harassment. Since 2009, cooperation between civil society and the government has significantly increased.[401] Despite this fact, domestic funding opportunities for NGOs remain minimal and such organisations are largely dependent on foreign benefactors for their existence.[402]

OTHER ISSUES

Refugees

There are a relatively small number of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons in Moldova. The law provides such persons with most of the same rights as citizens, including the right to work. Such laws are generally upheld.[403]

Stateless persons are frequently unable to obtain Moldovan citizenship due to their lack of documentation.[404]

Transnistria

Transnistria is a breakaway republic within the territory of Moldova which proclaimed independence in 1990.[405] It is not internationally recognised as a state.

Little is known about the internal situation in the region, and information regarding the area is often difficult to corroborate.

Having said this, it is widely believed that human rights often go unrecognised within the republic's borders. The majority of media outlets are either government-owned or pro-government.[406] Those opposition journalists who do not practice self-censorship are frequently subjected to harassment from the ruling authorities. Romanian speakers are discriminated against.

Poverty is widespread among the population, and organised crime and corruption represent significant obstacles to human rights and democracy within the republic.[407]

COUNTRY REPORT: UKRAINE

Head of State: Viktor Yanukovych

Head of Government: Mykola Azarov

Capital City: Kiev

Population: 45.7 million[408]

GDP: $162.5 billion[409]

Life Expectancy: 70[410]

Under 5 Mortality Rate: 15.1 per 1000[411]

Adult Literacy: 99.7%[412]

Death Penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes[413]

Ukrainians perhaps suffered more than any other national group during the Soviet era. 3 million were slaughtered between 1932 and 33 in a genocide carried out by the Stalinist regime.[414] As a result, one might imagine that, having gained independence from a totalitarian regime, the Ukraine would be more enthusiastic about pursuing human rights and democratisation than other newly-independent nations.

Such a summation appears to have some level of validity. In recent years, the Ukrainian authorities have loosened ties with Russia, with President Yanukovych recently stating that, "Ukraine's future lies with Europe".[415] In light of this, the country's government has been in negotiations over an association agreement with the EU[416] - an agreement which would require the country to adhere to European norms regarding human rights and democracy.

Despite this, significant concerns remain. The EctHR continues to frequently uphold claims of human rights violations by Ukrainian citizens.[417] While the country's government has predominantly tended to accept such rulings and award financial compensation to victims, little has been done to address the root causes of those cases brought before the court.[418]

Ties with the EU have become strained, and concerns about transparency and independence within the Ukraine's legal system heightened in the wake of the Tymoshenko affair. After losing the 2010 election to President Yanukovych, Former president, Yulia Tymoshenko was arrested and found guilty of criminally exceeding her powers by agreeing a gas deal with Russia.[419] Her continued imprisonment and the circumstances surrounding her arrest have been a significant source of concern among the governments of Western Europe.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Torture and Inhuman Treatment

Allegations of torture and ill-treatment in police custody are widespread,[420] and such actions are predominantly carried out with impunity.[421]

In 2011, the ECtHR found that Article 3 of the ECHR (which prohibits torture and inhuman treatment) had been violated in nine separate cases.[422] Moreover, in its 2012 judgement in the case of Kaverzin v. Ukraine, the ECtHR noted that Mr Kaverzin's ill-treatment in police custody reflected a recurring problem in the country.[423]

Prisons

Conditions within Ukrainian prisons and detention centres remain poor. The main problems include: torture, poor sanitation, insufficient food supplies, substandard medical care and a lack of adequate light. NGOs have reported that complaints about such issues by prisoners are highly discouraged, and often censored, by prison officials.[424]

In addition to the aforementioned issues, overcrowding is perhaps the most significant problem within the Ukrainian penitentiary system. According to the State Penitentiary Service, the average amount of space afforded to each prisoner is just 24.8 square feet - more than two square feet less than the minimum amount required under Ukrainian law.

It is not difficult to see how such issues raise significant human rights concerns. Such concerns are perhaps most manifest in the astonishing number of prisoner deaths. In 2010, around 1 in 35 Ukrainian prisoners died in custody.[425]

The Right to a Fair Trial

2011 and 2012 witnessed a number of reforms to the Ukrainian legal system.[426] Despite such reforms, however, significant problems remained in practice.

The Ukrainian court system continues to suffer from a lack of funding which, combined with lengthy administrative procedures, means that the legislation specifying that trials must begin within three weeks of charges being filed is rarely adhered to.[427]

NGOs have also drawn attention to the extremely low acquittal rate in Ukrainian courts (which consistently remains at less than 1%) as evidence that the trials which are held are far from fair. One major reason for this is the severe shortage of qualified defence counsel within the county.[428] While Ukrainian law specifies that all defendants be provided with a lawyer free of charge, in practice state-funded lawyers were often entirely unavailable, and those that were generally lacked the appropriate qualifications and experience.[429]

Although Ukrainian law provides for trial by jury, in practice the vast majority of cases are decided by a lone judge.[430] This is of particular concern given the lack of independence among the country's judiciary.[431] Criminal proceedings are frequently brought about and decided on the basis of political grounds. The independence of judges is threatened by the fact that the Prosecutor General's Office holds the power to prosecute judges and is prone to misusing this power in order to ensure that judge's reach decisions it approves of. For instance, in June 2012, the Deputy Prosecutor General requested the dismissal of three judges from the Kiev Court of Appeal after they refused a request to detain a suspect.[432]

The ECtHR has repeatedly found the Ukrainian government to be in breach of the right to a fair trial within a reasonable period of time. For example, when ruling on Agrokompleks v.Ukraine in 2010, the court found that there had been three separate violations of this right in this one case alone.[433]

By far the most famous example of the deficiencies with the Ukrainian legal system in recent years has been the aforementioned trial of the country's former president, Yulia Tymoshenko. In October 2011, Tymoshenko was found guilty of a criminal abuse of power for signing a multi-million dollar energy contract with Russia while in office and sentenced to a seven year prison term. Her prosecution has been widely held to have been politically-motivated by external observers.[434]

