The Open Society European Policy Institute Activities and Outcomes Report¹

September-November 2015

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Highlights

- The reporting period was overshadowed by the continuing **refugee crisis** and latterly, the attacks in Paris and the **counter-terror** response at national and EU level.
- The use of **drones** was included in the European parliamentary agenda and a joint hearing on drones use in counter-terrorism in the Human Rights and Security and Defence sub-committees due for the first half of 2016. OSEPI/OSJI/OSF had worked for its inclusion.
- The European Parliament adopted a second landmark resolution on **Azerbaijan** in September, conditioning its consent to a future EU agreement with Azerbaijan on a drastic improvement in human rights and the release of political prisoners. The resolution also called for targeted sanctions and asset freezes, including investigations into corruption of the ruling family.
- The EU has suspended budgetary aid to Burundi and is activating article 96 of the EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement for failure to respect human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. OSEPI coordinated the CSO response.
- The European Commission is preparing a progress report with regard to the infringement case against the Czech Republic over **Roma** segregation in education.
- George Soros visited Brussels between 16-20 November. Meetings included Commissioners Hahn, Avramopoulos, Moscovici, Dombrovskis, V-P Georgieva, Creţu, members of the parliament, Norwegian Ambassador Schulerud and a RIO/OSEPI event on Roma funding. Discussion topics included migration/asylum, Ukraine, Roma and the Paris attacks. OSEPI also contributed to George Soros' meetings with EU leaders around the UN General Assembly in September.

¹ This is the first quarterly 'activities and outcomes report' as described in OSEPI's 2015-16 strategy update. Two more reports will follow the same format: for December 2015 to February 2016, and March to May 2016. The fourth and final report will cover June to August 2016, but will also review the whole period of Heather Grabbe's sabbatical year. The final report will be completed by the end of August 2016.

1. Human Rights and Democratic Practice

i. CONCEPT: EU Governance and Institutional Reform

Neil made the case for the EU's closer engagement with the Open Government Partnership as a way towards more inclusive, participatory and effective EU governance in an op-ed with EUobserver <u>Involving people in EU governance</u>, and a presentation at the European Conference on Public Communication. Foundation for an Open Society–Romania took up this effort by hosting a session ('we will OGP EU!') at the OGP summit in Mexico in October.

ii. CONCEPT: Human Rights and Democracy in EU Foreign Policies and Funding

Srdjan organised an advocacy visit of leading think tanks from **Macedonia** (European Policy Institute and the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities Skopje) to highlight the political crisis and closing space for civil society. The visit included direct policy advocacy and a public debate hosted by the EPC.

Srdjan also delivered several public presentations and organised closed events with member state officials and MEPs to address the root causes of **EU enlargement** fatigue. He joined the presentations of the EPC study on the <u>EU Member States Enlargement Policies</u> in Brussels, Rome, Berlin, Vienna, Sarajevo, Skopje and Belgrade, the result of a project jointly funded by OSEPI and OSIFE/TTF.

OSEPI pressed the EU to restrict its relations with **Azerbaijan** and apply targeted sanctions in response to the crackdown on rights defenders, civil society, media and the opposition. Iskra conducted advocacy with political groups and individual Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) for the adoption of a parliamentary resolution. She coordinated messages with CSO partners and Azerbaijani human rights defenders and wrote portions of the resolution.

Bram and Marta raised EU attention to **elections in Tanzania**. They gave input on a pre-electoral assessment study commissioned by OSIEA-Tanzania and advised OSIEA-Tanzania on their Election Situation Room. They took forward the theme of elections with integrity through the publication of a Voice *With Upcoming Election, Tanzania Shows the Limits of 'Good Enough Governance'*, and liaised with the election observation mission in Tanzania and OSIEA in-country.

Bram and Marta provided analysis of EU reactions to the electoral crisis in Burundi and bridged Brussels-based CSOs working on the **Great Lakes** with Congolese and Burundian activists. They developed a project with OSEPI's advocacy research program to explore EU initiatives in **DRC** ahead of 2016 elections.

iii. SHARED FRAMEWORK: Lethal Drones and Targeted Killings

Srdjan organised a joint OSF/OSEPI/OSJI advocacy visit to Brussels on 12-15 October that resulted in the use of drones being included in the EU parliamentary agenda and a parliamentary hearing on "The Use of Drones in Counter-Terrorism" now scheduled for the first half of 2016.

Work continued to secure support from an EU member state to table armed drones and targeted killing in the EU Council Working Groups and to support UNIDIR to produce a study in cooperation with our partners in the Netherlands. Ahead of The Netherlands' rotating presidency of the EU from January 2016, Srdjan organised a high-level OSJI meeting with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He joined the informal gathering of CSOs – European Forum on Armed Drones – and will host their next meeting in 2016.

2. Justice Reform and the Rule of Law

CONCEPT: Fundamental Rights, Rule of Law and Equality within the EU

OSEPI took up the coordination of the internal EU work of the Human Rights and Development (HRDN) network of NGOs in Brussels. Natacha led the drafting of their joint statement ahead of the vote of the

European Parliaments's report on **fundamental rights** in September. The statement provided crucial support to the adoption of the text as proposed by the rapporteur. Natacha contributed to OSF's analysis of developments in Hungary by bringing in an EU perspective and insights from partner CSOs in Brussels; and kept respect for the rule of law in Hungary on the agenda through informal channels.

Natacha, with OSJI, followed the adoption of the February parliamentary resolution on the US Senate Torture Report. She prepared MEPs for their visit to Bucharest and pushed for a press release after they were denied access to the CIA black site. OSEPI also led in advising the LIBE committee for a hearing on accountability organised in mid-October.

