



SLOVAKIA SUMMARY REPORT
for the cooperation within the Visegrad funded project
„Knowledge Transfer for Enhanced Government's Accountability and
Citizens Participation in Armenia"

The assessment report was developed within the framework of the “Knowledge Transfer for Enhanced Government’s Accountability and Citizens Participation in Armenia” Project by Project partner- Open Governance Initiative, Slovakia.

The Project is implemented by OxYGen Foundation with the financial support of the Visegrad Fund.

The aim of the project is to promote the participation of citizens in the democratic system, increase awareness of transparency and involvement in policy-making processes with emphasis on youth and women as a norm in society and formalize these efforts in the new Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan 2021-2023 of Armenia.

The overall situation of OGP in Slovakia:

Slovakia joined the Open Governance Initiative as one of the first member states in 2011 through a two-step process. As a first step, the then Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic Iveta Radičová declared Slovakia's interest in an official letter, in which she declared herself to adhere to the principles formulated in the Declaration of Open Government. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society was and still is the coordinator of the Open Governance Agenda and the processes related to the Open Governance Initiative.

The Government of the Slovak Republic has also committed itself to the principles of open government in its Government Program Statement of 2016, as well as in the Government Program Statement of 2020.

By joining the Open Governance Initiative, Slovakia has committed itself not only to strengthening the main principles of open governance - transparency, participation and accountability of the government to its citizens, but also to follow simple procedural rules:

- Develop biennial national action plans in a regularly participatory way in cooperation with civil society.
- Implement the commitments of the action plans in accordance with the timetable
- At the end of each two-year period, prepare an evaluation report summarizing the success of the implementation of the OGP commitments.
- Collaborate in the development of independent evaluation reports provided by the headquarters of the Open Governance Initiative in cooperation with an independent evaluator.

Together with partners we have prepared the workshop on the theme:

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

- **A workshop was organised online on 10th August 2021 14,00 – 16,00 Bratislava time.**

General aim of the workshop was to share the key learning and best practices on youth engagement and participation in Eastern European countries, **on the example of Slovakia** and to find replicable models for Armenia. Specific aim was to share the research on values and attitudes of young people in Slovakia, how they were effected by pandemia, what are the latest development of the participation of children and young people in Slovakia and what can be taken for Armenia.

Speakers:

Juraj Lizák, Rada mládeže Slovenska, [*The Youth Council of Slovakia covers the largest youth organizations in Slovakia. Among them you will find organizations that deal with science, volunteering, non-formal education or spiritual life. Our task is to represent their interests and the interests of young people in Slovakia. At the same time, obtain valuable data on young people that will help our country in its progress and positive development.*](#)

Youth values - do young people believe in democracy?

Young people do not question democracy, but they have a shallow knowledge of democratic principles and a great deal of distrust of political parties and public institutions.

Young people lack a deeper understanding of what lies behind the concept of democracy and how society and politics actually work.

Young people are dissatisfied with how political parties and politicians are able to solve problems they consider important. 62% of young Slovaks and Czechs do not trust them equally.

The share of "disconnected" young voters who do not go to the polls is high. At the beginning of summer 2020, almost a third of young people in the Czech Republic would not go to the polls, or did not know who to vote for. In Slovakia it is a quarter.

Electoral preferences show that young people in large numbers support either populist parties or those that do not consider respect for democratic principles a priority.

Trust in the institution is seen as an important element of democracy that ensures its legitimacy and stability. The level of trust is taken over by the young from the house or the surroundings.

<https://mladez.sk/>

Zuzana Čáčová, Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti, OSF is one oldest well established civic organisation in Slovakia operating since 1992. It has become part of a family of foundations known as Open Society Foundations, operating in more than 70 countries around the world. Their founder is the philanthropist and financier George Soros, who has a special place in the democratic transformation and modernization of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In 2013, the Open Society Foundation became independent from the founding organization, and within the international network of open society foundations, we no longer have the status of a member organization. We are increasingly obtaining funding for our activities from domestic and European sources. OUR main activities are granting operations via program as Active Citizen Fund, Stronger Roots for Civil Society, Journalism Awards and educational programmes: open schools and Aflatoun.

