



## Outcomes and activities update: February-March 2014

### Highlights:

- ▶ The EU moved to early signature of association agreements with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova - and stepped up assistance to all three, including enhanced support to Ukrainian civil society.
- ▶ The Commission committed in principle to support a joint campaign with OSF to promote the benefits of an Association Agreement with Moldova.
- ▶ The European Parliament approved the establishment of public registries for the beneficial ownership of companies, as advocated by OSF and grantees. Negotiations with member states to follow.
- ▶ The European Parliament called for an EU fundamental rights strategy as advocated by OSEPI. The Commission's plans fall short of what we put forward, but included some elements we introduced to officials.
- ▶ DG Enlargement agreed to fund the Roma Decade Secretariat's monitoring reports for the Balkans and Turkey.
- ▶ The Cotton Campaign, a long-term OSF grantee with OSEPI advocacy support, helped to shift the Uzbek government's approach to forced labour.

## 1. WORK IN SUPPORT OF OSF ENTITIES, GRANTEES AND PARTNERS

### *I. Improve governance and development through EU external policies and funding*

**Support to OSISA's Situation Room in Malawi:** Marta supported OSISA's initiative in Malawi ahead of the May elections. She contributes on gender and political participation issues and is preparing an EU advocacy plan. She participated in a Joint OSISA/OSEPI/AfRO fact-finding mission to Malawi in March. Marta also assisted the OSF Sudan group to develop its advocacy on an AU Commission of Inquiry, while informing OSIEA on the EU approach to the **South Sudan crisis**.

**An end to forced labour in Uzbekistan:** Martin organised EU advocacy meetings with the Cotton Campaign coordinator (OSF grantee). EU interlocutors revealed that pressure by the EU over the past two years and in response to the Cotton Campaign, contributed to the Uzbek government's commitment to tackle the issue. Martin secured the intervention by Uzbek exiled activist and OSF grantee Umida Niazova at a closed committee meeting in the European Parliament and ensured that the Cotton Campaign's message informed the Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet's visit to Tashkent.

### *II. Extend the highest European standards in enlargement and Eastern neighbourhood*

**Ukraine:** Iskra led our work on the crisis in Ukraine in close collaboration with the Eurasia Program and the Renaissance Foundation. OSEPI engaged various EU actors on their options to support the government's reform agenda and to keep Ukraine and the region oriented towards the EU. We provided analysis and information to colleagues on EU and NATO sanctions options, and participated in consultations with Brussels-based CSOs, think-tanks and Ukrainian NGOs. Iskra is moving ahead with plans to convene Ukrainian, regional and EU NGOs and think-tanks to re-think the EU's policy for its Eastern neighbourhood.

OSEPI promoted speeding up the delivery of assistance to Ukrainian civil society and strengthening its participation in key reform areas such as anti-corruption, decentralisation, media and national reconciliation. Taking the crisis in Ukraine as a catalyst, we also pushed for accelerated integration of other EU partners in the region under threat from Russian pressure. This has contributed to a reinforced EU offer of assistance and commitment to an early signature of EU association deals with **Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova**.

**Moldova:** Iskra secured the support of the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy for joint initiatives around OSF plans to launch a communications campaign to promote the benefits of an Association Agreement with the EU. OSEPI will work with the Moldova foundation and Eurasia Program to develop the agenda.

**Balkans and Turkey:** The European Commission agreed in principle to **support the Decade Secretariat's monitoring reports for enlargement countries under its Roma 'facility'**, in response to Violeta's efforts and those of the Roma Initiatives Office.

### **III. Protect, support and ensure participation of civil society and human rights defenders**

**Civil society inclusion in the EU-AU Summit:** Marta convened the CSO steering group ahead of the 2-3 April summit to prepare joint advocacy efforts. She also organised an exchange of views with the Pan-African Unit of the EU's External Action Service and officials from across participating institutions. She targeted Portugal's key role in the EU-Africa strategy through a presentation at a conference of the Portuguese NGO platform in Lisbon. Marta presented OSEPI's position in interviews and publications, building on an earlier Voice [article](#). Follow-up will include support to US colleagues ahead of the US-Africa summit.

**A citizen-informed EU-Myanmar partnership:** In collaboration with the Burma Project and SE Asia Initiative, Neil continued to raise shortcomings of the EU-Myanmar partnership and the need for stronger EU messaging on rights and the peace process. The postponed Civil Society Dialogue Network meeting (to bring civil society voices into the peace process) and the EU-Myanmar human rights dialogue are now scheduled for May.

### **IV. Protect fundamental rights, achieve inclusion and equality in the EU**

**Reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) to ensure increased protection for asylum seekers:** OSEPI organised a lunch with President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and George Soros to discuss asylum, the need for reform of the EU's system, and Italy becoming an unsafe country for asylum-seekers. Costanza is organising a meeting on asylum to target the incoming Italian EU presidency, and working with IMI on an asylum reform project.

Costanza's efforts to **Guarantee Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Equality in Italy** included the publication of two op-eds on what Italy needs to do to improve its human rights record before it takes up the EU presidency. She is organising three closed-door meetings between grantees and institutions on specific rights problems in Italy (migration, asylum, Roma) in Rome between April and June.

Violeta pressed the **European Commission to develop eligibility criteria that would allow the Decade Secretariat to apply for funding**. She submitted a memo on the objectives, outcomes and eligibility criteria for the pilot project.

## **2. WORK TOWARDS OWN CONCEPTS/INITIATIVES**

### **I. Reinforce human rights and democracy in EU foreign policies and funding**

Marta continued her efforts to ensure the **EU accepts civil society analysis and participation in security mission planning and evaluation processes both at HQ and in the field**. She contributed to a Wilton Park conference on

the comprehensive approach to fragile states. In order to help support a future OSF advocacy profile on **gender issues**, Marta wrote an article on the EU's response to violence against women in conflict for the Commission's advisory group to President Barroso, at their invitation.

