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Public Presentation of the Programme “Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process”

18 July, 2014, Yerevan – The public presentation of the programme “[Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process](#)” was held in the Picasso Hall of the Best Western Congress Hotel on 18 July 2014.

The Head of the European Union Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Traian Hristea delivered a welcoming speech, stating that “EU strongly supports resumption of currently suspended normalization process between Armenia and Turkey and actively contributes to the overall security stability and cooperation in the South Caucasus. The EU strongly believes that the dialogue between the societies of Armenia and Turkey is fundamental as a sustained, strategically necessary step towards future normalization of relations and eventual reconciliation.”

The Executive Director of Eurasia Partnership Foundation Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan, Regional Studies Center (RSC) Director Richard Giragosian, the Head of the Public Journalism Club Seda Muradyan, Program Manager at Civilitas Foundation Anna Shahnazaryan from Armenia and the Programme’s Communication Coordinator Burcu Becermen from the Hrant Dink Foundation, Turkey each presented different aspects and plans of the programme, its beneficiaries, achievements so far, and upcoming activities to representatives of civil society, local and international partner organisations, as well as to the media from Armenia and Turkey.



Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process is funded by the European Union

The most remarkable results of the Programme over the initial six months of implementation include but are not limited to the 57 sub-grant scheme applications from the two countries, more than 380 applications to the travel grant opportunity, 88 organisations in Armenia and Turkey showing interest in hosting a fellow from the neighbouring country, and more than 60 jointly elaborated film projects, which undoubtedly indicates considerable interest of the two societies in a dialogue.

Speakers elaborated on the social, cultural, economic, and political developments that can positively influence Armenia-Turkey relations in the coming months. Gevorg Ter-Gabrielyan emphasized the increasing role of the civil society in confidence building and advancing economic and human interactions between the two countries: “Several hundred thousands, if not millions of citizens of Turkey build civil society there on a daily basis. This involves actions that move Turkey towards a more democratic society; this also means that a good deal of these people try to reevaluate their past, and fill in the gaps in the national memory. No wonder that more and more people there learn about the tragedy of Armenia-Turkey relations, the Genocide, and try to come to terms with their history, which is often a family history. Our project helps provide them with an opportunity to do that. Armenians, on the other hand, learn about the current inhabitants of modern Turkey, and clear up the ‘diabolic image’ that they might have about the peoples of the neighbouring country.

Richard Giragosian shared his vision of “normalisation” process and reported on his recent activities in Turkey, including extensive meetings with Turkish government officials and media. Giragosian noted that “although the course of engagement remains somewhat dependent on Turkish domestic politics, there were several new measures and gestures from the Turkish side.” He further added that “in light of the overwhelming lack of success in Turkish foreign policy, the possibility for progress with Armenia represented an important opportunity for Turkey to achieve some degree of success, especially in light of the changing security environment due to instability in the broader Middle East and in Ukraine.” Similarly, he stress that “the opening of the long-closed border with Armenia would offer Turkey an effective way to economically stabilize the Kurdish regions, thereby strengthening the Turkish government’s so-called ‘Kurdish initiative’ seeking to engage in negotiations with Kurdish leaders.”

Burcu Becermen talked about the perception of the Programme in Turkey saying that: “Individuals and civil society organisations from Turkey, from different walks of life and from different regions, have shown great interest in the overall Programme, have taken part in outreach meetings and are contacting us on a daily basis to get engaged in the Programme activities so that they can travel to Armenia to get to know their neighbours and learn more about people and culture. Given the fact that the border is closed by Turkey and the very low awareness levels of citizens of Turkey about their neighbours, this demand indicates that civil society in Turkey is in favour of normalisation. ”

The implementing Consortium will hold another presentation of the Programme in Yerevan and in Istanbul in early summer 2015 to share with the Armenia- and Turkey-based stakeholders the upcoming achievements of and lessons learned from the Programme.

[Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process](#) is a Programme implemented by a Consortium of eight civil society organisations from both countries with the financial assistance of the **European Union** under the Instrument for Stability.

The overall objective of the Programme is to promote civil society efforts towards the normalisation of relations between Turkey and Armenia and towards an open border by enhancing **people-to-people contacts**, **expanding economic and business links**, promoting **cultural and educational activities** and facilitating **access to balanced information** in both societies.

The Consortium partners include [Civilitas Foundation](#) (CF), [Eurasia Partnership Foundation](#) (EPF), [Public Journalism Club](#) (PJC), [Regional Studies Center](#) (RSC) from Armenia; and [Anadolu Kültür](#), the [Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey](#) (TEPAV), [Helsinki Citizens' Assembly](#) (hCa), and [Hrant Dink Foundation](#) from Turkey.



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