Children and young people are citizens of this country and make up a significant part of the population. We start from belief that they should have the opportunity to participate in political and civic life. Their needs and the requirements should be heard and taken into account. Children and young people are also recipients public services and their voice can contribute to improving their quality. Promoting the participation of children and young people people is an investment in the education of active, responsible and democratically minded citizens. By participation we mean the participation or participation of citizens, including children and young people people, in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies. It makes sense especially active participation, which means proper consideration of comments (consultation), sharing decision-making power (co-decision) and control of decision-making and the actual exercise of powers.

Why do we need participation of young people?

The latest representative research of the organization IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute shows that high school students, who are usually involved in decision-making, are engaged in active use of free time or volunteering, evaluate their life, school system, employment and labor market, spend less time more positively. on social networks. The results of the research showed a positive impact of promoting participation and non-formal education on the formation and development of young people.

<https://osf.sk/vychova-k-obcianstvu-podpora-democratickeho-prostredia-na-skolach-otvorene-skoly/>

Guest: Office of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society
https://www.minv.sk/?ros_ogp

Lucia Lacika, Office of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society

How OGP works in Slovakia?

1 online workshop: Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society
https://www.minv.sk/?ros_ogp

Through its OGP national action plans, Slovakia has been focusing on strengthening the principle of transparency via building the foundations for publication of open data, open educational resources and open access to scientific and research publications, the principle of participation via establishing public participation in the legislation – making, supporting participation in public policy making, educating public officials about the importance of participation and use of participatory methods. Furthermore, through the OGP national action plans, Slovakia has taken various steps to improve transparency of the Slovak justice system.

Outcome and recommendations from the workshop: (agenda and ppt attached)

After really interesting presentation the discussion went around themes e.g. what values do we really give to young people. We call them very often our future and perceive them as our most precious thing, but as a outcome of presented researches, young people do not feel like they are part of the society. This is really a big problem in both countries, and if we want raise active citizens we have to start to treat them with more respect and teach them all skills they will need as citizens in future in primary school already.

Armenia and Slovakia has a lots in common in these topic as a heritage of former Soviet Union and its influence. We lack the culture of listening for example.

Regarding the OGP principles , Slovakia is the lead in this area and participation is seen both as topic and principle as well. Civil society face a little bit different situation in Armenia – it is not so developed as in Slovakia, and the war plus covid pandemia,(but mainly the war) has stopped or better to say was devastating for any kind of participation processes within the country. The remaining question is How do the citizens can be involved and How to evaluate the impact (and also the feedback) of the participation of the Civil society.

As one of the causes of low participation of young people in Armenia was identified the lack of awareness. As an very alarming fact can be considered that the youth is very sceptical towards democracy in Armenia, especially after war, they are really frustrated and not interested at all.

Public procurement is still a big challenge and Slovakia can share their experiences within this field as well. (the good ones and bad ones as well)

The possible future cooperation might seem very relevant among couple of organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE OGP SYSTEM IN ARMENIA FOR THE TOPIC OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION:

- Support the theme of participation of young people - ideally find some institution who could be a bearer/laureate/powerhouse of this theme, youth participation needs an extra effort to be done
- Support the theme at the same time on national and local level as well
- Create the space for participation in schools - supporting the youth school council, involving children in the decision making processes in the schools
- No participation is better than fake/formal participation - especially with young people - it might create the environment for the growth of radicalism among young people

➤ **The second workshop prepared with the partners was organised on the theme:**

LABOUR RIGHTS PROTECTION AND GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES IN THE CONTEXTS OF OGP PRIORITIES & IN THE LIGHT OF COVID-19 EXPERIENCE SHARING AND MUTUAL LEARNING ONLINE EVENT

From Armenia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary

OxYGen-led Labour rights multi-stakeholder open Platform - Civic Voice and Action (CVA¹) is launching the 4th round of the workshops on the topic of open governance and participatory policymaking.

