

PRESS RELEASE

15 July, 2016

Yerevan

of the "Corruption Risks in the Field of Education" Anti-Corruption Event

On 15 July, 2016, the Armenian Lawyers' Association, in cooperation with the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia, organised an anti-corruption event entitled **"Corruption Risks in the Field of Education"**. The event was held in Darist Hotel, Kapan and was organised in the scope of the "Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion" project funded by the EU and co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The event was aimed at revealing the corruption risks in the education system and outlining respective solutions.

Mr. Karen Zadoyan, the President of the Armenian Lawyers' Association and the Coordinator of the Secretariat of the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition, spoke in his welcoming speech about the fight led by the Coalition, mentioning that the model of an independent universal anti-corruption body is currently being developed and that one of its most important components is education.

Representative of the RA Ministry of Education and Science Ms. Marine Aghajanyan spoke about the anti-corruption courses currently taught at various educational institutions.

The welcoming speeches were followed by reports and presentations on the prevention of corruption, the role and importance of anti-corruption education in the scope of civic education, the reforms implemented in the field of education, as well as the importance of introducing the institute of anti-corruption audit in educational institutions.

Executive Director of the US Alumni Association of Armenia Mr. Alexander Shagafyan spoke of the field of public education and proposed that anti-corruption activities be carried out in school administration, as well as in academic and student councils.

Local Expert of the "Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion" Project Mr. Marat Atovmyan recommended improving the system of admission examinations, amending the system of mid-term and final examinations, as well as increasing the salaries of the academic staff. Moreover, he suggested forming independent student, professor and parent councils in universities and schools, in addition to conducting courses on ethics both for students and professors.

Specialist of Reforms Issues on the above-mentioned project, lawyer Ms. Syuzanna Soghomonyan found it expedient to introduce anti-corruption audit in universities as a corruption prevention mechanism. According to her, the audit is supposed to comprise two components: control over public procurement and raising the public perception (external and internal).

It is noteworthy that teachers from Syunik complained about low salaries, emphasising that that is the main factor causing corruption. They also noted that children from Syunik are forced to go to the Kotayk and Gegharkunik Regions to participate in camps. The teachers proposed moving some courses currently included in the academic year programme to the summer time when pupils are free, as well as organising for them various, including anti-corruption, camps.

Upon hearing about the problems, Mr. Zadoyan stated that they would be discussed by the Coalition and that respective steps would be taken.

The problems and recommendations, after being summarised in the event report, will be sent for consideration to the relevant state bodies, which will contribute to the implementation of reforms in the field of education.

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

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

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

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

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



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