Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Armenia End-of-Term Report 2016-2018

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Table of Contents

Overview: Armenia

Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) End-of-Term Report 2016-2018

Armenia's third action plan focused on improving transparency of public spending and setting online tools facilitating access to government-held information. However, many of the commitments had minor potential impact and were not fully implemented on time due to limited financial resources, technical problems, and political changes. Moving forward, the government could develop more ambitious commitments and allocate necessary resources to ensure complete implementation of the next action plan.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a voluntary international initiative that aims to secure commitments from governments to their citizenry to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) carries out a review of the activities of each OGP-participating country. This report summarizes the results of the period August 2016 to June 2018 and includes some relevant developments up to September 2018.

The Staff of the Government coordinates the OGP process in Armenia, which was transformed into the Staff of the Prime Minister after constitutional changes that took effect in April 2018.[1] The OGP coordinator for the third action plan was the Deputy Chief of Staff Vahe Jilavyan. However, in June 2018, this role was transferred to the Deputy Prime Minister Ararat Mirzoyan. A multi-sector working group comprising 26 members, including 15 government, ten civil society, and one private sector representative, was established in December 2016 by the Prime Minister's Decree[2] to oversee the implementation of the third action plan.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and public were involved in the action plan development, while the participation in its implementation period was provided through OGP Working Group meetings and collaboration with CSOs in the framework of specific commitments. Most of the commitments were carried out by ministries, while one commitment was led by the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials.

Table 1: At a Glance	Mid-term	End of term
Number of Commitments	8	
Level of Completion		
Completed	0	1
Substantial	2	3
Limited	5	3
Not Started	1	1
Number of Commitments with…		
Clear Relevance to OGP Values	6	6
Transformative Potential Impact	0	0
Substantial or Complete Implementation	2	4
All Three (✪)	0	0
Did It Open government?		
Major	1	
Outstanding	0	
Moving Forward		
Number of Commitments Carried Over to Next Action Plan	N/A	

The third action plan included several open data initiatives designed to improve transparency of government spending and service provision. However, the IRM progress report found the potential impact of the most commitments to be minor due to their limited scope as well as low specificity of commitment language. On the other hand, only half of the commitments from the action plan have reached either substantial or complete implementation, which was

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explained by various reasons from limited financial resources and technical difficulties up to political changes. Moving forward, the government could develop more ambitious commitments and allocate necessary time, budget, and human resources to ensure complete implementation of the next action plan.

At the time of writing this report, Armenia has not published its end of term self-assessment report, nor its new action plan for its fourth cycle.

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[1] RA Law 253-N "On the Structure and Functions of the Government", 23 March 2018, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=120915
[2] Decision of RA Prime Minister N 12-06A on appointing Coordinator and Creation of Working Group, 16 December 2016, https://www.e-gov.am/decrees/item/16513/

Consultation with Civil Society during Implementation

Countries participating in OGP follow a process for consultation during development and implementation of their action plan.

The consultation process during implementation of Armenia's third action plan was mostly limited to the meetings of the OGP Working Group. As a rule, the Government Point of Contact sends an invitation to the meeting to Working Group members, as well as other stakeholders such as representatives of international organizations and IRM researcher. The meetings are open to public in case there is a request from anyone to attend.[1] However, since the meetings are held at the government's premises, and information about the meeting is not publicly available in advance, the meeting is attended by the invited persons only.

The Working Group held three meetings during the implementation period: 30 October 2017, 19 February 2018, and 29 June 2018.[2] However, only the February meeting covered the implementation process of the third action plan. The minutes of the Working Group meetings are posted on the www.ogp.am website under the 'news' section for public access, with the possibility of leaving comments. In addition, the Ministry of Finance organized a meeting with interested CSOs and companies in December 2017 in the framework of the "Interactive Budget" commitment to present and obtain feedback on the draft budget platform.[3]

Table 2: Consultation during Implementation

Regular Multistakeholder Forum	Midterm	End of Term
1. Did a forum exist?	Yes	Yes
2. Did it meet regularly?	No	No

Table 3: Level of Public Influence during Implementation

The IRM has adapted the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) "Spectrum of Participation" to apply to OGP.[4] This spectrum shows the potential level of public influence on the contents of the action plan. In the spirit of OGP, most countries should aspire for "collaborative."

Level of Public Influence during Implementation of Action Plan		Midterm	End of Term
Empower	The government handed decision-making power to members of the public.		
Collaborate	There was iterative dialogue AND the public helped set the agenda.		
Involve	The government gave feedback on how public inputs were considered.		
Consult	The public could give inputs.	✓	✓
Inform	The government provided the public with information on the action plan.		
No Consultation	No consultation		

[1] Vahe Jilavyan, Lilia Afrikyan (Staff of the Government), interview by IRM researcher, 17 October 2017
[2] A Meeting of OGP Working Group Took Place, OGP Armenia, 24.11.2017, http://ogp.am/hy/news/item/2017/11/24/WG_2017/; A Meeting of OGP Working Group Took Place, OGP Armenia, 28.02.2018, http://ogp.am/hy/news/item/2018/02/28/WG_2018/; The First Meeting of OGP Working Group of the New Government, OGP Armenia, 30.06.2018, http://ogp.am/hy/news/item/2018/06/30/OGP_WGnew/
[3] Zhirayr Titizyan (Ministry of Finance), interview by IRM researcher, 17 September 2018
[4] http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/foundations_course/IAP2_P2_Spectrum_FINAL.pdf

About the Assessment

The indicators and method used in the IRM research can be found in the IRM Procedures Manual.[1] One measure, the "starred commitment" (✪), deserves further explanation due to its particular interest to readers and usefulness for encouraging a race to the top among OGP-participating countries. Starred commitments are considered exemplary OGP commitments. To receive a star, a commitment must meet several criteria:

- Starred commitments will have "medium" or "high" specificity. A commitment must lay out clearly defined activities and steps to make a judgment about its potential impact.
- The commitment's language should make clear its relevance to opening government. Specifically, it must relate to at least one of the OGP values of Access to Information, Civic Participation, or Public Accountability.
- The commitment would have a "transformative" potential impact if completely implemented.[2]
- The government must make significant progress on this commitment during the action plan implementation period, receiving an assessment of "substantial" or "complete" implementation.

Starred commitments can lose their starred status if their completion falls short of substantial or full completion at the end of the action plan implementation period.

Armenia's action plan did not contain any starred commitments.

Finally, the tables in this section present an excerpt of the wealth of data the IRM collects during its reporting process. For the full dataset for Armenia, see the OGP Explorer at www.opengovpartnership.org/explorer.

About "Did It Open Government?"

To capture changes in government practice the IRM introduced a new variable "Did It Open Government?" in end-of-term reports. This variable attempts to move beyond measuring outputs and deliverables to looking at how the government practice has changed as a result of the commitment's implementation.

As written, some OGP commitments are vague and/or not clearly relevant to OGP values but achieve significant policy reforms. In other cases, commitments as written appear relevant and ambitious, but fail to open government as implemented. The "Did It Open Government" variable attempts to captures these subtleties.

The "Did It Open Government?" variable assesses changes in government practice using the following spectrum:

- Worsened: Government openness worsens as a result of the commitment.
- Did not change: No changes in government practice.
- Marginal: Some change, but minor in terms of its effect on level of openness.
- Major: A step forward for government openness in the relevant policy area, but remains limited in scope or scale.
- Outstanding: A reform that has transformed "business as usual" in the relevant policy area by opening government.

To assess this variable, researchers establish the status quo at the outset of the action plan. They then assess outcomes *as implemented* for changes in government openness.

Readers should keep in mind limitations. IRM end-of-term reports are prepared only a few months after the implementation cycle is completed. The variable focuses on outcomes that can be observed in government openness practices at the end of the two-year implementation period. The report and the variable do not intend to assess impact because of the complex methodological implications and the time frame of the report.