The aim of the workshop is to create a mutual learning platform between Eastern European countries and Armenia on the Labour right protection, labour code creation, and the implementation process, OGP principles in this regard with a specific focus on gender-related issues, particularly addressing the following issues: how COVID-19 Pandemic affected the labour rights protection in Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Armenia and how the countries are addressing the current challenges: best learning and success stories will be shared.

The initiative is undertaken within the framework of “Knowledge Transfer for Enhanced Government’s Accountability and Citizens Participation in Armenia” and “EU4LabourRights: Increasing Civic Voice and Action for Labour Rights and Social Protection in Armenia” projects.

“Knowledge Transfer for Enhanced Government’s Accountability and Citizens Participation in Armenia” project is implemented by OxYGen Foundation with the financial support of the International Visegrad Fund.

“EU4LabourRights: Increasing Civic Voice and Action for Labour Rights and Social Protection in Armenia” project is implemented by OxYGen Foundation, Socioscope NGO, “Asparez” Journalists’ Club NGO, Armenian Progressive Youth NGO, Media Diversity Institute - Armenia in cooperation with Protection of Rights without Borders NGO, and Eurasia Partnership Foundation. The project is funded by the European Union.

➤ 3rd workshop was held online on 24th August 2021 14,00 – 16,00 (Bratislava time)

¹ The CVA is a newly formed network for labour rights protection that facilitates the national consultations for policy reforms and legislative changes to address the discrimination and violation of labour rights, with the involvement of grassroots organisations, experts, social partners - private sector, trade unions, CSOs, activists’ nonformal groups, and government officials.

General aim of the workshop was to share the key learning and best practices on labour rights protection systems in Eastern European countries, **on the example of Slovakia** and to find replicable models for Armenia. Specific aim of the workshop was to share experiences with Armenian NGO's about the issue of creation and implementation process of labour code, OGP principles in praxis, with special focus on gender related issues – how it was effected by pandemia and what kind of recommendations they can take from the recent development in Slovakia

Speakers:

CELSI, *The Central European Institute for Labor Research (CELSI) is a non-profit research institute based in Bratislava. He deals with multidisciplinary research on the labor market and its institutions, work and organizations, business in society and ethnicity and migration in the context of economic, social and political life in modern society.*

I want to work, who will help me? Strengthening cooperation between policy makers and the non-profit sector in integrating people with disabilities into the labor market

<https://www.celsi.sk/sk/publikacie/vyskumny-clanok/detail/178/chcem-pracovat-kto-mi-pomoze-posilnenie-spoluprace-medzi-tvorcami-politik-a-neziskovym-sektorom-pri-integracii-zdravotne-znevychodnenych-ludi-na-trh-prace/>

Trade unions and professional associations as civil society actors working on the issues of labour rights and social dialogue in Armenia

<https://celsi.sk/en/publications/research-reports/detail/138/trade-unions-and-professional-associations-as-civil-society-actors-working-on-the-issues-of-labour-rights-and-social-dialogue-in-armenia/>

<https://celsi.sk/en/publications/research-reports/detail/133/trade-unions-and-professional-associations-as-civil-society-actors-working-on-the-issues-of-labour-rights-and-social-dialogue-in-eastern-partnership-countries/>

Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť, *We promote human rights values, dignity, freedom and responsibility. In our association, we are convinced that the key to fulfilling these values is civic participation, the will to change society positively and to do something concrete for it every day - with civic courage, professionalism and responsibility. We create a space for public discussion, especially on issues that fundamentally affect people living in our country. At the same time, we strive for cooperation with public authorities.*

Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť (Citizen, Democracy and Accountability – CDA, www.odz.sk) is an independent civic association founded in 1992 that promotes the values of open society based on civic responsibility and the accountability of public authorities. One of CDA's primary aims is to assert everyone's rights to human dignity and to protection from discrimination, as well as to assert the human rights of women. CDA has carried out numerous activities to achieve accountability of public authorities and promote the principles of human rights, including non-discrimination and women's rights, good governance, and the rule of law at all levels. To achieve these goals, CDA has been using monitoring, advocacy, litigation and policy-making tools both on the national level and internationally, often in cooperation with other stakeholders. Examples of CDA's activities include drafting legislation and policy reports, carrying out monitoring and research, publishing analyses, publications and articles (including, for example, the first and so far the only comprehensive commentary on the Anti-

discrimination Act), giving presentations and trainings to various target groups (judges, the police, prison educators, teachers, public authorities, social workers, business representatives, NGOs, etc.), providing consultations, organizing public discussions and other public events, networking with various institutions including NGOs and public authorities, and awareness raising of the general public through the media.

