

Planning and Implementing Actions to Enhance Public Awareness and Participation in Armenia at National and Local Levels

Since 2011, the Republic of Armenia has actively participated in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative. OGP is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder international program that seeks to secure tangible commitments from governments to their citizens, fostering transparency, empowering citizens, and leveraging technology to strengthen governance. The primary objective is to drive open government reform and promote innovation at the national level, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement in close collaboration with civil society. As a direct outcome of this initiative, Armenia has successfully implemented four action plans, with the recent launch of the fifth plan.

The plans involved commitments across a range of sectors, including social, legal, financial, mining industry, environmental, and other related areas.

In 2022, the Local Open Government Partnership initiative was launched in Armenia, with several communities, including the capital Yerevan, participating in the process. The objective of this initiative is to collaboratively develop a policy that aligns with the principles of Open Governance in partnership with civil society. In this context, as part of the Yerevan Action Plan for 2023-2024, the Municipality has assumed specific obligatory responsibilities.

One of the commitments undertaken is the "Green Seal-Green Deal" initiative. As part of the program, a study was conducted to assess the purchases of goods and services, along with the analysis of annual energy consumption by over 400 municipal public organizations and institutions. This led to the development of a new mechanism aimed at encouraging these organizations to adopt "green" procurement practices on an annual basis. The participant that emerged as the winner received a small grant to implement energy efficiency measures and a "green" seal certificate as recognition for their efforts in prioritizing environmentally friendly purchasing.

The second one is "Green Development" e-platform hosted on the website of Yerevan Municipality: a new alternative public and transparent system to promote public awareness (as a pilot project), which will enable large public and vulnerable groups of society to be informed about and involved in the decision-making process.

This platform serves as an innovative and transparent system to promote public awareness and engagement, specifically targeting large segments of the population, including

vulnerable groups. The aim is to provide information and actively involve these groups in the decision-making processes.

It will consist of three components:

- "Green Actions" section will encompass a comprehensive approach to sustainable practices across all levels of municipal government. This section of the platform will be regularly updated to keep citizens informed about the current environmental situation within the city. It will provide information on various aspects, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution levels, and energy savings resulting from implemented energy efficiency projects by the city authorities. Furthermore, it will showcase other environmental best practices.
- "Green Seal" section of the platform will feature information about the actions undertaken by municipal organizations to encourage their compliance with sustainable development standards. The aim is to motivate these organizations to obtain the Green Seal certificate, which signifies their commitment to sustainable practices. The objective is for all institutions within Yerevan Municipality to be fully compliant with the "Green Seal" standards by 2028.
- "The 'Green Procurement' initiative aims to facilitate the purchase of goods and services through the implementation of a 'green' procurement procedure. This procedure promotes sustainable consumption and production practices.

Currently, the municipality is conducting an analysis to assess citizens' participation in public hearings and its effectiveness. It aims to find out the percentage of citizens and CSOs who have been informed about the hearings through the Internet, daily newspapers, mobile communication to both improve the framework of used toolkit and find out the best approaches for citizens' involvement.

Accordingly, the policy of the municipality will be reviewed to spread most effective approaches.

These activities are aimed at enhancing awareness-raising efforts and increasing citizen engagement at the local level, with the ultimate goal of making the process more public, participatory, and transparent.

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