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[1] IRM Procedures Manual, http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/about-irm.
[2] The International Experts Panel changed this criterion in 2015. For more information, visit http://www.opengovpartnership.org/node/5919.

Commitment Implementation

General Overview of Commitments

As part of OGP, countries are required to make commitments in a two-year action plan. The tables below summarize the completion level at the end of term and progress on the "Did It Open Government?" metric. For commitments that were complete at the midterm, the report will provide a summary of the progress report findings but focus on analysis of the 'Did It Open Government?' variable. For further details on these commitments, please see the IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018.

Armenia's third action plan contains eight commitments, grouped into three topics: ensuring transparency and accountability, promoting access to information, and strengthening public integrity. The commitments cover areas such as state budget, local government, social services, licensing and accountability of public officials. Commitments in the report are presented in the same sequence and grouping as in the original action plan.

Table 4: Assessment of Progress by Commitment

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
1. Transparency of public officials' trips — Midterm															✓						
1. Transparency of public officials' trips — End of Term			✓		✓					✓					✓				✓		
2. Transparency of state grants — Midterm														✓							
2. Transparency of state grants — End of Term			✓		✓					✓				✓					✓		
3. Interactive budget: Open Data principle — Midterm														✓							
3. Interactive budget: Open Data principle — End of Term			✓		✓			✓		✓						✓				✓	
4. Officials' declarations in open data — Midterm														✓							
4. Officials' declarations in open data — End of Term			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓					✓		
5. Portal for community decisions — Midterm														✓							
5. Portal for community decisions — End of Term			✓		✓			✓		✓				✓				✓			
6. Licensing		✓			Unclear					✓				✓					✓		

register													✔									
7. Accessibility of integrated social services and awareness raising		✔		✔	✔		✔			✔			✔ ✔					✔				
8. One-stop-shop military registration offices	✔			Unclear				✔			✔ ✔						✔					

1. Transparency of public officials' trips

Commitment Text:

Title: Responsible official trips: Ensuring transparency and accountability of official trips of representatives of republican executive bodies and territorial administration bodies

A unified platform with a search engine will be created based on the "open data" principle for posting decisions on official business trips of officials and reports thereon. The main objective is to raise the level of efficiency and accountability of funding allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia for the purpose of sending on official business trips heads, deputy heads and other officials of state executive bodies or territorial administration bodies on official trips; improve the transparency of activities of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

The activities under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Drafting of amendments and supplements to legal acts defining the procedure for permissions for international official trips of officials, and discussion thereon with interested representatives of civil society (Sep 16 - Jan 17)*

2. *Coordination of draft legal acts with interested government agencies and adoption thereof (Jan 17 - Apr 17).*

3. *Creating a unified information platform accessible to users for posting decisions and reports on official business trips of heads, deputies or other officials of state executive bodies or territorial administration bodies (May 17 - Oct 17).*

Responsible institution: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting institutions: Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

Start date: September 2016   **End date:** June 2017

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion		Midterm / End of Term		Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
1. Transparency of public officials' trips			✓		✓					✓					✓ / ✓				✓		

Commitment Aim

The commitment aimed to publish reports on officials' business trips online. In 2013, the government of Armenia adopted legal acts defining procedures for business travel permission and for submitting the related narrative reports.[1] At the time the commitment was adopted, individual decisions on official trips of heads of state, executive bodies or territorial administration bodies, their deputies, or other officials were posted on Armenia's electronic government website—www.e-gov.am, while the reports on the results of trips were not published. This provided grounds for speculation on the goals and efficiency of the trips by the media and the public. This commitment entailed the creation of a platform where official trip reports will be publicly available, providing the public with access to information on the aims and outcomes of such trips, thus justifying the relevant budget spending.

Status
Midterm: Substantial

An amendment to the Prime Minister's Decision No 1087-N of 2013[2] was adopted, requiring the publication of official trip reports within one day of presenting the reports. The amendment entered into force on 1 May 2017. There was no electronic or in-person consultation with civil society on this Decision. From May 2017, the reports on international official trips are available on the website www.e-gov.am in the section "Reports on Official Trips."[3] However, the reports are only available in PDF format (with a list of 20 reports on each page) without search possibilities other than those provided by the browser. The browser search uses the official's name, date, or destination country to find the link to a report on its given page. Many reports are published in the scanned format with the signature of the officials. For more information, see the IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018.[4]

End of term: Substantial

No additional actions took place in the framework of the commitment within the second year of the action plan, as the platform remained the same. The reports continue to be published at the corresponding section of the e-gov.am website. A new e-government platform was prepared in 2018 by Helix Consulting LLC to replace the current e-gov.am web platform, which, among other features, includes search and filtering options of trip reports by government agency, date, and destination of the trip.[5] The launch dates for the new platform are not yet available.

Did It Open Government?
Access to Information: Marginal

Armenian law has required public officials to present their report on trips to the staff of the government since 2013, but the reports were not published online prior to this commitment. The reports contain narrative information on the trip, such as the purpose of the trip, topics discussed, and commitments made. However, the reports do not provide the budget of the trips, which, according to interviewed stakeholders, could improve the transparency of officials' travel expenses and allow greater public oversight on government spending on travel.[6] The general budget amount and source of funding is provided in the orders of the prime minister, which were available before the adoption of the commitment.

As highlighted in the IRM Progress Report, stakeholders note that the trip reports published on www.e-gov.am lack a systematic summary of outcomes in the context of priorities and programs of the given executive agency. Including this would allow the public to make general conclusions on the performance of the given program or state body.[7] If the platform included search possibilities to filter the reports by agency, this analysis might be feasible to perform. In addition, the fact that the trip reports of officials are published online and can be reviewed by the public could make the officials more responsible and accurate in preparation of the reports.

According to the data provided to the IRM researcher by Helix Consulting LLC on the officials' trips report, page visits shows that 4,474 page views were registered between January and October 2018, showing an increase in the platform usage compared to 2,179 page views in May-October 2017.[8] Overall, this commitment has contributed to opening access to information, as it disclosed new information to the public, but has not significantly affected the policy. In the case that the new platform with a search engine is available, and the information provided in the reports includes budget-spending details, it might better serve for accessing information on trip reports due to ease of access and enhanced information.

Carried Forward?

At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia's fourth action plan is not available yet. During consultations for the fourth action plan, this commitment has not been suggested to carry forward. Though some of the IRM researcher's recommendations related to the search possibilities have been taken into account in the expected new e-government platform, some recommendations from the IRM Progress Report are related to the content of the trip reports. The report recommended to take into account the following for ensuring better access to information on officials' trip reports:

- Standardize the content of all report documents, ensuring compliance of the reports with the approved reporting structure;
- Produce reports in machine readable format, providing structured data;
- Include the total budget amount and source of funding for the trip and/or provide linkages with the corresponding decisions and budget spending reports to allow monitoring on spending and evaluation of cost-effectiveness of trips;
- Include attachments or links for details of the trips, e.g. the signed documents, speech texts, photos;
- Include the strategic direction and/or the program priority of the relevant state agency which informed the purpose of a trip.

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[1] Decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia No 1087-N of 26 November 2013 "On international official trips of representatives of republican executive bodies and territorial administration bodies", http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=112868

[2] Decision No 367-N dated 13.04.2017 "On making amendments to the Decision of Prime Minister No 1087-N of 26.11.2013" , http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=112853

[3] Electronic government of the Republic of Armenia, Trip Reports, https://www.e-gov.am/trips/

[4] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 01 State Travel Transparency, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/01-state-travel-transparency

[5] Lilia Afrikyan (Staff of the Government), interview by IRM researcher, 19 September 2018; Electronic communication with Aram Mkhitaryan (Helix Consulting LLC), 27 September 2018.