Violations of the human rights of women in the provision of childbirth care in healthcare facilities in Slovakia during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the wake of the pandemic, Slovakia's institutionalised childbirth care system has once again proved not to be based on human rights and recent evidence-based medical standards and recommendations of internationally recognised professional organisations. The experience from the first wave of the pandemic has also showed that the existing system has no real ambitions to satisfy the needs and rights of those whom it should serve in the first place. Quite the opposite, in situations where pregnant and birthing women and their newborns need special protection and support, the system is highly prone to harm them even more than before.

The findings from the monitoring showed that the pregnancy- and childbirth-related violations of human rights and internationally recognised medical standards that had already been documented in the past not only persisted during the first wave of the pandemic, but were occurring even to a larger extent and with an increased intensity, even taking on new forms. Examples included denying the women the right to have a birth companion of their choice with them; not allowing them to practice skin-to-skin bonding immediately after childbirth under the pretext of the absence of the birth companion whose presence, however, was prohibited; or separating mothers from their newborns if the mother tested positive or was suspected for COVID-19.

See also:

- <http://odz.sk/porod-prava-pandemia/#more-8917> (the monitoring report in Slovak)
- <http://odz.sk/en/violations-of-womens-and-newborns-rights-in-childbirth-getting-worse-in-slovak-hospitals-during-pandemic/>
- <http://odz.sk/en/appeal-for-compliance/>
- <http://odz.sk/en/the-un-special-rapporteur/#more-664>
- http://odz.sk/en/wp-content/uploads/Women-Mothers-Bodies_summ_EN.pdf
- http://odz.sk/en/wp-content/uploads/ZMT2_SUMMARY_EN_final.pdf
- <http://odz.sk/berme-vazne-potreby-zien/> (information about hte implemented project in Slovak)

The pandemic has exacerbated violations of maternity rights

<http://odz.sk/berme-vazne-potreby-zien/>

Outcome and recommendations from the workshop: (agenda and ppt attached)

The packed, but extremely interesting agenda of the workshop was presented to 36 participants. Labour rights and gender equality from the framework of OGP – what can we learn from each other, how does the pandemic affected these topics and what are the challenges – these were the main areas presented at the workshop. In Slovakia we are in the process of making the new action plan, where civil society and youth are part of it. Regarding the labour rights in Slovakia we have well established institutions and legislations, the remaining challenge is the enforcement.

The global pandemic has brought a new challenges e.g. woman are more under the pressure (working from home and at the same time taking care of kids, the kids were most the time also at home on distance learning during the time lockdown – in Slovakia the schools were closed for almost 7 months – longest period within the EU together with Romania and Bosna and Hercegovina. The problem regarding the work from home apperad that there are no regulations for it so far.

The value of health and safety was reinvented, and the importance of it was discussed.

Trade Union as an important stakeholder and its role has been discussed as well, while the role of it differs quite significantly in Slovakia, and Armenia.

After the presentation from Mrs. Pufflerová about the human rights failures in hospitals via pandemic for woman and children during the birth, the discussion turned to the topcis of system failoure in Poland, especially for woman. The conservative governement in Poland is trying to hide these failures with social benefits for families.

As the agenda was really full, not much time for discussion was left, but the agenda and especially speakers and their expertise fullfilled the aim of the workshop above the expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE OGP SYSTEM IN ARMENIA FOR THE THEME OF THE LABOUR AND GENDER RIGHTS:

- The home office and work from home needs to get more attention - to create some standards
- Gender rights needs an extra attention during the time of pandemic
- The themes of health, especially mental health and safety need an extra support especially in the time of pandemic (the importance of these two elements has been reinvented during the pandemia, and the cost of it as well)