**Programmatic Cooperation Framework for
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus**

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe

EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Implemented
by the Council of Europe

Mid-term results of regional projects under the Council of Europe /European Union Programmatic Cooperation Framework (2015-2017)

What is Programmatic Cooperation Framework?

In April 2014, the European Union and the Council of Europe agreed to implement targeted cooperation activities with EU's Eastern Partnership countries to bring them closer to European standards in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The projects under the 'Programmatic Cooperation Framework' (PCF) in 2015-2017, are funded primarily by the EU, and funded and implemented by the Council of Europe.

Civil participation in decision-making process

This regional project aims to strengthen civil society in Eastern Partnership countries, to promote its effective interaction with public authorities and to stimulate the civil participation in the democratic decision-making process. Unlike many other internationally-funded initiatives, the Council of Europe project seeks to mobilise the knowledge and experience of civil society leaders and public servants as well as their energy for acting at the regional level. The project has stimulated debate, learning and networking among NGOs, representatives of public authorities and independent experts.

With expert assistance and through multilateral working groups and regional conferences, a study on 'Civil participation in decision making in Eastern Partnership countries' has been published. On this basis, the small multi-stakeholder network created in the course of the project, will prepare a regional strategy for promoting civil participation in decision-making. This strategy and the extensive exchange of experience and the newly-created informal network will help the participating countries to face the challenges to democracy posed by the often rapid geopolitical, societal and technological changes taking place.

► Link to the factsheet on this project

Regional dialogue on judicial reform in the Eastern Partnership

Through regional dialogue, the Council of Europe facilitated exchanges among **the six Eastern Partnership countrie**s to compare their approaches and learn from one another so as to further reform their justice system. A regional steering group was set up to examine challenges faced by the judiciary in the region, identify best practices and formulate recommendations on how to reinforce the national reform processes. Specific areas for reforms were selected and working groups established.

They analysed challenges and devised possible approaches towards judicial ethics, e-justice, legal aid, equality of arms, the role of the high courts in harmonizing judicial practices and judges' selection and career with the participation of experts, representatives of civil society and the ministries of justice, judicial self-governing bodies and bar associations. The project beneficiaries began also exploring issues related to independence of judges, ways to ensure transparent and inclusive judicial reform processes and alternative dispute resolution approaches.

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Strengthening constitutional justice

The Council of Europe Venice Commission supported constitutional processes in **Armenia, Georgia, Moldova** and **Ukraine** and reinforced peer networking amongst all six EaP constitutional courts. Their representatives examined the role of constitutional courts in democracies, focusing on independence of judiciary and individual complaint procedures. The EaP constitutional courts enhanced their use of existing tools, such as the CODICES database and

the "Venice Forum" allowing for a prompt inter-court information-exchange, thus helping them to deliver higher quality judgments.

►   [Link to the factsheet on this project](#)

Improving women's access to justice in five EaP countries

Studies and practical tools identifying and addressing barriers to women's equal access to justice in **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** are developed in the framework of this regional project. The project deliverables aim at responding to needs that reflect shared concerns and common problems at the regional level and beyond. The regional dimension benefits from and encourages a peer-to-peer approach for both shared problems and existing good practices.

The project secured agreements with the Justice Academy of **Armenia**, the Justice Academy of **Azerbaijan**, the High School of Justice of **Georgia**, the Chief Prosecutor's Office of **Georgia**, he National Institute of Justice of the Republic of **Moldova**, and the National School of Judges of **Ukraine**, so that women's access to justice is integrated in the training curricula of these institutions. National-level training seminars for judges and prosecutors are also being organised in each country of the project. The final output will be a training manual on Ensuring Access to Justice for Women, composed of a common general part and separate "national chapters" with relevant information and examples from each of the five EaP countries.

►   [Link to the factsheet on this project](#)

Promoting Human Rights Education and Democratic Citizenship

The establishment of the Steering Committee, composed of representatives of public authorities and of national experts as well as the organisation of regional activities allowed an open exchange on social developments and policy challenges at regional level and a clarification of specific needs and priorities for individual countries. On this basis, self-assessment reviews providing an in-depth analysis of national policy frameworks were conducted and communicated to relevant national institutions.

Complementing this review process, technical assistance was provided at country level to help partners to strengthen their democratic governance in schools, to increase Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education teacher competences as well as to develop their school curricula and education materials. Moreover, main Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education manuals have been translated into several languages of the beneficiary countries including the first time translation into Belarusian of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

►   [Link to the factsheet on this project](#)

Promoting penitentiary reforms (from a punitive to a rehabilitative approach)

Prison overcrowding is a serious problem for many states. Therefore, the Council of Europe initiated **regional** reflection on how to effectively combat prison overcrowding. This reflection resulted in a general report and four country-specific reports with proposals for measures to fight prison overcrowding prepared in co-operation with **Armenia, Georgia, Moldova** and **Ukraine.** The proposals were compiled in the Report on Criminal Justice Responses to Prison Overcrowding in Eastern Partnership countries and the way how to implement them discussed at the Closing Conference, and a workshop dedicated to the steps forward, and individual needs of each participating country for further technical assistance.