In addition to the actual charges against her and the political pressure exerted upon those members of the judiciary deciding her case, questions have also been raised regarding the following of procedures during the trial. For instance, in December 2010, a hearing was conducted in Tymoshenko's prison cell for fourteen hours, despite the fact that the defendant remained bedridden and in need of medical attention. The country's human rights ombudsman, Nina Karpachova, described this as a "flagrant violation" of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which the Ukraine is party.[435]

POLITICAL RIGHTS

Freedom of Expression and the Media

Despite several legislative reforms in 2011, the Council of Europe has voiced it concern at the fact that the situation in the Ukraine regarding the right to free expression has actually deteriorated in recent years.[436]

Such assertions are supported my numerous decisions against the Ukraine in cases before the ECtHR. For instance, in the 2011 case of Editorial Board of Pravoye Delo and Shtkel v. Ukraine, the court found against the government, asserting that two separate violations of the right to freedom of expression and information had occurred.[437]

Civil society activists have repeatedly reported receiving official threats, apparently in retaliation to their criticisms of the government.[438]

In addition, there have been several incidents of attacks against journalists. For example, in July 2011, unidentified gunmen shot at reporter Anatoly Shariya of Obozrebatel as he drove home. While such attacks are not officially condoned, they appear to occur with impunity.[439]

Freedom of Assembly

The right to freedom of assembly remains severely restricted in the Ukraine. Ukrainian courts continue to deny permits to almost all protests which are critical of the government. It is widely believed that members of the judiciary come under severe political pressure to make such decisions.[440]

Ukrainian NGO Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group has noted that local authorities continue to deny permits for peaceful protests on the basis of a decree formed in Soviet times which goes against the country's constitution.[441] They do so despite the fact that a 2012 reference document issued by the country's High Administrative Court clearly states that the decree should not be used to make decisions regarding such permits.[442]

Free and Fair Elections

Election standards were generally deemed to have been improving in the Ukraine over recent years. The Presidential elections of 2010 were generally deemed to be free and fair by most international observers.[443]

However, since the emergence of the Tymoshenko affair, things have gone downhill. The parliamentary elections of 2012 were dogged by anti-government protests and allegations of vote-rigging. In addition, the OSCE raised concerns at the fact that state resources were used to give the ruling party an unfair advantage during the election campaign. It also noted that the ruling party's chances of winning were greatly increased by the fact that their chief rival, Tymoshenko, had been imprisoned and barred from running.[444]

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Labour Rights

Ukrainian labour laws are generally consistent with the requirements of the human rights treaties to which they are party. Workers are afforded the right to form and join trade unions without prior authorisation as long as such unions are registered with the government. Workers (with the exception of members of certain government agencies and the armed forces) provided that their occurrence does not threaten national security, public health, or the rights of others.[445] Compulsory occupational health and safety standards are also outlines.

In regard to salaries and conditions, the law asserts that:

- The maximum length of a normal work week is 40 hours

- Any hours worked over and above this amount should constitute overtime and be paid at double the usual rate.

- Workers must be afforded a 24 hour rest period between working weeks

-Workers must receive a minimum of 24 days of paid vacation per year.[446]

In practice, however, most workers are not treated in accordance with the reasonably high minimum standards set out by the law.

The State Labour Inspectorate is severely understaffed. As a result, rules surrounding the minimum wage, overtime rates, the maximum number of hours to be worked and rest periods frequently go unenforced.[447] Additionally, health and safety standards often fail to meet the required minimum standards, leading to a significant number or work-based injuries and job-related fatalities.[448]

With regard to the right to form trade unions, the complex and costly bureaucratic process of registering a new union often discourages their creation. In The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has described this process as "a restriction unacceptable by international labour standards".[449]

Education

Education is provided free of charge to all Ukrainian children and is compulsory under the law until the age of fifteen.[450] Due predominantly to widespread poverty, the education system suffers from a number of problems.

A severe lack of government funding means that education facilities are often substandard, and several schools in under-populated rural areas have been forced to close.[451]

Additionally, according to NGOs for children's rights, large numbers of children from impoverished families fail to attend school, and are instead forced to work - predominantly in the mining and agricultural sectors, or in begging rings.[452]

Health

The healthcare system suffers from severe underfunding and a prejudicial attitude toward sufferers of HIV/AIDS - rates of which are rapidly increasing as a result of a low level of public awareness with regard to modern contraceptives.[453]

Insufficient funding of the state healthcare system has led to substantial problems in various areas:

- There remains lack of pre and post-natal clinics available to women who cannot afford private healthcare. Those which are available lack quality equipment. This contributes to the country's relatively high maternal mortality rates.[454]

- According to the Ukrainian Psychiatric Association, severe understaffing of government watchdogs means that psychiatric patients receive substandard care in decaying facilities and where at high risk of abuse.[455]

Of greater concern was the government's stringent policy against drug use. In outlawing narcotics which might cause addiction, the government has made illegal many of the stronger pain medicines. This means that terminal cancer patients (particularly those in rural areas) are forced to unnecessarily suffer from severe pain levels.[456]

The level of HIV/AIDS is rapidly approaching epidemic proportions.[457] Discriminatory attitudes towards individuals with HIV/AIDS were held both within society generally and among the authorities. In January 2011, the Ministry of the Interior demanded that individuals suffering from HIV/AIDS would be denied treatment if they did not announce their HIV status to the government.[458] NGOs regarded this to be an unacceptable breach of the right to privacy, as well as the right to health.

There was, however, some progress in this area. In early 2011, the government enacted a new law regarding HIV/AIDS which, for the first time, identified substitution treatment and needle exchange as essential elements of the country's HIV/AIDS prevention strategy.[459]

DISCRIMINATION

Women

Relatively high levels of domestic violence and sex trafficking,[460] along with an expanding black market sex tourism industry, provide the main threats to women's rights in the Ukraine.

Ukrainian law prohibits rape and spousal abuse, but does not explicitly outlaw spousal rape.[461] Regardless of this, advocacy groups maintain that a high percentage of women are subjected to physical and psychological abuse in the home. The law requires that a shelter be provided for victims of domestic violence in every major city, but in practice this is not adhered to due to a lack of funding.[462]

In the workplace, women are afforded the same rights as men, including equal pay. While such rights are generally respected, women are predominantly employed in lower-paid industries and have limited opportunities for promotion.[463]

Ethnic Minorities

While the law prohibits racial discrimination, it is not effectively enforced. Discrimination against members of ethnic minorities by both members of the authorities and society at large continued.[464]

Acts of vandalism and violence targeting members of ethnic minorities continued, though their numbers continued to fall in comparison to previous years. Despite this, some racially-motivated attacks continue to occur and the government has urged black individuals not to go out after dark for their own safety.[465]

Marginal populist groups continued to make racist and anti-Semitic statements both in public addresses and small publications.