[6] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 01 State Travel Transparency, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/01-state-travel-transparency

[7] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 01 State Travel Transparency, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/01-state-travel-transparency

[8] Electronic communication with Aram Mkhitaryan (Helix Consulting LLC), 6 October 2018

2. Transparency of state grants

Commitment Text:
Title: Accountability of grants from the government: Ensuring transparency and accountability of allocation of grants from the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia

Posting on the official website of the respective government agency the list of organizations having participated and recognized as winners in the competition for obtaining grants from the State Budget, as well as the reports on projects implemented under the grants. Main objective is to raise the level of effectiveness of using grants allocated from the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia, enhance access to information on procedures for allocating grants and on projects implemented under the grants, the goal of a grant, accountability and transparency of the field.

The activities under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Drafting amendments and supplements to legal acts defining the procedures for provision of grants and discussion thereon with interested representatives of civil society (Sep-Dec 16).*
2. *Coordination of legal acts with interested agencies and adoption thereof (Jan-May 17).*
3. *Posting reports of organization having obtained grants on official websites of implementing agencies providing grants (starting June 17).*
4. *Placing the list of organizations having participated and recognized as winners in competitions for provision of grants from the State Budget of RA on official websites of the implementing agencies providing grants (starting June 17).*
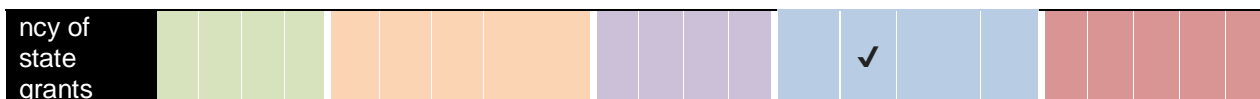
Responsible institution: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting institutions: Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Armenia

Start date: September 2016   **End date:** June 2017

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
2. Transpare			✔		✔					✔				✔					✔		

| ncy of state grants | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | |

Commitment Aim

This commitment intended to increase transparency of grants funded from the state budget by publishing the list of organizations receiving grants from each state agency and project reports for the allocated grants. The intended results of the commitment are efficient management of budget funds, increased accountability, and public confidence.

Status
Midterm: Limited

This commitment saw limited progress during the first year of the action plan. On 1 June 2017, the government adopted Decision No 579-N amending the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1937-N of 24 December 2003, specifying the procedures of providing grants and subsidies to legal entities. The amendments stipulate that state agencies that fund grants must publish to their website (within three days after signing a grant contract with an organization) the name, address, and project proposal of the funded organization.[1] According to the procedures of providing grants and subsidies to legal entities, adopted in 2003, the organization that receives the grant must provide a report on the grant project's implementation within the timeline set by the contract. The amendment adopted in 2017 also stipulated that the state agency must publish these reports to the website within three days after their acceptance.[2] There was no electronic or in-person consultation with civil society on this Decision.

At the time of writing the midterm report, the IRM researcher could not find a list of grant-recipient organizations on any ministry website. It should be noted that the commitment covers only the list of grants received through competition, while most of state grants are provided in a non-competitive manner based on the Law on Budget and other legal acts or special governmental decrees. For more information, see the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016–2018.[3]

End of term: Limited

In the second year of the action plan implementation, many of the ministries providing grants have posted grant project reports on their websites. In particular, grant project reports are available on the websites of the Ministry of Culture,[4] the Ministry of Agriculture,[5] the Ministry of Education and Science,[6] and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.[7] The reports have different formats and content, varying from a scanned one-page documents with a single table including information on total project budget to a comprehensive narrative covering project goals, activities, and outcomes. In addition, the Ministry of Health publishes compiled information in table format on the grants it funds throughout the year, including the title and address of recipient organizations, budget line, contract terms and amount, evaluation criteria, and reporting terms.[8] However, there are no project reports published by this Ministry.

According to the Annex to the Law on Budget 2017,[9] specifying the list of grants to be provided without competition, there are other state agencies that should have funded grants in 2017, such as the Staff of the Government, the Ministry of Diaspora, the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Nature Protection, as well as other ministries and state committees. Overall, 21 agencies are indicated in the list of grants provided without competition. However, apart from the above-mentioned five ministries, the IRM researcher could not find grant project lists or reports on the websites from these agencies.

Did It Open Government?
Access to Information: Marginal

As stated in the action plan, this commitment aimed to improve the effectiveness of grants allocated from the budget, as well as to enhance access to information on the procedures for allocating grants and on the projects implemented under the grants.[10] The implementation of the commitment, however, covers only part of the problems highlighted in the field, such as providing information on the projects implemented under the grants, while the procedures for grant distribution and effectiveness of the grant allocations remain unaddressed. Moreover, the scope of the provided grants project reports is limited, and the format and quality of the available reports needs improvement. Based on the findings related to the status of the commitment's implementation and the outlining problem related to the lack of transparency in public funding, this commitment demonstrates marginal progress in disclosing government-funded grant information.

Carried Forward?

At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia has not finalized its fourth action plan. During consultations for the fourth action plan, CSOs have suggested a commitment related to transparency of grant distribution be included in the next action plan. The IRM researcher recommends focusing on the following directions of activities in the framework of the current commitment:

- Ensure publication of grant project reports by all governmental agencies;
- Adopt unified standards on the titles and content of grant report documents;
- Reform the grant allocation process to ensure competitive and transparent mechanisms for providing grants, including providing a rationale for donating grants or outsourcing services to other organizations;
- Extend the scope of publication of information on state-funded projects, ensuring that not only the lists and reports of grant projects, but also the list of organizations receiving subsidies, donations, assistance, and other types of funding from the state budget, as well as the relevant narrative reports are publicly available.

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[1] Government decision No 579-N "On making supplements to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1937-N of 24 December 2003", 01.06.2017, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=113823
[2] Government decision No 579-N "On making supplements to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1937-N of 24 December 2003", 01.06.2017, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=113823
[3] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 02 Accountability for Grants of the Government, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/commitment/02-accountability-grants-of-government
[4] RA Ministry of Culture, Grant Projects, http://mincult.am/grants-program.html
[5] RA Ministry of Agriculture, Grants, http://minagro.am/դրամաշնորհներ
[6] RA Ministry of Education and Science, Narrative reports on activities in 2017 by the organizations in the framework of grant contracts with RA MES http://edu.am/index.php/am/documents/index/161
[7] RA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Report/Statistics, http://www.minsportyouth.am/category/hashvetvoutyounner.html
[8] RA Ministry of Health, Grants and Subsidies, http://www.moh.am/#1/990
[9] The Law "On State Budget 2017 of the Republic of Armenia" Annex 1, Table 16 "List of projects identified by the Law "On State Budget 2017 of the Republic of Armenia" for which the relevant government agencies will provide allocations to economic entities in the form of grants, without competition", http://www.arlis.am/Annexes/4/PT92.1_2016page925-950.pdf
[10] OGP Third National Action Plan of the Republic of Armenia (2016-2018), http://ogp.am/u_files/file/3AP_ENG.docx

3. Interactive budget: Open Data principle

Commitment Text:
Title: More Interactive budget: Ensuring transparency of the State Budget applying the Open Data principle

Citizens of the Republic of Armenia have the opportunity to become familiar with the structure of the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia and the estimated and actual expenditures in accordance with functional classification via the online electronic interactive budget posted on the websites of the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Armenia. The disadvantage of the system is that even though it provides users with the abovementioned information on the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia, it is not built upon the "open data" principles. The system does not provide users with an opportunity to download the information and process it for own purposes. Besides the expenditure part, improvement of the system of interactive electronic budget will provide an opportunity to interactively show not only the estimated revenues, but also the actual revenues through sources of generation, to make the search for particular data possible by applying relevant advanced instruments (for example, the distribution of expenditures of the State Budget among state bodies of the Republic of Armenia, etc.), as well as to make the information machine-readable for further processing by users. It will ensure that the information on the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia is user-friendly and will improve transparency of information on actual expenditures and collected revenues of the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia.

