



50
YEARS

Empowered lives. Resilient nations.

Towards SDG 16:
PROMOTING JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE
SOCIETIES IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

2 RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE
INSTITUTIONS

TOWARDS SDG 16:

Promoting Just, Peaceful and
Inclusive Societies in Europe
and Central Asia

RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE INSTITUTIONS

OVERVIEW

Building responsive and accountable institutions at all levels of government is central to ensuring that development is both effective and sustainable. At its core, this work is about supporting efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government and the provision of services, and covers three primary areas:

- **Anti-Corruption and Transparency** – Combatting corruption and increasing transparency in order to reduce the opportunities for corruption to occur, improve access to services for the poor and the disadvantaged, and increase the openness and effectiveness of institutions and development efforts.

- **Core Government Functions** – Supporting the delivery of quality services and improved accountability, including through technology and innovation, with the aim of building resilience to crises and strengthening the relationship between the state and the people at all levels of society.
- **Local Governance and Local Development** – Empowering local governments, facilitating the decentralization of government to the local level and encouraging public engagement in local decision-making and service delivery – typically the most accessible and responsive level of government.

An overarching theme to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP's) work to create

responsive and accountable institutions throughout the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region is encouraging strong citizen engagement. This increased engagement

not only further improves responsiveness, but also ensures citizens feel a sense of ownership of, and commitment to, development decisions affecting their lives.

UNDP's *Responsive and Accountable Institutions* work is designed to help countries meet targets under:

5 GENDER EQUALITY



GOAL 5 – ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



GOAL 16 – PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

- Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
- Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

KEY TRENDS

CORRUPTION SLOWLY DECLINING

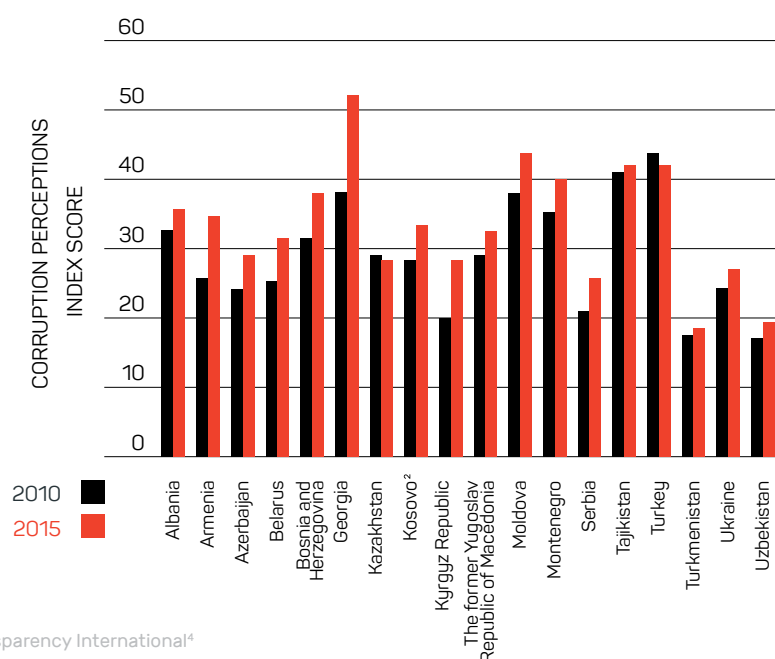
Often one of the most significant and persistent impediments to development efforts, corruption remains a challenge across the ECIS region. In 2015, several major corruption scandals in the region served to highlight this problem. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the release of evidence implicating the Government in the wide-spread wiretapping of a range of officials and of other abuses of power has led to ongoing mass protests. In Moldova, the impact of a large bank fraud perpetrated in 2014 continues to be felt, with the implication of a key government member in the fraud leading to mass protests and a no-confidence vote for the ruling coalition.

On the Corruption Perceptions Index¹ (CPI), Georgia is the best performing nation in the ECIS region. Yet with a score of 52/100, Georgia is only the 48th highest ranked nation globally. At the same time, some of the worst performing countries on the index are in the ECIS region, despite often being in a significantly better economic position than other countries with comparable ratings. Nonetheless, almost all countries in the region have shown improvement since 2010, with Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic and Montenegro making the largest gains. While the approaches to combatting corruption vary from Georgia's sweeping top-down changes to more incremental approaches taken in other countries, the one constant in successful efforts to reduce corruption is strong political support. For this reason, gains made are also often fragile, as seen in some countries which regressed over the period 2010 to 2015.

¹ Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2015". Available from <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015> (accessed 2 August 2016)

The general improvement across the ECIS can also be seen in the increasingly important role that the Open Government Partnership (OGP) is playing in the region. As of the end of 2015, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and all countries in the Western Balkans have either developed an open

government action plan, or are in the process of developing one. These action plans should enable countries to build a solid foundation for anti-corruption and transparency reforms going forward, allowing for significant improvements in the near future.



Source: Transparency International⁴

INCREASING GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND REGULATORY QUALITY

The ability of governments to formulate and implement good policy, as well as deliver services and fulfil the core functions of government, is a key measure of progress. In the ECIS region in particular, the equitable and effective delivery of services tends to have an outsized impact on citizens, due both to relatively low income levels and the centrally planned heritage of many economies. While obviously vitally important for citizens, effective governance is also crucial for successful development efforts, with UNDP's development programming increasingly reliant on government and regulatory bodies protecting and extending gains made.

