

PRESS RELEASE

25 November, 2016

Yerevan

Expanded Working Meeting of the Government-Civil Society Anti-Corruption Working Group Theme: Development of the Institutional System of Fight against Corruption and Presentation of Recommendations on Two Anti-Corruption Agency Models

On 23 November, 2016 an expanded working meeting of the Government-Civil Society anti-corruption working group (theme: Development of the Institutional System of Fight against Corruption and Presentation of Recommendations on Two Anti-Corruption Agency Models) was held in the Combined Meeting Room of the Best Western Congress Hotel, Yerevan. Representatives from the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, the RA Government and other state bodies, as well as the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia and mass media participated in the working meeting.

The meeting was organised by the Freedom of Information Centre and the Armenian Lawyers' Association (ALA) in partnership with the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia and the RA Ministry of Justice, along the same lines of the "Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion" Project funded by the European Union and co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

Mr. Karen Zadoyan, the President of the Armenian Lawyers' Association and the Coordinator of the Secretariat of the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia, highlighted, "We must adopt a three-pronged approach and create the agency from scratch based on the standards that have led the world to success". RA Deputy Minister of Justice Mr. Suren Krmoyan said, "The agency will be independent and financially sustainable. It will possess different functions, including the preventive and educational ones, with the exception of those related to law enforcement and making political decisions".

Mr. Carl Ulbricht, the International Expert on the "Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion" project and a member of the working group, spoke of the international experience, noting that not only independence is important for the anti-corruption agency, but also having a strong director, as well as cooperation with the population and the powers of the agency. "We have seen many cases when the agency was opened but had very few employees, did not have enough time to study all the cases and constantly had to fight for the budget". Ms. Mariam Zadoyan, a National Expert on the same project and a member of the working group, presented the legal framework for the anti-corruption agency, reiterating the importance of its independence. Ms. Tatev Sarukhanyan, an Expert at the RA Ministry of Justice, presented the bill on the corruption prevention commission as drafted by the Ministry. In her words, they envisage that it be created based on the model of the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials by expanding the powers of the Commission with the educational and preventive components of fight against corruption. Mr. Karen Hakobyan, the Head of the Department for Drafting Anti-Corruption and Penitentiary Policies, clarified the above-mentioned by stating that the Commission is to be legally dissolved.

As a result of the event, the work carried out by the working group formed to conduct research on the institutional system of fight against corruption was summarised. In addition, the proposals and recommendations on two models of institutional system of fight against corruption were presented to the public. These proposals had been drafted and submitted by the experts from ALA and the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia.

The main goal of the "Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion" project is 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 has been enhanced. Thus, 100 CSOs and media organisations have strengthened their understanding of corruption issues and freedom of information as well as their ability to monitor and engage in watchdog activities. Small sub-grants have been allocated to 20 CSOs and media organisations for raising the effectiveness of public monitoring and the implementation of appropriate monitoring, watchdog and investigative activities. In 2014 the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia was established in the scope of the project. The Coalition now comprises more than 80 CSOs and media organisations and plays a key role in the sustainable CSO-Government dialogue developed in the scope of the project. The joint work of the Government and the Coalition on the issues of the criminalisation of illicit enrichment and the establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency in Armenia has been a particularly remarkable achievement in the scope of the project. 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.

The **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.

The **Freedom of Information Centre (FOI)** has been operating for 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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This Project is funded by the European Union.

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This Project is co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.
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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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