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Criminal justice responses to drug dependent prisoners

The Council of Europe Pompidou Group worked closely with **Armenia, Georgia**, **Moldova** and **Ukraine** to improve drug legislation and drug treatment services in prison. With **Georgian** authorities, the Council of Europe developed a national roadmap for policy and legislative changes to reduce prison overcrowding and the number of drug-dependent offenders. In **Moldova**, the Regional Project refurbished a ward *Pruncul* Prison to install therapeutic community for drug-dependent prisoners and trained local staff on how to run it. **Armenia's** 25 doctors and psychologists and staff of **Ukraine's** Pryluky and Melitopol juvenile prisons, improved their therapeutic skills and tools, such as family therapy and risk assessment methodology.

►   Link to the factsheet on this project

Fight against corruption and fostering good governance, fight against money-laundering

The Council of Europe assisted **Eastern Partnership countries** in improving their legislative drafting techniques by developing model legislation for all six countries on issues including conflict of interest, criminal liability of legal entities, and integrity testing. Model legislation has been developed based on topics specific international standards and good comparative practices and has been supplemented with commentaries for each provision, as well as foreign country models.

Further support to legislative processes in the region has also been granted in the form of expert opinions on draft legislation through pilot activities. For example, through this initiative the Council of Europe has provided **Moldova** with advice regarding illicit enrichment provisions of the Criminal Code, amendments to the Integrity Testing Law, draft Law on combating money-laundering and terrorist financing. Through pilot activities the Council of Europe has worked with **Azerbaijan** to introduce the concept of risk management and will help **Belarus** identify corruption risks in the education sector.

Cybercrime in EaP II: regional and international cooperation
Cybercrime in EAP III: Public/Private Cooperation

The Council of Europe supported **Eastern Partnership countries (EaP)** to strengthen capacities of the mutual legal assistance authorities and 24/7 points of contact to cooperate internationally and regionally, as well as to enhance public/private cooperation in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime. The project team analysed the rules and procedures for the mutual legal assistance for **each EAP country** and provided for the mapping of current situation, opportunities and risks regarding co-operation among public/private and law enforcement/service providers in the region. On-line information resource tools and multilingual standardised templates for international requests to access stored computer data were developed to enhance information sharing on cybercrime and electronic evidence. Through peer networking and expert review, **all EaP countries** became aware of their strengths and weaknesses, defined their roles and responsibilities more clearly and adopted recommendations for improvement in the field of cybercrime.

►   Link to the factsheet on Cybercrime in EaP II: regional and international cooperation
►   Link to the factsheet on Cybercrime in EAP III: Public/Private Cooperation

Enhancing respect for the protection of human rights online through capacity building, regional co-operation and participation to global Internet governance policies shaping

Through regional exchanges, the regional project promoted a common understanding amongst **Eastern Partnership countries** of Internet use policy and Council of Europe standards on Internet Governance. The regional project brought together the executive and legislative branches, judiciary, local Internet service providers and non-governmental actors to discuss Internet public policy issues and how to address new challenges arising from Internet

use. The experts from beneficiary countries increased their knowledge and capacity on issues of human rights with regard to the Internet. The project contributed to establishment of sustainable Internet Governance Forum in **Georgia**.

To develop and strengthen national data protection systems

The Council of Europe helped to improve data protection legislation in **Armenia, Georgia and Moldova**. As part of the legislative review, the countries' authorities discussed how to improve their draft legislation taking into account Council of Europe comments**. Georgia and Moldova** have subsequently prepared draft legislative amendments being currently under the Parliament's consideration. A dialogue with **Belarus** continues to define the scope of Council of Europe support in analysing existing guarantees for data protection.

Promote professional and responsible journalism by supporting regional network of self-regulatory bodies

The Council of Europe reinforced the capacities of members of the **Eastern Partnership** regional self-regulation network to strengthen their co-operation in cross-border complaint-handling on alleged unethical behaviour of journalists. As a result of the activities, the regional self-regulation network adopted the Charter of the Regional Ethics Commission establishing a regional complaint mechanism. Regional exchanges also enabled **Eastern Partnership** self-regulatory bodies to better address challenges, including how best to combat the hate speech, through comparative experiences.

►   Link to the factsheet on this project

Strengthening institutional frameworks for local governance

The Council of Europe assisted the countries from the **Eastern Partnership** to foster a more efficient, transparent and ethical governance at the local level, to improve the consistency of legal frameworks and to improve local finance management. At the regional level, the programme promoted peer-exchange and networking among local authorities and their associations.

Regional and bilateral activities supported more than 60 mayors from **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** as leaders for change with the aim to increase their awareness and readiness to implement higher ethical standards in public policies, to promote good governance and transparency in their daily activities, and to lead change within their communities. Pilot projects on Inter-municipal cooperation were developed in **Armenia, Georgia and Moldova** and the local financial benchmarking approach is currently being tested in **Armenia and Georgia**. 35 representatives of the local **Belarus** administration have been trained on leadership topics, good governance and efficient management. In **Moldova**, support to the dialogue between central authorities and the autonomous authorities of Gagauzia was provided, especially through trainings and expertise. These activities are supported by a Community of Practice – network gathering together national associations, experts and practitioners.

►   Link to the factsheet on this project

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