The activities under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Discussions with private companies and civil society aimed at clarifying the scope of activities (Oct 16 - Jan 17).*
2. *Drafting of the terms of reference and implementing procurement (Feb 17 - Jun 17).*
3. *Improvement of the interactive budget system based on the open data principle also with the option of presenting actual revenues according to the sources of generation thereof (Jul 17 - Jun 18).*

Responsible institution: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting institution: Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia

Start date: December 2016   **End date:** June 2018

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Midterm / End of Term		Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed			Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding

3. Interactive budget: Open Data principle		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓				✓
											✓				

Commitment Aim

This commitment entailed improving the existing interactive budget platform, which includes planned and actual expenditure, by providing downloadable data with search and filter options, as well as information on budget revenues. It intended to improve accessibility and transparency of the state budget through online presentation of revenues and expenditures with possibility of analysis.

Before the commitment's adoption, the state budget and the estimated and actual expenditures were published via the online electronic "interactive budget" tool available on the websites of Armenia's electronic government[1] and the Ministry of Finance.[2] This is a visual tool that provides data on the relevant budget expenditures, including procurement contracts where applicable. However, this information was not available in open data format. In contrast, the new interactive budget platform envavironed in this commitment would provide users the opportunity to easily find, download, process, and re-use information, and would include information on budget income by source.

Status
Midterm: Limited

At the end of the first year of implementation, the Ministry of Finance completed the first two activities of the commitment. The discussion with private companies and civil society took place prior to the implementation period—that is, during the development of the third action plan, in the framework of OGP Working Group meetings and discussions with the CSO that had proposed the commitment.[3] Throughout the first year of implementation, the Ministry of Finance prepared the terms of reference and completed software procurement process. As a result, the ministry signed a contract with LSOFT limited liability company (LLC) in August 2017:[4] according to the Term of Reference (ToR) attached to the contract, the planned completion date for the budget platform software development was the end of December 2017. Although, after the midterm period, most of the technical work on platform software was carried out by the contractor by October 2017. For more information, see the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016–2018.[5]

End of term: Complete

In December 2017, the commitment-responsible official at the Ministry of Finance organized a discussion around the draft platform with interested CSOs and companies in order to improve the format of the information to be available, and the suggestions were taken into account when finalizing the platform. In late May 2018, the Ministry of Finance accomplished the testing and data input process and delivered the platform to National Security Service for approval, which is an ordinary procedure for government electronic platforms.[6] However, the security checks took longer than expected, and the platform was not available online until late August 2018.

At the time of writing the report (September 2018), the platform was available at the webpage of the Ministry of Finance under the "State Budget" section. It provides the possibility to search and filter budget information by several criteria, including the state agency, functional classification section, group and class, functional program, economic classification, and the possibility to view related contracts.[7] The results of the search can be downloaded in Excel format. In addition to the information provided by the existing "interactive budget" platform, the new platform provides supporting documentation for all spending, and includes spending of Project Implementation Units (PIU). The data on expenditures and revenues is updated on

a daily basis.[8] Budget revenues are also available with search options by agency, budget section, group, and account. Apart from revenues and spending, there is a page on budget deficits where the sources and calculations of deficit are presented in a table with a possibility for download.

In the section of spending, the contracts are presented in PDF format. However, the IRM researcher noticed that some of the PDF documents under the "Contracts" sections are in fact not the contracts themselves but the verification documents for the relevant spending (a one-page document including the name of the recipient, budget line, and amount), or signed invoices along with acceptance acts.[9]

Did It Open Government?
Access to Information: Major

Although budget data was published in different formats before this commitment's implementation, including through the existing interactive budget tool and quarterly budget reports, this commitment significantly improved the accessibility of the budget information as well as the scope of the information available to the public. In contrast to the existing graphical interactive budget, the accessibility of the information has been ensured in the new platform through the search and filtering options with the possibility to download. For example, users can download information on a specific state agency and/or budget line (e.g., education, housing, health), or compare planned and actual expenditure of various state agencies by type of cost (i.e., communication costs, representative costs, insurance costs). More detailed searches can also be carried out by selecting a specific functional class or program. For example, in the area of education, users can select higher education in the functional classification, and if needed, have further opportunities to select from a range of economic classification lines such as salaries, trip expenses, allowances, etc. The scope of the information has been enlarged to include purchase contracts or other verification documents, spending of PIUs, and extrabudgetary spending. In contrast to the quarterly budget reports provided in Excel format on the webpage of the Ministry of Finance, in the new platform, the information is updated daily.

The IRM researcher contacted CSOs working in the area of budget analysis and fiscal transparency, including CSOs participating in initial consultations and the meeting in December 2017 to provide feedback on the platform. Most were not aware of the platform at the time of writing the report, but indicated interest and found that the platform would be useful for their work. Specifically, it would aid in checking the actual spending of specific budget lines, updated daily, to analyze the expenditure in the areas of public interest. However, since there are no guidelines or tutorials on platform usage, users must have a basic understanding of the budget structure and try the platform several times to gain better understanding on how to use it.

The commitment has had a major contribution to improving the scope and mechanisms of the access to information on the budget. At the same time, there is a need to implement awareness-raising activities and disseminate the information on the platform through various channels to ensure its usage and impact in terms of better transparency and public oversight.

Carried Forward?
At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia has not finished developing its fourth action plan. The IRM researcher recommends the government and other stakeholders to carry out public awareness-raising activities to ensure usage of the platform as well as to provide brief information on the platform and user guidelines on the platform page.

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[1] Electronic government of the Republic of Armenia, Interactive Budget, https://www.e-gov.am/interactive-budget/
[2] Ministry of Finance, Interactive Budget, http://www.minfin.am/hy/page/grafik
[3] Zhirayr Titizyan (Ministry of Finance), interview by IRM researcher, 15 November 2017
[4] State procurement contract No RA MF 17/5, 29.08.2017, https://www.e-gov.am/procur_files/40772838-pg.PDF

[5] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 03 Transparency of the State Budget, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/commitment/03-transparency-of-state-budget
[6] Zhirayr Titizyan (Ministry of Finance), interview by IRM researcher, 17 September 2018
[7] Ministry of Finance, Interactive Budget, http://budget.minfin.am:82/
[8] Zhirayr Titizyan (Ministry of Finance), interview by IRM researcher, 17 September 2018
[9] See, for example, randomly found verification documents: http://budget.minfin.am:82/xml/storage/43263812-sca43.pdf, http://budget.minfin.am:82/xml/storage/42259239-13015.pdf, and a link to invoice and acceptance act provided under "contract" section: http://budget.minfin.am:82/xml/storage/43050172-sca55.pdf

4. Officials' declarations in open data

Commitment text:

Title: "Open data" in official declarations: Improving the electronic system of declarations on property, income and affiliated persons of high-ranking officials

Compliance of the format of declarations of high-ranking officials with the "open data" principle, improvement of the processing, analysis and search system thereof.

The objective of this initiative is to make data on declarants having failed to submit declarations within the time limits specified by law should be made available and accessible for the civil society, as well as to enable to receive the data subject to publication from the system through an interactive method and in an open electronic format.

It is expected to have, with the help of civil society, an impact on declarants to perform their duty of submitting declarations. This will improve the statistics on declarations that have not been submitted within the time limit specified by law and those submitted late. Moreover, by introducing the declarations registry interactive instrument, the Commission expects to receive from the interested groups of civil society more substantiated recommendations and applications in relation to cases of restrictions on the activities defined by the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On public service", or conflict of interests, or prima facie violations of the rules of ethics on the part of any high-ranking official, or risks recorded in that regard.

The activities under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Presenting the proposal regarding the commitment to the interested civic groups, receiving their viewpoints, organizing discussions, summarizing results with regard to publication of lists of persons having failed to submit declarations within the time limit specified by law and developing software for making the Registry of Declarations section of the Commission's website interactive for users (Sep 16 - Dec 16).*
2. *Posting on the Commission's website the lists of persons having failed to submit declarations and persons having submitted declarations late in 2016 (Dec 16 - Mar 17).*
3. *Upgrading the search engine of the Registry of Declarations section of the Commission's website at www.ethics.am, ensuring its interactive accessibility for users, developing and installing the software (Mar 17 - Jun 18).*

Editorial note: While the action plan lists three milestones, the IRM researcher identified two milestones for this commitment, differentiated by the outputs of the commitment: posting the list of officials' that did not submit declarations on time, and the establishment of search engine with information in open data format.