Natacha, with OSJI, followed-up the implementation of the February parliamentary resolution on the US Senate Torture Report. She prepared MEPs for their visit to Bucharest and pushed for a press release after they were denied access to the CIA black site. OSEPI also took the lead in advising the LIBE committee on its hearing on accountability. Natacha promoted the event and secured the intervention of OSJI (Amrit Singh) at the hearing.

3. Migration

Costanza developed EU advocacy objectives related to the **refugee crisis** in Europe with OSF colleagues. She provided input to the 48h reports, engaged with OSIFE's staff and grantees, and provided input in high-level consultations, including those organised with IMI. In **Italy**, OSEPI and OSIFE supported the creation of an NGO group working on migration and asylum reform in the context of European Protection Now!, and reached out to policy-makers to form a parallel policy track. Consultations with policy-makers confirmed the possibility of progressive reforms, even after the backlash caused by the Paris attacks.

Srdjan co-wrote an op-ed in Esharp!, <u>Western Balkans Beyond the Migration Route</u> (with Goran Buldioski), and spoke at a policy event on the Balkan perspective on the refugee crisis. In collaboration with Communications, Srdjan gave interviews to Irish National Televison and German radio WDR on the root causes of the refugee crisis and the effects on the transit countries (Turkey and the Western Balkans).

Bram participated in a two-day expert meeting on migration and asylum seeking in South Africa organised by OSF-SA, sharing best practices and exchanging views vis-à-vis South African and EU migration/refugee policies. Marta and Bram worked with the research team to commission research on African perspectives of the migration crisis to inform advocacy discussions and to contribute to IMI and AfRO's migration work.

4. Equality and Anti-Discrimination

i. CONCEPT: Advance Equality, Non-Discrimination and Social Inclusion of Marginalized Groups

OSEPI coordinated with OSIFE and JI to influence the first EU colloquium on **fundamental rights** (1-2 October), providing input for the content of the meeting, advising the European Commission on participants and panelists (including many grantees), and submitting recommendations on expected conclusions. Equality Data, a long-term OSEPI and JI objective initially led by Costanza, was taken forward in the conclusions.

Violeta organised three trainings on the EU's budget cycle in preparation for the RIO/OSEPI conference "How to make EU Funds Simpler, More Efficient and Accountable?" George Soros spoke on the high-level panel alongside Commissioner Crețu and MEPs. RIO and OSEPI will pursue management of EU funds for Roma to the Roma Education Fund through the 'Global Grants Scheme'.

ii. CONCEPT: New routes to policy change

Working with ENAR, OSEPI's research team drafted an advocacy paper on changing the rules of procedure in the European Parliament in order to more clearly prohibit and sanction **hate speech**. We are now targetting MEPs for re-drafting the rules of procedure. OSEPI also organised a seminar to train MEPs on how to counter **xenophobic populists** in the parliament; participants requested a follow-up training.

iii. CONCEPT: Anti-Gypsyism

Violeta placed **Roma evictions** on the EU agenda. She organised a public hearing in parliament, bringing five political groups together on Roma issues for the first time. The EP will send written questions to the Commission on evictions in Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy and France. The Commission started two pre-infringement investigations against Italy and Hungary and might consider further proceedings against Bulgaria and France.

The **Czech Republic** submitted its estimates of the number of Roma children attending special schools to the Commission. OSEPI raised concerns on the data collection methods. Violeta is organising input to the Commission of evidence for its progress report on the infringement case.

5. Additional Collaborations

Inside track groups: OSEPI and the Centre for European Reform organised the third meeting of the group on justice and home affairs in the EU, the *Amato Group*. The October meeting focused on smart borders and data security, bringing together 30 senior policy policy-makers and included presentations from EUROPOL, the Border Unit of the Commission's Directorate General for Home Affairs, former Italian Prime Minister Giuliano Amato, and the former UN rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights.

OSEPI, IRF and Carnegie Europe organised the *Global Europe 2030* inside track group bi-annual retreat in Kyiv. Participants in the programme (high-potential EU diplomats from Brussels and member states) met a wide range of Ukrainian interlocutors, with the purpose of giving them a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the issues at stake in Ukraine. IRF support was invaluable.

OSEPI worked with OSIFE to co-organise the **Vienna policy conference** bringing together activists and policy-makers from across Europe to discuss the issue of rebuilding trust within Europe.

OSEPI stepped down from a leadership role in the civil society steering group of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). After assessing progress in the partnership since the JAES Summit in April 2014, Marta and Bram concluded it has become a stalled, state-centric process, and will direct their efforts elsewhere.

Marta continues her work in support of the President's office focused on enhancing OSF's role in the governance of security institutions.

6. Internal Organisational Plans

OSEPI held a **staff retreat** in Lisbon to launch the year from Spetember. The strategy unit (Nadia and Julia) joined to give sessions on the strategy process.

OSEPI/OSIFE exchange: OSEPI's Administration and Operations team joined OSIFE in Barcelona to learn more about OSIFE's operations. The team joined training organised by OSIFE. Pearly and Ellen have volunteered to be part of the review team for the replacement of **KARL**. Marta participated in the inaugural **Contested Spaces** trip to India in October.

Personnel: **Srdjan Cvijic** and **Bram Dijkstra** joined the EU external policy team. **Pamela Valenti** joined OSEPI as a new foreign policy intern and **Anca Cioriciu** joined the internal EU policy team. **Annalisa Buscaini** replaced **Nadja Groot** in the research team. Five staff members attended the excellent **new hire training** in New York.