

## OPEN SOCIETY EUROPEAN POLICY INSTITUTE

### Outcomes and activities update: September-December 2013

#### Highlights:

- The European Parliament's resolution on national Roma integration strategies includes verbatim wording provided by OSEPI.
- The European Parliament agreed an urgency resolution on Sudan in response to OSEPI and partners' advocacy.
- The EU's response to the crisis Ukraine was influenced by OSF analysis and recommendations.
- Moldova repealed its anti-propaganda law, safeguarding the rights of LGBTI groups and leading to a Commission recommendation for visa-free travel for Moldova – a double success that is the culmination of a five-year OSF campaign.

#### EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD

**Eastern Partnership countries:** OSEPI gathered, edited and presented input into EU annual progress reports from foundations, programs and grantees in Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Georgia. Viorel presented OSF's assessments to EU Commissioner Štefan Füle and country rapporteurs on reforms in 2013 and recommendations for new commitments for each country. Viorel co-authored with OSF foundation staff the European Integration Index, which compares reforms in six Eastern Partnership countries. Only Moldova and Georgia are now moving closer to meeting EU requirements. Viorel organised presentations of the findings of the report in Brussels, Paris, Berlin and Chisinau. He wrote articles for Open Democracy and OSF's website.

**Ukraine:** The government's rejection of the Association Agreement with the EU at the Vilnius Summit led to social and political turmoil. Mass street protests and police violence provoked a strong reaction from the EU, its member states and the Council of Europe. OSEPI promoted the IRF statement on the Euro-maiden protests, and Heather and Viorel participated in high-level brainstorming meetings with EU, UN, US and member-state officials about how they should react. Viorel wrote a memo on events in Ukraine, the EU's role and OSF reaction for George Soros and colleagues. In the run-up to the Vilnius summit, OSEPI worked with the national foundation to disseminate the results of its regular monitoring of Ukraine's implementation of commitments and. We advocated reform of the Prosecutor's office and amendments to the anti-discrimination law. OSEPI facilitated a visit of our Ukrainian colleagues and partners to Brussels to insist that EU conditions should still be applied.

**Armenia:** After the Armenian president was forced in Moscow to renounce political association with the EU, OSEPI organised advocacy meetings for the director and staff of the Armenian foundations in Brussels in November to advocate continued EU engagement but with a focus on citizens rather than government. We briefed EU officials prior to the forthcoming EU-Armenia human rights dialogue, specifically on domestic violence

law and impunity in cases of attacks against activists. OSEPI hosted a roundtable with EU actors to assess critically the reforms.

**Moldova:** Our five-year campaign led by Viorel finally achieved the repeal of the anti-propaganda law restricting freedom of opinion and assembly for LGBTI groups by using EU leverage. Viorel had coordinated colleagues and partners to maintain consistent EU pressure on the government to repeal the law, and he worked directly with the government on the strategy for a successful vote in parliament. After the repeal of the law, the Commission recommended visa-free travel for Moldovans to the EU, which achieved another key advocacy objective of OSF.

**Georgia:** Presidential elections in October and a peaceful transition of power ensured an upgrade in relations with the EU at the Vilnius Summit. OSEPI organised an advocacy visit of Georgian colleagues and experts to brief key EU officials and parliamentarians about reforms, which ensured OSF recommendations were included in the EU assessment. The group advocated the adoption of the anti-discrimination law as a pre-requisite for visa-free travel, and got this requirement into the Commission's November report.

## AFRICA

**DRC:** The EU's focus on the security crisis in the East increasingly comes at the expense of other reform issues such as elections, security sector reform and natural resource management. OSEPI convened a CSO working group and is co-editing a shadow EU strategy for the Great Lakes. We facilitated an advocacy visit of advocates and a workshop in collaboration with OSF colleagues and partners. Marta presented OSF concerns at the US embassy and participated in a fact-finding mission in November.

**Joint Africa EU-Strategy (JAES):** Despite commitments of a 'people-centred' strategy, the EU-Africa Forum in April 2014 will reduce the potential for CSO participation. OSEPI facilitated the work of the joint European-Africa CSO steering group and organised an intercontinental CSO forum to coordinate advocacy ahead of April 2014. Marta published a Voice piece for the OSF website articulating concerns about CSO marginalisation.