Responsible institution: Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials (upon consent)

Supporting institution: Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia

Start date: September 2016   **End date:** June 2018

Commitment Overvie	Specificity	OGP Value Relevance (as written)	Potential Impact	Completion	Midterm End of Term	Did It Open Government?

w	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
4. Official declarations in open data			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓					✓		
														✓							

Commitment Aim

According to the Republic of Armenia (RA) law "On public service," high-ranking officials have to present a declaration on their property and income on an annual basis by March 30 of the next year as well as upon their appointment and termination of the office within 30 days of the appointment or termination.[1] Since 2012, declarations on property and income of high-ranking officials and their affiliated persons have been published in PDF format on the website of the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials ("the Commission") at www.ethics.am. However, search options were available only by official's name, title, and year, and it was not possible to search and filter declarations by specific types of information (such as income or property owned). Also, the publication format in the Registry of Declarations did not allow to process and analyze the data by year.

This commitment aimed to publish the declarations of high-ranking officials in open data format (i.e. downloadable and searchable data instead of PDFs), and publish the list of declarants who did not submit declarations within the time limits specified by law. The commitment also entailed consulting civil society on the process of publication of the list of non-compliant officials and the software to be developed for the website. The completion of the commitment would enable journalists and civil society to access and verify officials' declared income and assets through fact-checking and reporting.

Status
Midterm: Limited

This commitment saw limited progress in the first year of the commitment implementation. The Commission held discussions on the commitment during various meetings, events, and non-formal interactions with civil society and media representatives, including CSOs working in anticorruption and transparency as well as investigative journalists.

The funds envisaged for this commitment's implementation are included in the scope of the World Bank's "Third Public Sector Modernization Project for Armenia" (2016-2020). According to the Commission representative responsible for the commitment, the modernization of the search engine was delayed due to legal amendments that entered into force in July 2017. By October 2017, the Commission had prepared the draft Terms of Reference for the development of software to upgrade the search engine of the "Registry of Declarations" section of the Commission's website.[2]

The list of officials who failed to present declarations on time was scheduled to be completed by March 2017 but was not published within the first year of the implementation. This list was published on 30 October 2017, presenting the names and positions of officials who had not provided declarations on income and property for 2016 due by 30 March 2017 by the date of

publication (30 October 2017).[3] Any information on delayed submissions of declarations was not reflected in the published list. For more information, see the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016-2018.[4]

End of term: Limited

In May 2018, the Commission published the lists of officials who failed to provide their annual declarations and those who provided their annual declarations with delay.[5] Later, the Commission published the list of officials who did not provide declarations of income and property upon their appointment.[6] Thus, one milestone for the commitment has been implemented. The Commission also published information on the number of administrative cases proceeded and penalties applied towards the non-compliant officials.[7]

The second milestone—establishment of the search engine and providing open data format of declarations on Commission's website—was not completed. According to the Staff of the Government, the implementation of this milestone was delayed due to delays in funding, which was planned in the framework of the "Third Public Sector Modernization Project for Armenia" (2016-2020) and funded by the World Bank.[8] Furthermore, the Commission proposed to postpone these activities because of the expected dissolution of the current Commission and establishment of a new Commission on Preventing Corruption.[9] The law "On the Commission on Preventing Corruption," adopted in June 2017, stipulates the establishment of a Commission on Preventing Corruption with a larger scope of functions and powers. This will replace the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials upon its formation after April 2018 when Constitutional changes fully come into effect.[10] However, by the end of the action plan period, a new Commission has yet to be formed. Correspondingly, the Commission suggested carrying this commitment to the next action plan.

Did It Open Government?
Access to Information: Marginal
Civic Participation: Did Not Change
Public Accountability: Did Not Change

In parallel to this commitment's implementation, several legislative amendments were adopted in the area of public declarations in 2017. Parliament adopted an amendment to the RA law "On Public Service" (and a number of other laws) on 9 June 2017, and they entered into force on 1 July 2017. According to the amendments, administrative liability is established for failure to submit declarations on time or for violating regulations for declarations as well as for failure to submit full or correct information by negligence. Criminal liability is set for the intentional non-submission of declarations, presenting false information, or hiding the information subject to declaration. The legislative amendments allowed the Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials to have additional staff and enlarge their authorities, including verification of declaration information and proceeding administrative cases toward non-compliant officials.[11] These changes have taken place outside of the commitment scope, but had an important role in improving public accountability of officials. Publishing the list of those who have not submitted declarations on time might have marginal impact on access to information on non-compliant officials, as it provides consolidated information that would otherwise be found through detailed revision of all declarations available in the Commission's website and identifying the missing officials.

Though the commitment included discussions with interested stakeholders on the commitment as the first step in the creation of "open data" platform, it has not added new opportunities or capabilities for the public to inform or influence government decisions, since the search engine was not created, thus civic participation has not changed.

Carried Forward?

At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia's fourth action plan is not available. The Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials has suggested carrying forward the establishment of the searchable database of declarations in the next action plan.

[1] RA Law 'On Public Service', 26.05.2011, Article 33, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=121573

[2] Armen Khudaverdyan (Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials), interview by IRM researcher, 24 October 2017

[3] The Commission publishes the list of the officials who have not submitted their appointment or annual declarations of 2016, appointment and termination declarations in 2017, 30.10.2017, http://ethics.am/hy/news/item/2017/10/30/news63/

[4] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 04 "Open Data" in Official Declaration, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/04-open-data-official-declaration

[5] The list of the high-ranking officials who have not submitted annual declarations for 2017 is published, 24.05.2018, http://ethics.am/hy/news/item/2018/05/24/news107/; The list of the high-ranking officials, who submitted their declarations later than the time period prescribed by the law within the period of July 1 of 2017 to February 10 of 2018, 18.05.2018, http://ethics.am/hy/news/item/2018/05/18/news106/

[6] The list of declarant public officials who failed to submit their appointment declarations as of July 24 of 2018, 25.07.2018, http://ethics.am/en/news/item/2018/07/25/news115/

[7] The Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials has made 100 decisions on the application of administrative penalties, 31.05.2018, http://ethics.am/en/news/item/2018/05/31/news108/

[8] Lilia Afrikyan (Staff of the Government), interview by IRM researcher, 19 September 2018

[9] Armen Khudaverdyan (Commission on Ethics of High-Ranking Officials), interview by IRM researcher, 03 September 2018

[10] RA Law "On the Commission on Preventing Corruption", 09.06.2017, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=114355

[11] RA Law "On making amendments and supplements to the RA law 'On Public Service'", 09.06.2017, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=114359

5. Portal for community decisions

Commitment Text:

Title: Portal for community decisions: Creation of a unified legal information system for decisions of council of elders and heads of communities

Creation of a unified legal information system for decisions of council of elders and heads of communities, based on the "open data" principle. Ensuring accessibility of the decisions of councils of elders and heads of communities, providing a search function (simple and advanced search), ensuring usability, increasing transparency of the activities of communities.

Publication of the decisions of councils of elders and heads of communities based on the "open data" principle conveys new quality to the introduction and persistent development of the value of public accountability in terms of access to information.