Roma

Romani citizens continue to report being subject to police harassment and societal violence - which they claim the police condone, and even assist with. In terms of social rights, two-thirds of Roma are illiterate and one-third lack sufficient funds to afford medical care. As a result, 15% of all Roma have tuberculosis.[466]

LGBT Persons

LGBT persons continue to suffer from both societal and official discrimination. According to LGBT rights group Nash Mir, law enforcement officers were involved in 69 instances of discrimination between 2010 and 2011.[467] Openly homosexual individuals report suffering from inequality in the workplace and in terms of access to healthcare and education.[468]

Persons with Disabilities

Ukrainian law demands that public buildings should be accessible to disabled persons. In practice, this is rarely the case, thereby causing de facto discrimination against disabled citizens who are less able to gain access to healthcare, education, and workplaces as a result.[469] Additionally, the law requires 4% of the workers of each company should be disabled. In practice, such persons receive a nominal fee from the companies in order to meet the requirement, but do not actually work there.[470]

TREATMENT OF NGOS

Human rights defenders in the Ukraine risk prosecution and physical attack - particularly if their work involves investigation into government corruption.[471] For example, in August 2011 he head of local NGO Yuzer, Andrei Fedosov, was kidnapped and tortured - allegedly as a result of his investigations into corruption. His attacker was on familiar terms with the police, who instead detained and assaulted Mr Fedosov after he reported the attack.[472]

OTHER ISSUES

Refugees

Refugees and asylum seekers in the Ukraine risk forcible return to their home countries[473] even if this means they will face life-threatening human rights violations and are often unable to access a fair asylum procedure.[474] For example, in March 2011, 10 Afghan refugees were deported to Afghanistan against their will. They alleged that they had not been provided with an interpreter at any point during the asylum or deportation processes and had been forced to sign documents written in a language they did not understand.[475]

In July 2011 the Ukraine adopted a new law "on refugees and persons in need of complementary protection". While this improved the status of refugees and asylum seekers, it was criticised by the UNHCR for falling short of international standards since it did not provide complimentary protection on the grounds of armed conflict.

EU PROJECTS: ARMENIA

PART V

Armenia is a nation with an ambitious agenda for reform. The EU has put into place a comprehensive programme of financial and technical cooperation in order to help support the implementation of this agenda. In line with this programme, a significant number of programmes are currently being implemented across a wide range of sectors all over Armenia. The assistance of the EU primarily focuses upon providing support for: democratic structures and good governance; trade and investment, regulatory alignment and reform; socio-economic reform and sustainable development..

In April 2009, a high-level EU Advisory Group was set up in the country in order to actively assist the authorities in their efforts to implement reform.

The funding for the individual projects is provided by the EU is provided in the form of grants, contracts, and, increasingly, budgetary support. The following pages provide an overview of some of the nature of a selection of such projects which were implemented over the 2011-2012 period:

Governance, Democracy, Human Rights and Support for Economic and Institutional Reforms

The EU is providing the entire budget of over ќ1.7 million giving Support to Two Electoral Cycles in Armenia. The project, which aims to strengthen civil society in the country, is being implemented by the OSCE. It aims to strengthen the capacity of the office of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia (HRDO), and expand the institution's geographical outreach before, during, and after the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2012 and 2013. Through such actions, the project will provide support in improving both the efficiency of electoral administration and the transparency of the electoral process, thus empowering civil society actors to effectively monitor the election process. The project began in January 2012 and will continue to run until September 2013.

The Development of a Comprehensive Model Aimed at Addressing Health and Social Need of the Community as an Effective Measure for Poverty Alleviation initiative took place between December 2012 and December 2013. The initiative took place in the city of Yeghvard in Armenia's Kotayk region and was implemented by the staff of the head of the municipality. The project aimed to help alleviate poverty among the community in the region by developing and putting in to practice a sustainable operational model capable of comprehensively addressing their health and social needs. The EU funded 90% of the costs of the project, which amounted to around ќ1 million.

Speaking for Myself: Voicing the Hopes and Concerns of Children in Armenia was a programme implemented over a two-year period between December 2010 and December 2012. The EU contributed ќ540,891 to the project - a figure which represented 80% of the total budget. The project aimed to encourage both disabled and able-bodied Armenian children to come together to voice realise their rights and become active citizens in an inclusive, child-friendly environment.

December 2010 saw the commencement of a three-year project within the sector of population policy and administrative management entitled,

Strengthening Evidence-Based Management of Labour Migration in Armenia. The project, which is being implemented by the International Center for Human Development Public Organization, is primarily aimed at enhancing the management of labour migration flows from Armenia to EU countries. This goal will be achieved through various, interlinked activities, including policy advice, institutional capacity-building, training, and awareness-raising. The EU is contributing ќ1.95 million to the project - a figure which represents just under 80% of the total budget.

The project, Everything For Us - With Us, was operated in the regions of Lori, Shirak, Gegharkunik and Aragatsotn regions of Armenia. The EU provided a contribution of ќ115,000, which represented 83.68% of the total budget. Armenian NGO, LiarzhekKyank, was responsible for the project's implementation between November 2010 and November 2012. The project's objective was to promote democratic values in civil society through advocacy of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Between October 2010 and December 2012, the EU funded 95.24% of the ќ4 million project in the area of legal and judicial development in Armenia. The initiative, entitled Support for Access to Justice in Armenia, was implemented by Conseil De L' Europe. It consisted of three primary components:

- Component 1: Providing support to the Chamber of Advocates

- Component 2: Providing support for improvements in the training of judges and court personnel

- Component 3: Providing support for the facilitation of access to justice for socially-vulnerable groups within the population

The initiative Reducing Violence Against Children in Armenia began in November 2011, and will run until February 2013. The project has two main goals: The first is to build the capacity and coordination of state agencies in protecting children against violence within the current structure. The second is to amend Armenian domestic law and policy relating to child protection in order to bring such things into line with international standards. The initiative was implemented by World Vision UK and the EU contributed around ќ750,000, which represented 80% of the total budget.