## ***II. Guarantee fundamental rights, rule of law and equality within the EU***

***EU mechanism and strategy to monitor and enforce implementation of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights inside the EU:*** Israel's recommendations for an EU monitoring mechanism were incorporated in a European Parliament report adopted in March. In parallel, the Commission's Justice Directorate is warming to the idea of an ***EU fundamental rights strategy*** along OSEPI lines: checking transposition of EU legislation against impact on fundamental rights, and encouragement to call for a platform of fundamental rights NGOs at EU level. The Fundamental Rights Agency's annual report will include a focus chapter on the need for an EU fundamental rights strategy, following Israel's submission of a policy paper and FRA participation in an OSEPI-organised roundtable, and conversations with the FRA director. Israel published a critical [Voice](#) in response to the Commission's Communication on its new framework to protect the rule of law.

Violeta and Israel also published an [article](#) on the right to free movement of EU citizens and how the facts and figures of both Roma movement and Roma inclusion are wilfully ignored in the populist discourse. Violeta promoted the inclusion of Roma civil society organisations at the EU Roma Summit, resulting in participation by more than 40 organisations and individuals.

***The Equality Data Initiative:*** Costanza organised national consultations on equality data in four member-states in partnership with grantees European Network Against Racism and the Migration Policy Group. Equality Data consultations were held in Berlin and Budapest.

## ***III. Develop a global standard on transparent governance and accountability for public and private sectors***

The UK proved its commitment to ***early transposition into national legislation of the extractives disclosure rules*** by opening its consultation; however other countries, namely Germany and France, are more hesitant on a fast-track approach. The European Parliament agreed to a strong position for the creation of ***public registries for beneficial ownership of companies and other legal entities*** – though progress towards legalisation will now have to wait for the new term of parliament. The ***Open Government Partnership*** remains a potential driver for improved EU practice of its own transparency commitments. Neil has submitted a proposal for the regional OGP meeting in May to explore this issue and is leading a reflection with CSO partners. Neil and Israel [responded](#) to the first EU anti-corruption report with an article in support of the principle of monitoring but reservations about the watering down of the report because of member-state pressure.

## ***IV. Counter xenophobia in the European election campaigns and in the EU institutions over their 2014-19 term***

***Minimal levels of xenophobia and racist language in the 2014 elections campaign:*** OSEPI continued to support anti-populism and communications seminars (in Brussels, Sofia and Budapest). We worked closely with OSIFE to connect their grantees' work on campaign monitoring and populist rebuttals to OSEPI's advocacy work in Brussels. We are exploring options to monitor the online EU election debate (Twitter analysis), and analyse potential discrepancies between EU elite rhetoric and opinions of the larger public.

***A constructive debating culture in the European Parliament:*** The pilot "Blue Card" campaign has moved forward after two tests during a February plenary on homophobia and March plenary on the Asylum and Migration Fund. The first failed, as the chair of the debate decided not to take Blue Cards. The second was a modest success, as

MEPs rose to challenge populist speech, and used arguments directly from our briefing. The last trial will be during the April plenary.

### 3. SHARED FRAMEWORKS

**Drones:** Martin is looking into possibilities for Brussels (EU and NATO) work on drones. He held internal consultations on the issue with OSF colleagues in New York.

**Post-2015:** Neil and Heather continue to follow and participate in advocacy efforts around the post-2015 shared framework. Neil attended the charette in New York and is working with the post-2015 team and JI advocacy colleagues on follow up.

### 4. ADDITIONAL COLLABORATIONS

Israel convened the OSF **Council of Europe** working group in London, which gathered JI, PIJ, IP and OSIFE colleagues. The members updated each other on their activities with the Council of Europe and established points for further internal cooperation: JI support for PIJ and IP grantees to engage in litigation; IP grantees working on digital rights to liaise with OSIFE grantees working on civil liberties to strengthen the former's advocacy; OSEPI to follow up with the Council of Europe's Brussels liaison office; JI, OSEPI and OSIFE to explore how and whether to involve the Council of Europe in OSF's work to protect the human rights framework of the UK. Iskra began consultations with leaders of local civil society on the options for advocacy in Brussels and Strasbourg around Azerbaijan's forthcoming Council of Europe chairmanship from the end of April.

OSEPI and Carnegie Europe launched our new **Global Europe 2030** initiative aimed at addressing the need for better strategic insight on long-term European foreign and security policy-making to include human rights and other values. The initiative brings together 30 of the best minds amongst officials and advisors from the EU institutions and member-state capitals to foster strategic thinking about Europe's role in the world—and the values and interests underpinning its actions.

OSEPI engaged with groups and networks in Brussels increasingly concerned about **civil society space** and the extent to which transparency initiatives may be abused to generate restrictive legislation for CSOs. Neil engaged with the network of European Foundations, with NGOs in Brussels and co-organised a joint brainstorming with the Fiscal Governance Program and the Human Security Collective.

Marta continues to contribute to the work of OSF **elections working group**. Together with AfRO, she supports the group with insights from field work in preparation of the 2015 focus on Nigeria.

### 5. INTERNAL ORGANISATIONAL PLANS

Our current lease has expired and we are negotiating to take new office space nearby. Increased space for reduced costs will allow OSEPI to host more partner, grantee, OSF and advocacy meetings. The move to the new space will happen in July/August.

Pierre-Olivier Bigo, former intern, has now taken up the vacant position of administrative assistant.