The activities under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Discussion with representatives of civil society and private organizations on possible technical solutions for the creation of a single unified electronic platform for publishing the decisions of councils of elders and heads of communities (Sep 16 - Nov 16).*
2. *Creation of a single unified electronic platform with search function for publishing the decisions of councils of elders and heads of communities (Dec 16 - Jun 18).*
3. *Organizing and conduct of training courses for community servants (Jul 17 - Dec 17).*
4. *Creation of a repository for previously adopted decisions of councils of elders and heads of communities (starting January 18).*
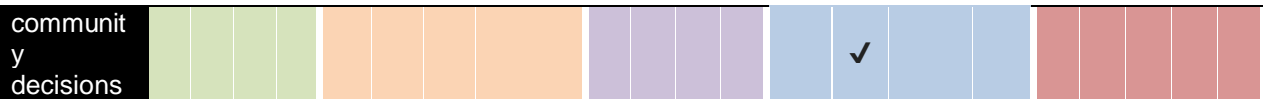
Responsible institution: Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting institutions: Marzpetarans (regional governors' offices) of the Republic of Armenia

Start date: September 2016   **End date:** June 2018

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion / Midterm End of Term				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
5. Portal for			✓		✓			✓		✓				✓				✓			

community decisions							✓			

Commitment Aim

Prior to the drafting of this commitment, the decisions of local self-government bodies (LSGB), represented by councils of elders and heads of communities, were electronically posted in PDF format on various official websites, particularly in communities (if available) and relevant marzpetarans (regional governments). However, Armenia did not have a single, unified platform for users to easily find community legal acts. National legal acts, however, are posted on the online platform—Armenian Legal Information System (ARLIS)—providing possibilities to search by specific criteria as well as to download specific legal acts.[1] This commitment intended to create a web platform to serve as a unified information system for the publication of community decisions, including decisions of the heads of communities and community councils of elders.

Status

Midterm: Limited.

In July 2016, a new "LSGB Acts" section was introduced on www.arlis.am, where the decisions of councils of elders and heads of communities were published in the form of a quarterly bulletin in PDF format.[2] According to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, the technical capacities of the ARLIS website were considered, and it was found expedient to publish the information of community acts on the same platform as national-level legal acts.[3] The administration of ARLIS website is done by "Pashtonakan teghekagrer," a closed stock joint company (CJSC) owned by the government and responsible for publishing law bulletins. Thus, there was no need for trainings of community servants, as the latter are not responsible for posting the decisions in the platform.

However, the format of the published decisions does not allow user-friendly search or information retrieval, considering the lack of machine-readable options in PDF file and its downloading capacity. The platform provides a table of contents where the name of each legal act is provided, including the community, the decision number and the date of adoption, and often the subject of the decision. This makes it possible to use the search engine of the browser to find a specific decision in the content table and find the relevant legal act in the PDF bulletin by following the page number indicated in the content table. However, if the year of the decision is not known, users must conduct a search for each year. Furthermore, most of the decisions published on the websites of governors' offices were not included in the bulletins. For more information, see the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016–2017.[4]

End of term: Limited

The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development did not undertake any additional actions in the framework of the commitment during the second year of the action plan. The review of the quarterly bulletin published in 2018[5] shows that many community decisions available on the websites of governors' offices are still not included, and the machine-readable option is not provided. According to the Staff of the Government, the technical capacity of the www.arlis.am portal is expected to be improved to provide better search possibilities for the platform.[6]

Did It Open Government?

Access to Information: Did Not Change

The IRM researcher finds that the available portal has not contributed to the improvement of the scope or quality of information disclosed due to several reasons: the limited search and processing options provided in "LSGB decisions" section of the ARLIS platform, the difficulty to download and use the bulletins of community decisions, an incomplete list of community decisions included in the bulletin, and the discussions with civil society carried out in the during the assessments for Armenia's 2016-2017 IRM Progress Report.

Carried Forward?

At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia's fourth action plan is not available yet. During consultations for the fourth action plan, this commitment has not been suggested to carry forward. The IRM researcher recommends the following steps to improve the implementation of the commitment, which have been highlighted in the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016-2017:

- Ensure that the portal (bulletin) covers all decisions of all Armenian communities;
- Publish the decisions in machine readable format, providing structured data;
- Consider further revision of the portal to make it compliant with the commitment text, in particular providing simple and advanced search possibility;
- Make the bulletin more user-friendly for reading from the website (e.g. providing possibility of full screen view).

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[1] Armenian Legal Information System, http://www.arlis.am

[2] Susanna Grigoryan (Pashtonakan teghekagrer CJSC), interview by IRM researcher, 17 November 2017

[3] Ashot Giloyan (Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development), interview by IRM researcher, 16 November 2017

[4] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 05 Portal for Community Decisions, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/commitment/05-portal-community-decisions

[5] Bulletin of Community Normative Acts, No 1(60), 30 March 2018, http://www.arlis.am/VL/Downloads/2018/2018-1-1.pdf

[6] Lilia Afrikyan (Staff of the Government), interview by IRM researcher, 19 September 2018.

6. Licensing register

Commitment Text:

Title: Accountable licensing: Creation of a state unified electronic register of persons carrying out activities subject to licensing by state bodies and subject to notification

Creation of a state unified electronic register of persons carrying out activities subject to licensing by state bodies and subject to notification, and digitization of the licenses issued. Creation of a state unified electronic register of persons carrying out activities subject to licensing by state bodies and subject to notification will help further simplify the process of issuing a license and the administration related to types of activities subject to notification, as well as reduce potential corruption risks.

The activities under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Studying the international practice (Aug 16 - Oct 16).*
2. *Drafting the amendments to relevant secondary regulatory legal acts (Sep 16- Nov 16).*
3. *Developing a state unified electronic register of persons carrying out activities subject to licensing by state bodies and subject to notification, developing software and creating an electronic website (Sep 16 - Mar 17).*
4. *Digitalizing all the licenses previously issued by state bodies and including them in the unified electronic register (Dec 16 - Mar 17).*
5. *Connecting the electronic register to other state electronic registers, for example, to the database of the state register of legal persons (e-register) (Mar 17 - Apr 17).*
6. *Organizing relevant training courses on the peculiarities of maintaining a unified electronic register for representatives of state bodies issuing licenses (Dec 16 - Mar 17).*

Responsible institution: Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting institution(s): Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Armenia

Start date: August 2016   **End date:** April 2017

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion / Midterm End of Term				Did It Open Government?				
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
6. Licensing register			✓		Unclear					✓				✓ (midterm) / ✓ Substantial (end of term)				✓			

Commitment Aim

Prior to the time of undertaking the commitment, the Republic of Armenia had no unified register of persons carrying out activities subject to licensing by or notification to state bodies.[1] The information on the existence or absence of a license and notification or its authenticity with the original was verifiable only through hard copy documents. The lists of licensed organizations for some areas of economic activities were posted on the respective websites of authorized issuing bodies, but there was no unified format or requirement on public disclosure of the lists.

The commitment specified that due to the state-unified electronic register of licenses, the responsible party would be able to verify the information on the availability of a license and its validity by entering the number and date of the license.[2] However, the commitment did not specify whether the unified electronic register would be made accessible to the public, thus its direct relevance to OGP values was unclear.

Status

Midterm: Limited

In the last quarter of 2016, the Ministry of Justice completed the first activity under the commitment, an analysis of international experience, in partnership with Harmonious Development NGO. Furthermore, the Terms of Reference for development of the register were designed in the first half of 2017. In parallel, draft amendments to relevant legal acts were prepared and circulated in May 2017 among governmental agencies for review.[3] In particular, an amendment to RA law "On Licensing" introduced the concept of a unified electronic registry of licenses, the information it would cover, the rules on providing free access, and the maximum amount of state fees for access to the information in the registry.[4] On 25 October 2017, parliament adopted the revised amendments, which entered into force on 15 May 2018. According to the amended law "On Licensing," the electronic registry will contain information on the name and address of the licensed legal entity or place of residence and registration address of the natural person, license number and date of issue, the type of activity for which the license was issued, address of business activities, term of validity, and other information as provided by law.