**Sudan/South Sudan:** Marta briefed EU officials on the two Sudans and participated in an advocacy effort coordinated by Crisis Action that resulted in an urgency resolution on Sudan by the European Parliament.

## ASIA

**Central Asia:** Jacqui and current intern Pierre-Olivier wrote a policy brief on the entrenchment of authoritarian leaders in Central Asia, and how the West's security-led approach to the region bolsters this process. They worked in close collaboration with colleagues and published the brief under the Civic Solidarity Platform.

**Burma/Myanmar:** The EU's rush to engage with the Burmese government has underplayed the marginalisation of the Rohingya, anti-Muslim violence and land grabbing. OSEPI raised Rohingya and land rights in separate roundtables and bilateral meetings with EU officials. We co-sponsored events in the European Parliament around a Rohingya photo exhibition. Neil participated in a fact-finding mission in December prior to the new EU-Myanmar human rights dialogue that has been announced for 2014.

**ASEAN:** The EU is negotiating with several countries in Southeast Asia on free trade, investment and preferential access treaties. These often result in land grabbing or include investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms that harm national public policy initiatives. OSEPI is mapping options for further advocacy with other groups working on public and private accountability.

## EUROPE

**Xenophobia in Europe:** OSEPI organised events with the Centre for European Studies, the think-tank of the centre-right EPP party group, and with ECFR to raise awareness among mainstream parties of the dangers of populist election campaigns for the open society in Europe and to encourage positive engagement with xenophobic attitudes in door-to-door campaigning.

**Migration in Europe:** OSEPI is focusing its advocacy on the most vulnerable categories of migrants: undocumented migrants and asylum-seekers. We organised a debate around the report on Greece and Italy of the UN special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, followed by a roundtable presentation led by OSF fellow Sarah Spencer on access to services for undocumented migrants in Europe. Costanza has been collecting information in Lampedusa and Sicily to inform proposals on reforms of asylum management systems which were presented to Italian ministers and the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs. We are planning a series of roundtables with specialised NGOs and senior officials in 2014.

**Fundamental rights in the EU:** Israel published a policy brief setting out recommendations for what the EU could do under existing powers to monitor the rule of law and fundamental rights within the EU. The Commission then requested an article for the monthly brief of the Bureau of European Policy Advisors (circulated among high-level Commission officials). An in-depth background paper on the issue commissioned by OSEPI from the Bingham Centre on the Rule of Law will be launched in February 2014.

**Free movement of EU citizens:** Four EU governments are pushing for restrictions on freedom of movement for EU citizens. OSEPI prepared two briefs in defence of freedom of movement and organised meetings for George Soros with the European Commissioner for Employment and country ambassadors, as well as a letter to the four prime ministers. OSEPI has produced an explainer document for the OSF website to help inform public debate and media coverage of the issue.

**European Parliament report on human rights:** OSEPI submitted amendments for the European Parliament's draft annual report on human rights within the EU, and Heather testified in a parliamentary hearing of the Civil Liberties Committee on it. OSEPI also collated research from OSF partners on the human rights situation in various EU member-states that will be incorporated in the report.

**Regulation of the media in Europe:** The Commission carried out several consultations on possible reforms of EU legislation covering the media in the EU. OSEPI provided input for the Media Program's contributions to these consultations and its recommendations on transparency of media ownership, and helped in the organisation of a conference in Brussels.

## ROMA

**National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS):** OSEPI successfully pushed for a European Parliament resolution on the implementation of the NRIS. Violeta, working with colleagues and grantees, ensured that OSF programs' wording on health, employment and housing was included. Recent Council recommendations on NRIS included issues raised by OSF, including the increase in anti-Roma sentiment and school segregation. OSEPI also prepared a background note on illegal Roma data collection in Sweden, highlighting possible breaches of EU law on data protection and the Racial Equality Directive. The note informed a plenary discussion in the European Parliament and the Swedish authorities who are investigating the issue.