The EU contributed 90% of the ќ110,000 budget of an initiative aimed at Strengthening the Capacity of Achajur Local Self Governance Body for Addressing the Socio-economic Problems of the Community. The project, which began in December 2011 and ran for one year, aimed to contribute to the alleviation of poverty in Achajur, Tavuzmarz by developing the ability of the local municipality to deal with the socio-economic problems of local residents.

Between August and December 2012 the EU contributed the entire ќ148,000 budget for a project in the area of legal and judicial development. The initiative, Assistance to the RA Ministry of Justice on Penitentiary System Reforms, Including the Establishment of a Probation Service, took place in Yerevan and was implemented by Particip Gmbh Consultants Fur Entwicklung Und Umwelt. The objective was the elaboration of a Strategy Paper for the establishment of a Probation Service in the Republic of Armenia. The paper provided guidance as to the current EU best practices, as well as relevant procedures and guidelines.

The EU project providing Technical Assistance and Capacity Building to the Municipality of Garni and Four Neighbouring Villages for the Improvement and Enlargement of the Public Services Provided by Them to the General Public, was implemented between December 2011 and December 2012. The project's objective was to aid the municipality of Garni and its four neighbouring villages in the areas of public utilities and urban planning. It set about achieving this goal by ensuring that the municipal technical team and policy actors were informed as to the latest best practices, tools and approaches in the organisation of planning processes, basic urban services and local economic development. The EU contributed ќ100,000 to the project, a figure which represented 82.03% of the total budget.

Human Development

The project, Promoting Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities in Armenia: Women in Local Democracy, will run from April 2012 until April 2015. Implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the project's primary objective is to support the advancement of gender equality in Armenia. The EU recognises that, in order for this to occur, it will be necessary for the country to build parity in democracy and improve social cohesion. As such, the project aims to enhance the knowledge of and mechanisms for the progressive realisation of human rights in Armenia. Additionally, it also hopes to foster democratic governance at the local level. The total cost of the project, which will run in all areas of the country, will be ќ525,000. This sum will be entirely financed by the EU.

Perhaps the biggest recent EU-funded project in Armenia in recent years is the Continuation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Reform and Development of an Employment Strategy. This on-going, country-wide initiative was guaranteed a further five years of funding in November 2010. It provides vital support to the Armenian government in increasing the quality of the Vocational Education and Training sector in order make this more relevant to both the country's labour market and citizens. The project is being entirely funded by the EU to the amount of ќ14 million and is being implemented by Hayastani Hanrapetut Yun.

Linked to the above project is the shorter (September 2012 - June 2013) initiative, Support to the Operational Establishment of the National Training Fund in Armenia. This initiative is being implemented by Ace International Consultants Sl. Its specific objective is to provide assistance to the National Training Fund of Armenia in the effective implementation of its functions as laid out in the fund's approved charter. The project will achieve this objective by enhancing the institutional capacity of the fund in continuing the process of VET modernisation and innovation. Once again, the entire budget of the initiative (ќ190,950) is being provided by the EU.

Rural Development, Territorial Planning, Agriculture and Food Security

The project Combating Rural Poverty in Vayots Dzor Region Through Promoting Dynamic and Sustained Development of Agricultural Cluster in the Milk Processing Sector and Improving milk Producers' and Processors' Access to Agricultural Supplies and Services began in December 2011 and will run until June 2013. The project aims to develop the capacities of the local municipality and other relevant stakeholders in the Vayots Dzormarz by promoting dynamic and sustained development of the agricultural sector. It is hoped that the successful completion of such aims will help to combat poverty in the region. The EU is contributing ќ150,000 to the project, which represents 88.24% of the total budget.

Social Cohesion and Employment

The project Poverty Alleviation in the Regions of Armenia is an integrated approach to provide sustainable community development based on European experience. It will be implemented by the NGO, Center for Community Dialogues and Initiatives who will work in close cooperation with local authorities and community organisations across Armenia in order to provide sustainable development based upon each community's social needs. Work began in December 2011 and will run for a period of two years. The EU is contributing ќ150,000 to the project, a figure which represents almost 90% of the total budget.

Water and Energy

In December 2011, the EU implemented a one-year project in Vayots Dzor marz which aimed to help alleviate poverty in the region by developing practices for sustainable energy generation and use. The project, entitled Poverty Reduction through Sustainable Energy Generation and Use, was implemented by the NGO the Union of Investors of Vayots Dzor. Just under 90% of the project's budget (a figure of just below ќ150,000) was contributed by the EU.

EU PROJECTS: AZERBAIJAN

The EU provides support for Azerbaijan's reform agenda through a programme of technical and financial cooperation. This support manifests itself in a wide-range of projects implemented all across the country. The funding is provided in the form of grants, contracts and budgetary support. The projects focus on energy, agriculture and environment in addition, to human rights, democratisation and good governance.

Governance, Democracy, Human Rights and Support for Economic and Institutional Reforms

The primary aim of the project Capacity Building for Citizens' Participation and Increasing the Accountability of Elected Bodies is to strengthen Azerbaijani civil society. The project, which began in December 2011 and is due to end in April 2013, is being implemented by Mammadli. 77% (around ќ120,000) of the budget is being funded by the EU. The specific objectives of the project are threefold:

1. To encourage Azerbaijani citizens to engage actively in public policy.

2. To increase the capacity for participation in state governance of civic groups.

3. To strengthen relations between citizens and elected state bodies within the country.

The project Developing Civil Society Capacity for Preventing Discriminatory

Torture and Ill-treatment began in November 2011 and will run until May 2013. The EU is contributing ќ150,000 to the project, which amounts to 90% of the total budget. The project is being implemented by The Equal Rights Trust.

December 2011 saw the onset of the on-going two-year project Enhancing the Effectiveness of Government by Strengthening the Role of Think Tanks in the Decision-making Arena. The project, which is being implemented by Iqtisadi Tedqiqatlar Merkezi Ictimai Birliyi Association, aims to strengthen civil society in Azerbaijan in order to contribute to the de-monopolisation of public policy decisions in the country. It will do this by building the institutional and research capacity of eighteen non-state think tanks and empowering the informed and responsible participation of these think tanks in inclusive policy-making in Azerbaijan. The EU is contributing ќ185,000 to the project, a figure which represents 88.1% of the total budget.