According to the amendment, the government defines the procedure of provision of information on licenses and validity checking, as well as the list of state agencies which can access the electronic register free of charge. At the same time, the amendment states that information on any license holder stored on the electronic register can be provided online to other individuals and legal entities for a fee but will be free of charge to the license holder itself.[5] By November 2017, VX-Soft, the company contracted for the software development, had prepared the draft software and tested it in several state agencies. For more information, see the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016–2017.[6]

End of term: Substantial

VX-Soft tested the licensing register software in most of the state agencies throughout 2018, and conducted trainings for responsible officials, who started filling in the data on licenses available in respective agencies.[7] At the time of writing this report (September 2018), the testing is ongoing (with two to three agencies remaining), and the platform itself is not yet available online. According to an interviewed representative of the Ministry of Justice, the main reasons for the delay were the excessive volumes of information and the heavy workload related to the input of the system.[8]

In August 2018, the government adopted the procedure of provision of information on licenses and validity checking, as well as the list of state agencies which can access the electronic register free of charge.[9] The decree will enter into force in December 2018. The procedure of providing information online, attached to this decision, defines that the register will provide the following information free of charge:

1) The name and address of the licensed legal entity, or the name and surname and the residence address of the natural person or private entrepreneur,

2) The type of the activity, for which the license has been provided,

3) Term of validity of the license,

4) The current status of the license.

For any additional information available in the register, users will need to register and pay a fee.[10]

Did It Open Government?

Access to Information: Did Not Change

As the electronic platform of the licensing register is not available at the time of writing this report, there are no improvements made to access to information. However, based on the information above related on the availability of free information as defined by government decree, it is expected that the online publication of the license register could contribute to major changes in the scope of information disclosed to the public.

Though some agencies have been providing information on licenses in a fragmented manner, a unified register that includes information on all licenses registered in Armenia, along with mechanisms for easy access and searching, could make it possible for the public to check providers of activities subject to license. This would allow them to find out the availability and status of their licenses. In addition, it could help provide public oversight upon the conditions of providing the license by relevant state agencies.

Carried Forward?

At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia's fourth action plan is not available yet. During consultations of the fourth action plan, this commitment has not been suggested to be carry forward.

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[1] Activities subject to notification are covered by the RA Law "On Activities Subject to Notification" and include activities that do not require licensing but relevant notification to be sent to state bodies (such as production and/or sale of specific products, including wine, beer, veterinary biologics, etc.).

[2] OGP Third National Action Plan of the Republic of Armenia (2016-2018), http://ogp.am/u_files/file/3AP_ENG.docx

[3] Suren Krmoyan, Mariam Galstyan (Ministry of Justice), interview by IRM researcher, 25 October 2017

[4] RA law 161-N "On making amendments and supplements to the Law of the Republic of Armenia 'On licensing', 25.10.2017, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=117125

[5] RA Law 161-N "On making amendments and supplements to the Law of the Republic of Armenia 'On licensing', 25.10.2017, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=117125

[6] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 06 Accountability Licensing, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/commitment/06-accountability-licensing

[7] Anna Harutyunyan (Ministry of Justice), interview by IRM researcher, 4 September 2018

[8] Anna Harutyunyan (Ministry of Justice), interview by IRM researcher, 4 September 2018

[9] RA Government decision 866-N "On the registration of decisions on providing licenses in the electronic register of licenses, automatic provision and publication of the series and number of the license, procedure of providing information and verification of licenses, the list of state agencies using the register free of charge, defining fees for online provision of register information on other persons', as well as assigning the responsible body for register by RA government", 02.08.2018, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=124424

[10] Procedure on the registration of decisions on providing licenses in the electronic register of licenses, automatic provision and publication of the series and number of the license, procedure of providing information and verification of licenses, Annex to the RA Government decision 866-N, 02.08.2018, http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=124424, article 8-9.

7. Integrated social services and awareness raising

Commitment Text:
Title: Open and Social: Accessibility of integrated social services and awareness raising

Introduction of "Open&Social" instrument based on collection, coordination, analysis and accessibility of data, and transformation of "114 Hot Line" Service into a Call Center.

The innovation instruments developed within the framework of the "Open&Social" commitment will ensure access to information on social services that is classified in detail and presented in an automated manner; participation of the public in the assessment of social services online; as well as rating organizations providing these services, ensuring increase in accessibility and transparency of social services for the public.

The activities (milestones) under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Introducing the "Open&Social" instrument at* http://www.esocial.am *on-line information system of integrated social services for the purpose of ensuring access of the beneficiary to information on the social services that are available, ensuring automated provision of information on social services chosen by the beneficiary (Nov 16 – Jun 18).*
2. *Posting reports on the results subject to publication with regard to the monitoring and assessment of services provided in the social protection sector that are regularly carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, at* www.elibsocial.am *under the "Knowledge Management System" of the social protection sector (Jan 17 – Jun 18).*
3. *Creating a platform where the public will be provided with an opportunity to give scores to the specific service and the organisation providing this service, and as a result of analysing these scores, such services and organisations functioning in the social protection sector will get a certain rating. Revision of services being provided based on opinions of the beneficiaries, simplification of working procedures and reduction of time (Dec 17 – Jun 18).*
4. *Extending the scope of services provided by Nork Technological and Awareness Center for Social Services Foundation ('Nork Foundation') by way of transforming the Hot Line Service into a Call Center, conducting internal investigation with regard to complaints and alerts received from the citizens (Jul 17 – Jun 18).*

Responsible institution: Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

Supporting institutions: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Diaspora.

Start date: November 2016   **End date:** June 2018

Commitment Overview	Specificity	OGP Value Relevance (as written)	Potential Impact	Completion	Midterm	Did It Open Government?
					End of Term	

7. Integrated social services and awareness raising	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
			✓		✓	✓		✓		✓					✓ / ✓				✓		

Commitment Aim

This commitment aimed to post information on all state social protection services differentiated by location, beneficiary status, and type of service. The commitment introduced a comprehensive information platform presenting the eligibility for, and scope and mapping of, provided services. The commitment includes four milestones:

1. Introducing automated provision of information on social services based on the beneficiary information at www.esocial.am platform,

2. Online publication of monitoring and evaluation reports related to social protection sector,

3. Providing possibility for rating services and organizations functioning in the social protection sector,

4. Creating a call center through enhancement of Hot Line service responding to inquiries and complaints related to social protection services.

Status
Midterm: Substantial

By the midterm, the www.esocial.am platform was functioning, providing mapping and description of the integrated social service centers, information on services and programs grouped by the category of specific social groups eligible for the given services, and the list of organizations providing services in each category. However, automated search of information based on the eligibility criteria was not available. Within the framework of the second milestone, the monitoring and evaluation reports regarding the social protection sector programs implemented during 2012-2016, as well as related materials, were published in the electronic library of the online system www.elibsocial.am. The system provides a free registration option with larger possibilities available for registered users. Within the framework of the third action, the assessment of social services platform was still under development. The IRM researcher observed technical problems through usage of both platforms—esocial.am and elibsocial.am. The representative of the National Institute of Labor and Social Research of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, responsible for this commitment implementation, noted that the technical problems were due to a change of the hosting service.

Within the framework of the fourth milestone, no progress was registered. According to the representative of Pension System Awareness Center of Nork Foundation, the Center carried

out technical enhancement of the 1–14 Hot Line center in early 2015, including the set-up of an online consultation service and a 24/7 hotline through registration of calls in non-working hours. However, in September 2017, the online consultation service was not available due to lack of financing. For more information, see the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016–2017.[1]

End of term: Substantial

There was no significant progress in commitment implementation during the second year of implementation. According to the commitment's responsible person, representing the National Institute of Labor and Social Research of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the registered users of www.esocial.am were provided opportunity to rate specific social services.[2] However, by the time of writing the report (September 2018), no ratings were available, mostly due to the website technical problems in user registration, as well as lack of awareness of potential users about the rating possibility.[3] The online consultation service of the 1–14 Hot Line is also still not available.