**Roma integration:** OSEPI organised a high-level workshop to explore how new insights and approaches could help develop new narratives on Roma integration, immigration and asylum. Follow-up debates targeted at policy-makers will be held in Oxford, Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Rome and London in cooperation with the academics and policy-makers who participated in the initial workshop and wrote analysis for us.

**Roma in the Western Balkans:** OSEPI supported OSF and George Soros' drive for a specific Roma funding 'facility' to be included in the next funding package in the Western Balkans (known as IPA2), and for this to be used to fund the expansion of the Decade's monitoring reports to cover all EU enlargement countries. The use of similar benchmarks and indicators as in the NRIS by EU member states would allow Western Balkan governments to be prepared for full integration into the NRIS framework following accession.

## THEMATIC PRIORITIES

**Anti-discrimination/Equality Data Initiative:** OSEPI and the Justice Initiative are leading a campaign pushing European states to collect data on racial and disability-based inequalities. The initiative produced a background report covering the situation of "equality data" in seven European states. In late October, OSEPI organised a first equality data symposium in Brussels. OSEPI is now organising national consultations in four countries on what data would help fill the inequality gap in specific national contexts, and the best way to advocate or litigate for equality data.

**Security sector governance:** The unit in the European External Action Service responsible for improving EU crisis management missions asked for input from Marta for their lesson-learning process.

**Women:** In support of the restructuring of the Women's Program, Marta mapped gender advocacy by other organisations in Brussels and is currently working on a background paper on EU approaches to gender equality in its external relations. Marta has worked with the interim IWP leadership to provide input on future priorities for the program relating, particularly on gender in conflict and post-conflict situations .

**EU funding:** In November, the EU institutions agreed on a new EU budget for 2014-2020. For the first time the EU's multi-annual budget will decrease and this might affect funding to many areas of OSF work. OSEPI has developed a new guide for OSF colleagues which clarifies the basics of EU funding, outlines the role of OSEPI and sets out issues to consider when seeking project financing from the EU.

**Transparency:** The EU's Accounting and Transparency Directives, now awaiting transposition to national legislation, include strong extractives industry disclosure rules. The Anti-Money Laundering Directive, moving towards a plenary vote in parliament, includes possible public registries of beneficial ownership of companies (matching a commitment made by UK PM Cameron at the OGP summit). The Non-Financial Reporting Directive has the potential to ensure reporting of operations, taxes paid and subsidies received of large companies in all sectors.

**Criminal justice:** A new Directive on Access to a Lawyer was adopted in October. It specifies that suspects should have access to a lawyer prior to and during any questioning by police. It reflects OSF advocacy targeting MEPs during the final negotiations. In November, the Commission published a package of five new proposals including complementary Directives on Legal Aid and the Rights of Child Suspects.

## INTERNAL OSF

OSEPI has been involved in the development of OSF work on **elections** including through representation in OSF elections review panel, the OSF elections working group and AfRO elections cluster.

Heather has participated on the review committee for the **post-2015 development goals** shared framework.

Pierre-Olivier researched the European perspective for the OSF mapping exercise for the shared framework on **drones/targeted killings**.

## OSEPI staff moves

The period from September to December saw the departure of **Jacqui Hale** and **Viorel Ursu** from the OSEPI team. Viorel will start as advocacy and research manager with the Eurasia program in January, based in London. Jacqui now heads EU advocacy for Save the Children. Jacqui's replacement, **Martin Konečný**, will cover Central Asia, South Asia and MENA, with a focus on human rights in the EU's external policies. Martin was the director of Crisis Action's Brussels office and previously worked for Friends of the Earth, Bank Watch and the Forum 2000 Foundation Prague. Viorel's replacement, **Iskra Kirova**, will cover the European Neighbourhood and Russia, with a thematic focus on EU funding. Iskra is a research and advocacy analyst at the International Crisis Group. She previously worked at the USC's Center on Public Diplomacy, for the European Commission and at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. They will start with OSEPI in January and February respectively. In September, **Violeta Naydenova** returned to OSF after completing her Master's, now as policy officer for Roma and social inclusion at OSEPI.