The overall objective of the initiative Support for Human Rights Defenders in Azerbaijan is to unite and support human rights defenders and their organisations in the country as well as strengthening their role both nationally and internationally. The EU is contributing ќ121,870 to the project, which represents around 80% of the total budget. The implementing organisation for the initiative, which commenced in January 2012 and will continue until July 2013, is Human Rights House Foundation Stiftelse.

In November 2011, the EU - in collaboration with the Public Union for Gender Equality and Women's Initiatives- launched a two-year Public Awareness Campaign on Domestic Violence. The EU is contributing around 90% of the total budget, a figure which amounts to ќ108,000. The campaign has two specific objectives:

1. To disseminate information regarding Azerbaijani law on domestic violence.

2. To collect culturally sensitive and objective information on gender violence in the country and monitor trends in this area.

The project Improving the Legal Environment and the Organizational Capacity of Civil Society Organizations in Azerbaijan ran from October 2010 to October 2012. The EU contributed ќ261,744.66 to the project, which represented 89.5% of the total budget. The project, which was implemented by Democracy Learning Public Union Association, was a country-wide

initiative with several key aims:

- To analyse Azerbaijan's legislative framework regarding freedom of association.

- To monitor the country's registration process for civil society organisations.

- To conduct a survey on the development of civil society organisations.

- To provide technical assistance and training to those working in the field.

- To conduct advocacy activities.

Enhancing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Social Protection through Improvement of the Analytical and Forecasting Capacities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the largest projects to be implemented in the country by the EU in recent years. The project, which was implemented by Association Pour Le Developpement Et La Coordination Des Relations Internationales, ran from September 2010 until February 2012. It had a total budget of ќ700,000, all of which was contributed by the EU. The project aimed to enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population with regard to: actuarial calculations, data analysis, forecasting, monitoring, evaluation, social budgeting and strategic planning.

The project New Media Development and Regional Outreach was implemented across the regions of Baku, Nakhchevan, Ganja, Kurdamir, and Lankaran between November 2011 and October 2012. The project, which was implemented by the Reportyorlarin Azadliq Ve Tehlukesizlik Institutu Ictimai Birliyinin Association, aimed to increase access to information regarding Azerbaijani human rights issues within both the country and the international community. The EU contributed 87.38% of the project's total budget, a figure which amounted to ќ103,000.

Human Development

Advancing Healthy Communities through Responsive Local Governance was a substantial project which ran for a period of five-years, ending in December 2012. Its overall objective was to contribute to national efforts to improve the health of Azerbaijan's population by improving primary healthcare services and encouraging a participatory, rights-based approach to healthcare. The project targeted citizens in various isolated rural areas across Azerbaijan and aimed to develop community-based healthcare in such areas as well as augmenting state healthcare facilities, which were often inadequate. The EU contributed ќ750,000 to the project, which amounted to 63.03% of the total budget. The project was implemented by Oxfam Great Britain.

The EUis contributing ќ245,405 to the project HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Young Women in the Rural Areas of Azerbaijan: Socio-Cultural Approach to Education, Awareness Raising and Empowerment, a figure which represents 80% of the total budget. The project, which is being implemented by the Lider Gadinler (Leader Women) Public Union began in December 2011 and will continue for a period of two years from that date.

In January 2012, the EU began a two-year project in Azerbaijan entitled Social Rights Development - Community-based Strategies to Include Vulnerable and Isolated Children to Preschool Education. The project is based around the principles of the Millennium Development Goals, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations Convention on The Rights of People with Disabilities. As such, it aims to contribute to the formation and development of national polices which will ultimately target of improving the early childhood development outcomes of those Azerbaijani children who find themselves excluded from early education due to poverty, disability, or geographic location. Just over 89% of the projects budget is being contributed by the EU, a figure which amounts to ќ250,000. The project is being implemented by the United Aid

for Azerbaijan Trust across the areas of Sumquait, Bilisuvar, Lenkoran, and Siyazin.

Operating in the regions of Baku, Ganja, Sheki, Guba and Lenkaran, Empowering Mental Health Service Users in Five Regions of Azerbaijan is a project which aims to improvement user involvement in Azerbaijani mental health services by building the capacity of local NGOs in the target regions. The project, which began in December 2012 and will run until November 2013, is being implemented by the organization Globali Iniciatyva Psichiatrijoje Viesoji Istaiga. The EU is contributing ќ164,359 to the project, which amounts to 90% of the total budget.

Rural Development, Territorial Planning, Agriculture and Food Security

The project Sustainable Development of a Village: A Civil Society-Municipality Cooperation Model is currently operating in the municipalities of Chichi, Elik and Sohub, which are all located in the Gubadistrict of Azerbaijan. Its overall objective is to establish a new cooperation strategy between the aforementioned municipalities and civil society in the hope of enabling their stable and sustainable development. The two-year project, which began in December 2011, is being implemented by the Independent Consumers Union. The EU will contribute a total of just under ќ200,000 over the life of the project - a figure which represents 90% of the total budget.

Social Cohesion and Employment

The Creating Livelihoods for Youth Programme took place from November 2009 to February 2012 in the regions of Baku, Ganja, Guba, Sheki and Lankaran. The programme, which was implemented by The Netherlands branch of Save the Children, aimed to increase the livelihood opportunities of marginalised youths in the aforementioned areas by increasing their involvement in local projects and building the capacities of local civil society groups. Three-quarters of the project's budget (a figure of ќ483,140) was contributed by the EU.

Water and Energy

In November 2009 the EU instituted the three-year project Strengthening Twenty Village Municipalities' Capability to Provide Public Services (Safe Water Supply) in the Rural Area of the Garabakh Lowlands of Central Azerbaijan. The project, which was implemented by Oxfam Great Britain, increased access to potable water and sanitation infrastructure and services in twenty rural municipalities in central Azerbaijan. The EU contributed 75% of the project's budget - a figure which amounted to ќ336,605.