Did It Open Government?
Access to Information: Marginal
Civic Participation: Did Not Change

Information on all social services, including description of allowances, links to relevant legal acts, and contacts of relevant organizations is available online at the www.esocial.am platform. However, the information is not user-friendly, as it provides extensive texts and legal terms while the option of receiving automated information by entering information on the user according to the defined criteria is not yet available yet. With the second milestone, the monitoring and evaluation reports are provided on elibsocial.am, which makes information related to monitoring and evaluation outcomes open to public.

Overall, the change in the access to information is marginal due to the provision of information on social services in one place, as well as making monitoring reports available online. However, this improvement could be more significant if the planned solution (provision of user-friendly information on social services and eligibility criteria in accessible manner tailored to the needs of the user) is completed, thus providing new mechanisms facilitating access to information.

The commitment has not contributed to any change in the opportunities and mechanisms of civil participation. When the platform is fully functioning, that is when users can rate social services provided, and in the case that the ratings are taken into account in the decision-making processes, it is possible that the commitment could contribute to the improvement in civic participation dimension.

Carried Forward?
At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia's fourth action plan has not been finalized. During consultations for the fourth action plan, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has suggested carrying forward some components of the commitment to the next action plan. Based on the discussions with relevant stakeholders carried out for the development of the IRM Progress Report for Armenia's third action plan, the IRM researcher reaffirms the following recommendations for more effective implementation and impact of the commitment:

- Organize a large awareness-raising campaign to ensure the usability of the platforms by a wide range of social groups;
- Consider merging several platforms operated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs or preparing a well-designed information brief (for example, on the Ministry's websites) where purposes and possibilities of different platforms will be explained in an accessible and user-friendly manner;
- Ensure high technical capacity and proper functioning of the platforms;
- Provide accessibility and ease of reading text for average users.

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[1] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 07 Accessibility of Integrated Social Services, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/commitment/07-accessibility-of-integrated-social-services

[2] Arman Sargsyan (National Institute of Labor and Social Research, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia), interview by IRM researcher, 03 September 2018

[3] Arman Sargsyan (National Institute of Labor and Social Research, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia), interview by IRM researcher, 03 September 2018

8. One-stop-shop military registration offices

Commitment Text:

Title: One-stop-shop in the Army: Introduction of One-stop-shop pilot project within military registration offices of the Republic of Armenia

Implementation of the "One-stop-shop" pilot project within 2-3 military registration offices. Improvement of administration in the activities of military registration offices though testing and further introduction of the "One-stop-shop" pilot project and reduction of risks therein, restriction on contacts of citizens with the military registration office personnel, reduction of the time limits for providing requested information/documents.

The activities under this commitment are as follows:

1. *Clarifying the scope of functions relating to the One-stop-shop (Sep 16 - Nov 17).*
2. *Assessing capacities of military registration offices and selecting military registration offices (Dec 16 - Feb 17).*
3. *Introducing the One-stop-shop (Mar 17 - Jun 18).*
4. *Survey regarding change of public confidence (if necessary) (Jan 18 - Jun 18).*
5. *Submitting recommendations on making amendments to secondary regulatory legal acts (if necessary) (Mar 18 - Jun 18).*

Responsible institution: Ministry of Defense

Supporting institution(s): None

Start date: September 2016   **End date:** June 2018

Commitment Overview	Specificity				OGP Value Relevance (as written)				Potential Impact				Completion				Did It Open Government?				
														Midterm								
														End of Term							
	None	Low	Medium	High	Access to Information	Civic Participation	Public Accountability	Technology & Innovation for Transparency & Accountability	None	Minor	Moderate	Transformative	Not Started	Limited	Substantial	Completed	Worsened	Did Not Change	Marginal	Major	Outstanding
8. One-stop-shop military registration offices		✓			Unclear					✓			✓ (midterm) / ✓ (end of term)					✓			

Commitment Aim

In Armenia, a two-year service in the army is compulsory for males from 18 to 27 years old. The registration of conscripts, the conscription process, record-keeping, post-service registry maintenance, and the provision of related documents are implemented by military

registration offices located in each district and/or community. The scope of activities of military registration offices is diverse, and there is a need to specify legislative regulations for services provided.[1] According to the action plan, the introduction of "one-stop-shop" pilot project in two to three military registration offices would provide an opportunity to test its effectiveness in providing services related to provision of certificates, verification documents, etc. The introduction of a single unified service would make it possible to eliminate problems that emerge during personal contact with citizens in the process of providing documentation, by narrowing the scope of direct communication between representatives of military registration offices and citizens.

The commitment is related to improvement of administration and services, as it aims to facilitate procedures for providing information to people visiting military registration offices. However, the commitment does not include any activities that would enhance transparency or create more citizen oversight or public accountability of the military sector. Therefore, its direct relevance to OGP values is unclear.

Status
Midterm: Not Started

In 2016, the Ministry of Defense selected military registration offices in two districts of Yerevan (Nor-Nork and Kentron) for the introduction of "one window."[2] However, following the resignation of the government cabinet, the Minister of Defense was replaced in October 2016, and the strategy of the Ministry's work was revised. Parliament adopted a package of new laws on military service in October–November 2017, and subsequent reforms of military registration offices were planned, thus the implementation of this commitment was suspended.[3]

The Ministry of Defense launched a Hot Line service (1–28)[4] in January 2017, which provides the possibility for citizens to receive answers to inquiries and leave information on grievances related to any aspect of military service, including mistreatment of soldiers, results of medical examinations, corruption cases, or administrative impediments. In this regard, the Hot Line partly covers the services previously planned for the "one-stop-shop" system (information provision and response to grievances). For more information, see the Armenia IRM Progress Report 2016–2017.[5]

End of term: Not started

No additional actions took place in the framework of the commitment within the second year of the action plan.

Did It Open Government?
Access to Information: Did Not Change
Civic Participation: Did Not Change
Public Accountability: Did Not Change

No activities have been carried out in the framework of the commitment. As such, there has been no changes to open government in practice.

Carried Forward?
At the time of writing this report (September 2018), Armenia's fourth action plan is not available yet. During consultations of the fourth action plan, this commitment has not been suggested to carry forward.

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[1] OGP Third National Action Plan of the Republic of Armenia (2016-2018), http://ogp.am/u_files/file/3AP_ENG.docx
[2] OGP Midterm Self-Assessment Report on the Third Action Plan of the Republic of Armenia (2016 -2018), http://ogp.am/u_files/file/Armenia_MID-TERM_report_3AParm.doc
[3] Alexander Avetisyan (Ministry of Defense), interview by IRM researcher, 27 November 2017

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[4] The Hot Line of the RA Ministry of Defense has been launched, 10.01.2017, http://www.mil.am/hy/news/4576
[5] IRM Armenia Progress Report 2016-2018 (Year 1), 08 "One-stop-shop" Pilot Project Within Military Registration Offices, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/commitment/08-one-stop-shop-pilot-project-within-military-registration-offices

Methodological Note

The end-of-term report is based on desk research and interviews with governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders. The IRM report builds on the findings of the government's self-assessment report; other assessments of progress put out by civil society, the private sector, or international organizations; and the previous IRM progress report.

This report is based on a desk review of information available on the relevant websites related to each commitment, laws and regulations, findings of the IRM progress report, as well as interviews and correspondence with responsible government officials and Working Group representatives active in OGP processes. The IRM researcher also attended the meetings of the OGP Armenia Working Group during the second year of action plan implementation and consultations on the development of Armenia's fourth action plan in September 2018. This included the OGP Armenia Working Group retreat in Aghveran in 18-19 September 2018 where participants, including government representatives and CSOs, discussed the fourth action plan.

Tatevik Margaryan is an independent researcher with a background in sociology, civil society organizations and public policy research. She has worked for the Civic Development and Partnership Foundation and several non-governmental organizations, and presently provides consultation, training, and research and analysis services for a number of local and international organizations.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, to empower citizens, to fight corruption, and to harness new technologies to strengthen governance. OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism assesses development and implementation of national action plans to foster dialogue among stakeholders and to improve accountability.

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