



PRESS RELEASE

17th July 2017

Yerevan

Official Launch of the “Commitment to Constructive Dialogue” Project

On Friday, 14th July, the EU-funded “Commitment to Constructive Dialogue” project was officially launched.

The main objective of the project is to increase the influence of civil society organisations (CSOs) and CSO coalitions/networks on public policy development in selected target sectors. More specifically, the objectives are to strengthen Armenian CSOs’ capacity to build sectoral coalitions, to improve their engagement in public policy development, to identify issues in the target sectors and develop respective public policies, as well as constructive and strategic policy engagement with central and local governments.

The European Union has allocated EUR 2 million to the development of civil society organisations' capacities during the project implementation period. The project has a sub-granting component under which sub-grants will be allocated to CSOs and CSO coalitions. The project will cover nine target sectors, including those of justice, education and business environment.

H.E. Mr. Piotr Antoni Świtalski, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Armenia (RA), gave opening remarks at the ceremony attaching great importance to the role of dialogue between civil society and the authorities: *‘There are three ways in which an individual can act in society: i) leave the country and take no action inside the country, ii) stay loyal and remain silent towards the ruling powers, or iii) be a voice and articulate views and make an impact in society. And in the third scenario, the most important notion of voice is dialogue.’*

The Ambassador also appreciated that Armenian CSOs can learn from the experiences from Czech society through the Czech partner in the implementing consortium, since Czech civil society has changed rapidly in recent years.

Mr. Davit Harutyunyan, the RA Minister of Justice, welcomed the project launch on behalf of the Prime Minister. He emphasised that the Armenian Government is ready for a strong and honest cooperation: *“All of us understand very well that the Government is the main party responsible for policy development and implementation. However, that does not imply isolation, as the efficiency of the system of governance can increase only if the society is constituted of active citizens”*.

Mr. Karen Zadoyan, President of “Armenian Lawyers’ Association” NGO and Project Manager for the “Commitment to Constructive Dialogue” project, noted the following in his opening remarks: *“The key factor for the project’s success is for the trained CSOs to become able to articulate their needs and turn them into effective public policy dialogue achieving tangible results in policies. In doing so, CSOs will use the following capacities: evidence-based public policy development, public oversight of the activities of the government and the local government, building and developing coalitions and networks, implementing a constructive and sustainable dialogue with the government and the local government”*.

Mr. Zadoyan also presented the main objectives and directions of the project, as well as the activities carried out in the project inception period and the interim results achieved.



This Project is funded by the European Union.

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The European Commission is the EU’s executive body. The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

The project team has carried out a mapping of Armenian civil society organisations to identify the target sectors to be covered by the project. The findings of the report were also presented at the project opening ceremony. The report will be made available to the public once finalised.

The “*Commitment to Constructive Dialogue*” project is implemented with the financial support of the European Union by a consortium of civil society organisations, which are the Armenian Lawyers’ Association, Agora Central Europe o.p.s (an NGO from the Czech Republic), the Armenian Centre for Democratic Education-CIVITAS, the “International Centre for Human Development” Public Organisation, the SME Cooperation Association and the Union of Communities of Armenia.

The main objective of the project is to enhance the influence of civil society organisations (CSOs) and CSO coalitions/networks on the public policy development in the project target sectors. More specific objectives are: strengthening Armenian CSOs’ capacity to build sectoral coalitions, their engagement in public policy development, identification of issues in the target sectors and development of respective public policies, as well as constructive and strategic policy engagement with central and local government. The project has a sub-granting component, under which sub-grants will be allocated to CSOs and CSO coalitions. The project has 9 target sectors, including those of justice, education and business.

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 used to be called Armenian Young Lawyers Association.

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