Conflict Prevention

The initiative Local Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Azerbaijan - Strategies for Improving Lives in Displacement took place between December 2010 and August 2012. 80% of its budget (or ќ714,032) was contributed by the EU. The specific objective of the project was to provide refugees and asylum seekers in Azerbaijan with improved access to integration into their new local communities. This objective was achieved by targeting the social, economic and legal aspects of the issue.

Infrastructure, Communications and Transport

The EU contributed ќ309,704 to the Ethical Journalism Initiative in Azerbaijan, a figure which represented 80% of the total budget. The initiative was implemented by Federation Internationale Des Journalistes Aisbl between February 2010 and September 2012. Its overall objective was to promote, reinforce and renew commitment to the ethical values of journalism. Such values included:

- Respecting the truth
- Remaining independent and impartial
- Seeking to do no harm
- Being open, transparent, and accountable to peers
- Acting in the public interest.

EU PROJECTS: BELARUS

Between on-going projects and those still in the preparatory stages, the EU has contributed over ќ100 million in assistance and cooperation with Belarus. These projects are both regional and thematic in nature.

Cooperation between the EU and Belarus is based upon successive conclusions of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council. The projects each follow the guidelines of the Country Strategy Paper and the National Indicative Programme. These documents provide two key priority areas on which cooperation will focus: Good Governance and Economic Modernisation.

EU assistance to Belarus primarily focuses upon the following areas: energy; environment; food safety; regional and local development; higher education; civil society; and the media. In addition, special provision is made with regard to ensuring nuclear safety in those areas of the country affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

Human Development

The second part of the project Access to Higher Education for Young Belarusians, which had commenced in October 2007, came to an end in October 2011. The project targeted those young Belarusian citizens who had been denied the opportunity to acquire higher education degrees in subjects critical to Belarus's democratisation process in their own country. As such, all activities relating to the project took place in the resettled European Humanities University, located in Vilnius, Lithuania. The project was implemented by the Nordisk Ministerrads Sekretariat and the entire ќ980,910 budget was contributed by the EU.

EU PROJECTS: GEORGIA

The EU currently provides support for Georgia's ambitious agenda for reform through financial and technical cooperation on more than 100 different projects. Assistance is provided in the form of grants, contracts, and budgetary support, and focuses upon the following areas: Justice, Freedom and Security; Human Rights, Democratisation and Civil Society; Conflict Resolution; Economy, Trade and Public Finance Management; Infrastructure, Environment and Rural Development; and Education, Health and Social Development.

Human Development

Between February 2008 and December 2011, the EU provided support in improving the basic health care services available to Georgian citizens through its Primary Health Care Reform Support Project. The project was implemented by the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health across the regions of Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Samegrelo, Imereti, Adjara and Shida Kartli. The project's substantial ќ5 million budget was entirely provided by the EU.

Conflict Prevention

December 2011 also saw the completion of a four-year project which represented the fourth phase of the initiative for Rehabilitation and Economic Development in the Zone of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict and Adjacent Areas. This project aimed to provide reconstruction relief and rehabilitation to individuals living in the conflict zone of South Ossetia. The project was implemented by the OSCE and 97.7% of its budget was contributed by the EU - a figure which amounted to almost ќ2 million.

Between August 2009 and September 2011, the EU spent just under ќ1 million entirely funding a project Supporting the Integration of Internally Displaced Persons in the Kvemo Kartli Region. The project was implemented by Fundacion Accion Contra El Hambre.

In line with the theme of the two aforementioned initiatives, the project Supporting the Socio-economic integration of Internally Displaced Persons and their Host Communities through Engagement in Active Dialogue and Decision-making was launched in September 2009 and ran until March 2011. The project was implemented by Oxfam Great Britain in the regions of Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida Kartli and Samegrelo. The entirety of its budget (which was close to ќ1 million) was funded by the EU.

EU PROJECTS: MOLDOVA

Since the country gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the EU has donated over ќ500 million to support development projects in Moldova. In recent years, this level of assistance has substantially increased, with a further ќ500 million being allocated for the period 2010-2013 in order to support the achievement of the country's EU integration objectives.

More than half of this latest funding will be allocated to Moldova's National Indicative Programme of 2011-2013. Of this, more than ќ40 million has been spent on the Eastern Partnership Comprehensive Institution Building programme, which is a programme designed to build the capacity of a number of core institutions within the country which are deemed crucial to preparing the ground for and implementing the future EU-Moldova agreement. An additional figure of just under ќ7 million has also been allocated to help facilitate the country's Cohesion Policy.

Some of the priority areas to be addressed by this new EU funding include: the rule of law, human rights and security; reform of the healthcare system; reform of the labour market and education system; improved social protection; and regional and local development projects.

Governance, Democracy, Human Rights and Support for Economic and Institutional Reforms

The project Consolidating Freedom of Assembly Rights in Moldova aims to the successful implementation of and respect for the right of Moldovan citizens to freely assemble in a peaceful manner. The EU is contributing ќ159,268 to the project (which represents 95% of the total budget), which is being implemented by the NGO Asociatia Resource Centre Of Moldovan Human Rights. It began in April 2011 and will run for a total of two years.

The EU contributed just under 60% of the budget (a donation which amounted to ќ150,000) to the project Rehabilitation of Torture Victims from Moldova. The project, which was implemented by Institutia Privata Centrul De Reabilitare A Victimel or Torturii Memoria, ran in the country's capital, Chisinau, for a period of two years, beginning in March 2010. Its objective was to make a significant contribution to the quality of life and health standards of victims of torture and cruel and degrading treatment, as well as defending their right to appropriate reparation.

Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in the Moldovan Media - a System Based Approach was project which operated in Chisinau from January 2011 until July 2012. The EU contributed a total of ќ148,086, which represented 95% of the total budget. The project, which was implemented by Universitatea Libera Internationala Din Moldova Institutie De Invatamint Superior Privata, had three specific objectives:

1. To improve the skills and abilities of journalist, legal experts, and representatives of monitoring institutions within the country.

2. To prepare Moldovan school teachers as "multipliers" of critical media consumption.

3. To raise awareness and preparedness.

The project Upholding the Human Rights of Victims of Human Trafficking in Moldova and Transnistria: from Multi-disciplinary Assistance to Prevention ran from April 2011 until July 2012. It aimed to contribute to the increased protection of and respect for the rights of the victims of human trafficking and aid its prevention in both Moldova and Transnistria. The project was implemented by Association Medecins Du Monde. The project's total budget was close to ќ400,000, half of which was contributed by the EU.

In connection with the above project, the initiative Additional Measures to Fight Child Trafficking in Moldova aimed to strengthen the capacity of both state and non-state organisations to prevent the trafficking and sexual exploitation of Moldovan and Transnitrian children. It also aimed raise knowledge and awareness levels of the issue among the general public. The EU contributed ќ363,263 to the initiative, which represented 90% of the total budget. The project was implemented from June 2009 to April 2012 by Associazione Itaca Ong-Onlus.

The EU contributed ќ150,000 (around 63% of the total budget) to the project Return to Democracy! Strengthening Journalism Capacities, Improving Governmental Cooperation and Advocating Free Media in Moldova. The project ran from April 2010 to May 2012 and was implemented by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ev. The project aimed to contribute to the consolidation of a free and pluralistic media of the type suitable for a free and democratic state with the Republic of Moldova. As such, it aimed to build capacities among journalists and officials and to build platforms for interaction in order to advocate freedom of expression and the media in the country.

Commencing in March 2010, Strengthening Legal Protection from and Raising Awareness of Discriminatory Ill-treatment in the Republic of Moldova, Including Transnistria was a two-year project implemented by Asociatia Obsteasca Promo-Lex. 92.41% (around ќ143,000) of the total budget was contributed by the EU. The project had several key objectives:

- To increase protection of fundamental human rights.

- To build capacity among the relevant organisations.

- To strengthen partnership and awareness among civil society actors in the context of preventing discriminatory ill-treatment.

- To increase the engagement of civil society and the courts in preventing discriminatory ill-treatment.

The project Capacity-building for and Promotion of Human Rights and Democratic Institutions in the Transnistria Region of Moldova aimed to strengthen the capacity of twenty civil society organisations to effectively deliver testimonies of human rights violations, both domestically and internationally, to the general public and policy/decision-makers. The EU contributed around ќ392,000 to the project (80% of the total budget), which ran from December 2009 until December 2012 and was implemented by the NGO, Asociatia Resource Centre Of Moldovan Human Rights.

The initiative FONI: Freedom of New Ideas was implemented by the European Public Law Organisation between April 2011 and July 2012. Its goal was to promote freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech among the younger generations of Moldova. The EU contributed over ќ100,000 to the initiative - a figure which represented 85% of the total budget.

Human Development

In February 2009, the EU launched a ќ43,450,000, four-year initiative in Moldova which it solely funded. The project, entitled Sector Policy Support Programme: Health, was crucial to re-enforcing cooperation between the EU and Moldova in addressing the health-related priorities of the Moldova-EU Action Plan so as to support the implementation of the Moldovan Health Strategy 2008-2017.

In December 2011 the EU began a two-year project in the sector of the prevention of sexually-transmitted diseases. It contributed ќ414,025 to the project Strengthening Moldovan Civil Society Organizations in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care for Women and Juvenile Prisoners, which represented 80% of the total budget. The project was implemented by AsociatiaObsteascaSocietateaInternationalaADrepturilorOmuluiSectia Din Republica Moldova.

Social Cohesion and Employment

A crucial part of the Moldova-EU Action Plan focusses on poverty alleviation. In order to re-enforce cooperation between itself and Moldova with regard to addressing those priorities in the plan relating to poverty, the EU launched the initiative Assistance to Reform in the Moldovan Social Assistance Sector in August 2008. The project ran for a period of four years at cost of ќ20,000,000, all of which was contributed by the EU.

Water and Energy

The project Rehabilitation of the Water Supply System in the Municipality of Nisporeni, Republic of Moldova began in November 2011 and will continue to run until July 2016. It aims to provide sufficient amounts of safe drinking water to the residents of the towns of Nisporeni, Varzaresti and Grozesti - a goal it will achieve by creating an institution capable of sustainably operating, managing and maintaining the water supply infrastructure in the area, as well as establishing balanced local water governance. The project has a total budget of ќ5 million (which is being entirely contributed by the EU) and is being implemented by the Austrian Development Agency.

Conflict Prevention

The EU is contributing 100% of the ќ2.5 million budget allocated to the initiative Support to the Government of Moldova in the Field of Anti-corruption, Reform of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Including the Police and Personal Data Protection. The implementing organisation for the two-year initiative, which began in October 2011, is Deutsche Gesellschaft Fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (Giz) Gmbh. The initiative has two primary objectives: Firstly, to support the Moldovan government in implementing the requirements of the "Justice, Freedom and Security" chapter of the future EU-Moldova Association Agreement. And, secondly, to assist the Moldovan government in conforming to the recommendations of the on-going EU visa liberalization dialogue.

The project Support to Confidence Building Measures, which is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme, began in March 2012 and will continue to run until February 2015. This ќ9.5 million project, which runs entirely on EU funding, aims to foster cooperation between Moldova and Transnistria in three main areas:

1. Business Development.

2. Health, Environment, and Social and Community Infrastructures.

3. Civil Society

Multi-sectors

Capacity Building in Regional Development in the Republic of Moldova is a two-year project which was launched in December 2011. Implemented by Civi Pol Conseil,Societe De Conseilet De Service Du Ministere De L'Interieur Sa, the project's overall objective is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the three primary bodies concerned with regional development in Moldova, namely: The Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, The National Coordination Council for Regional Development, and The National Fund for Regional Development. The entirety of the project's ќ1,170,000 budget is being funded by the EU.

The EU has committed ќ145,000 to the project Civil Society and the Private Sector as Contributors to Millennium Development Goals' implementation, a figure which represents 63.15% of the total budget. The project, which is being implemented by Fondacija Centar ZaIkonomichesko Razvitie, was launched in June 2011 and is scheduled to run for a period of two years. Its aim is to increase the capacities of those sectorial Civil Society Organisations and private sector representatives defined as development actors by the ACCRA Agenda. In this way, the project hopes to enable such organisations to more effectively contribute to the realisation of the Millenium Development Goals and their targets.

EU PROJECTS: UKRAINE

The EU operates a significant programme of financial and technical cooperation with the Ukraine in order to support the country's ambitious reform agenda. There are currently over 250 different EU-funded projects running in a wide range of sectors across the Ukraine. Funding for such projects is provided in the form of grants, contracts and budgetary support. EU assistance to the country is particularly focused upon supporting projects in the areas of: support for democratic development and good governance; regulatory reform and administrative capacity-building; infrastructure development; and nuclear safety.

Governance, Democracy, Human Rights and Support for Economic and Institutional Reforms

The British Council Royal Charter implemented the project The Citizen and the State: Developing Partnership for Good Governance in Ukraine between September 2010 and September 2012. The project's goal was to increase the levels of political transparency and good governance within the Ukraine. It aimed to achieve this by improving policy and strategy processes at local and regional levels, and enhancing accountability and citizen engagement with elected representatives. 90% (around ќ170,000) of the project's total budget was contributed by the EU.

The primary objective of the project Public Empowerment in Addressing Local Social Problems is the promotion of the involvement members of the community in the formulation of social policies at the local level. The EU is contributing ќ184,395 to the project (which represents 85% of the total budget) which began in December 2010 and will continue to run until June 2013. The implementing organisation is the All-Ukrainian Charitable Fund Child Well-Being Fund.

In line with the above project, the EU launched phase II of the initiative Community-based Approach to Local Development in June 2011. The initiative, which will run until April 2015, is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The entirety of its ќ16.85 million budget is being financed by the EU. The initiative's overall objective is to promote sustainable socio-economic development at the local level by strengthening participatory governance and encouraging community-based initiatives throughout the Ukraine. In order to achieve such an objective, the project has a series of specific aims, including:

- Promoting a community-based approach to local governance and sustainable development.

- Enhancing energy efficiency at the local level.

- Supporting the creation of a locally owned and managed repository and network of good practices and knowledge on community mobilisation and participatory governance.

"Bridge the Gap" - End of Life-care for Terminally-ill and Elderly People Left Behind in Moldova and Ukraine is a three-year project which began in February 2011. The project's overall objective is to contribute to a reduction in the negative effects caused by migration to elderly people left behind without care in both Moldova and the Ukraine. More specifically, it aims to establish and promote high-quality end-of-life care for elderly and terminally-ill persons. The project is being implemented by Osterreichische Caritaszentrale and 80% of the total budget, a figure of ќ520,000, will be contributed by the EU.

December 2012 saw the conclusion of the two-year initiative Enhancement of the Capacity of Civil Society Organisations to Represent Interests, Protect Rights, and Influence the Development and Implementation of Public Policies in the Ukraine. Its aim was to protect

the social and economic rights of Ukrainian citizens in the areas of land reform, property rights, control of natural resources and labour rights. It did so by strengthening the advocacy capacity of civil society organisations and increasing their influence over public policy development. The initiative was implemented by the Women's Information Coordination Center and 89% (around ќ173,000) of its total budget was contributed by the EU.

The EU is contributing ќ1.5 million to the project Support to the Regional Development Agency (RDA) of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC), a figure which represents 97% of the total budget. The objective of the project, which is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is to contribute to the regional development of the Crimean Peninsula. In order to do this, the project will increase the capacities of republican and local experts, thereby enabling them to: a) develop coherent and equitable regional development policies; and b) to attract and absorb funding for their implementation. The project began in July 2010 and will continue to run until June 2013.

In August 2011, the EU embarked on a two-year twinning project entitled Increased Effectiveness and Management Capacities of Administrative Courts in Ukraine. The project, which is being implemented by Justice Cooperation International, will cost a total of over ќ1.5 million - all of which will be contributed by the EU. Its main purpose is to support attempts to bring the administrative judiciary in the country into line with both EU best practices and the principles of democracy. It will do this by:

- Strengthening institutional capacity within the country.

- Improving administrative legal proceedings.

- Improving the quality of administrative judgments.

- Increasing public awareness of the operations of the administrative judiciary.

The entirety of the ќ1.5 million budget for the project Support to Civil Service Development in Ukraine will be provided by the EU. The project aims to contribute to the construction of a modern, democratic, professional, merit-based, ethical, politically-neutral and sustainable civil service, which accords with European best practices, within the Ukraine. The project commenced in January 2012 and is due to run until the end of 2013.

The EU, through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) has committed 90% (a figure of almost ќ195,000) to the project Enhanced Civic Oversight of Reforms in Ukraine in the Framework of European Neighbourhood Policy. The project primarily focuses on ensuring that the key commitments of the Ukraine highlighted in its association agenda, are adhered to. Most importantly, it will promote the key role to be played by civil society in maintaining political dialogue with the government on the issues of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The project began in December 2010 and will run until March 2013.

Human Development

The project Capacity-building of the All-Ukrainian Teachers and Trainers Association (UTTA) to Improve Access to Quality Services of HIV/AIDS Prevention among Adolescents and Support the Integration of Children Living with HIV/AIDS into Schools is currently running across twenty-seven regions within the Ukraine. The aim of the project, which is being implemented by the NGO Children's Fund Health Through Education, is to improve access to HIV prevention programmes in secondary and vocational schools by building the capacity of the All-Ukrainian Teachers and Trainers Association. The project began in December 2011 and will continue to run until June 2014. The EU will contribute almost half-a-million Euros to the project over its lifetime, which represents 80% of the total budget.

In addition to the above project, in December 2011 the EU initiated a further two-year programme aimed at combatting the HIV/AIDS virus within the Ukraine. The primary objective of Developing a Network of Legal Support in the Field of HIV/AIDS was to create within the Ukraine organisational and legal instruments which are capable providing legal support to and improving the living conditions both of people living with HIV/AIDS and members of other vulnerable groups. The project is being implemented because the EU felt that rights of current and potential HIV/AIDS sufferers to effective prevention, treatment and care needed to be protected by professional lawyers. As such, it is providing ќ450,000 (80% of the total budget) in order that the Ukrainian Human Rights Protection Movement can implement the project.

Social Cohesion and Employment

In December 2010, the EU instigated a three-year project aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable adults in the Ukraine. The project Preventing Elder Abuse in Ukraine is currently being implemented across thirteen regions and five cities across the country by Help the Aged. The EU will contribute ќ173,891 over the life of the project, a figure which will represent 90% of the total budget.

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