The expectations of citizens in regards to government services are also changing over time. With all countries in the region now categorized as middle income, the people of the ECIS region are increasingly demanding a higher quality of

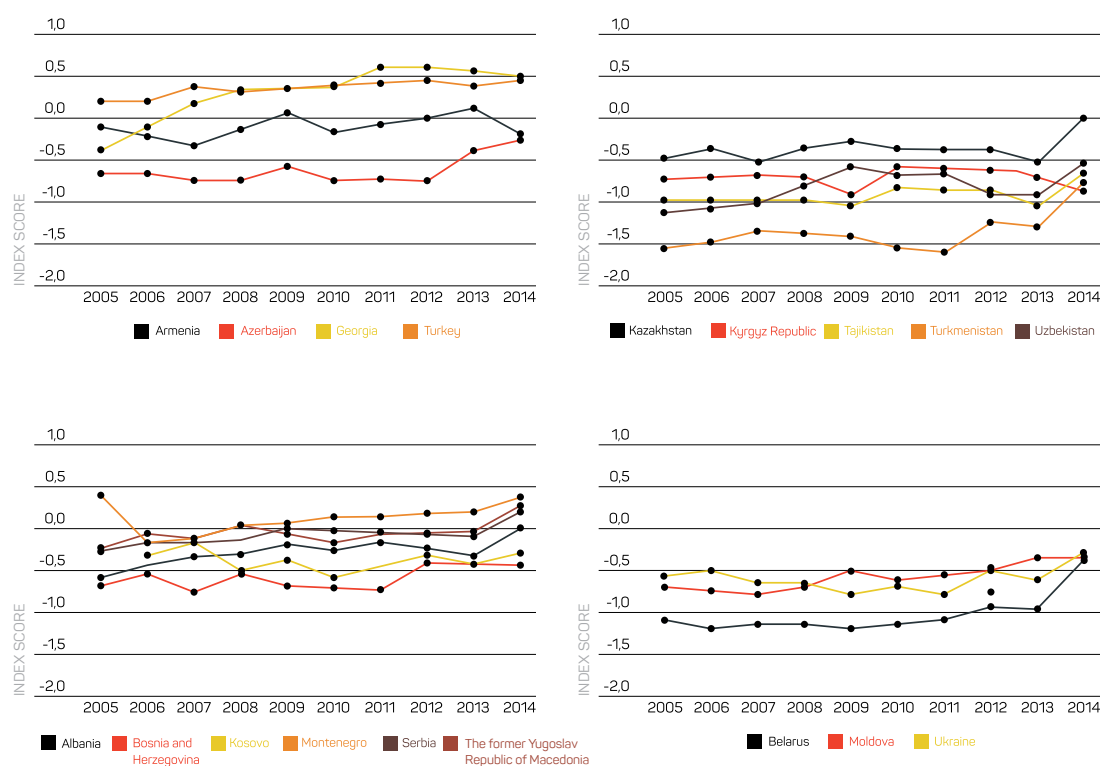
government services. For some of the wealthier countries in the region, resources available domestically, both in terms of expertise and budgets, are enabling governments to substantially improve services to meet these higher expectations. Examples of this can be seen in Kazakhstan, Serbia and Azerbaijan, where improving the delivery of public services has been made a high priority. Conversely, for some of the poorer countries in the region, government budgets are still not strong enough to deliver the level of services expected, despite middle income status.

Currently, in the ECIS region, there is variability in the level of government effectiveness and regulatory quality which can be seen in data reflecting the perceptions of the quality of public services, of the independence of the civil service, and the policy formulation process and implementation capabilities.

² All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

³ Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index".

Available from <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview> (last accessed 16 June 2016)



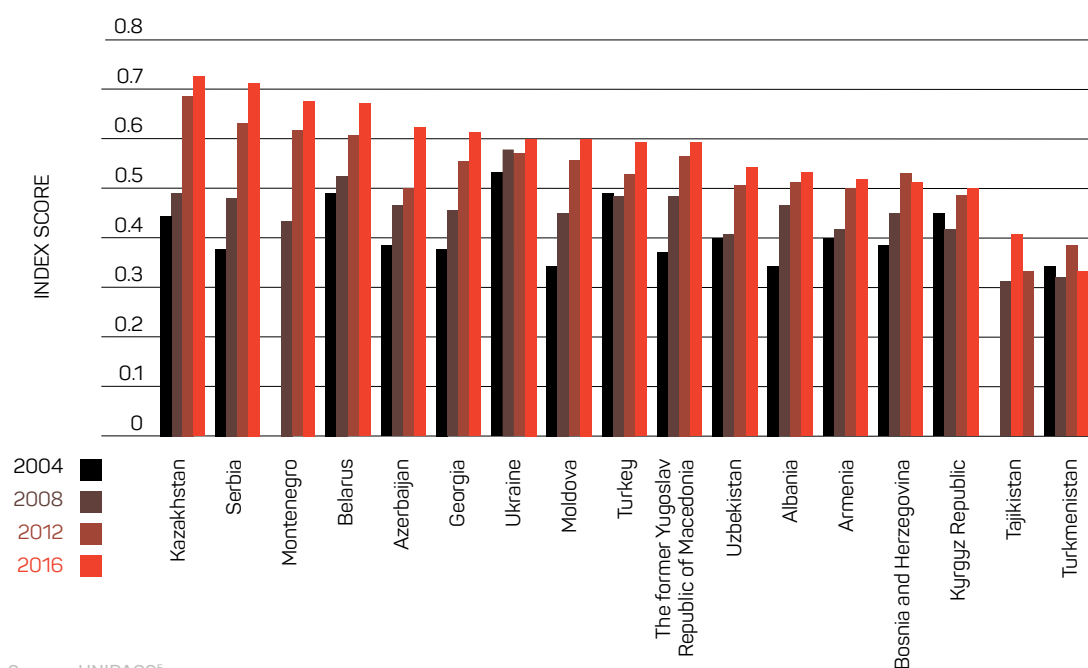
Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators, The World Bank⁴

THE GROWING USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Governments across the region are increasingly looking technology to help streamline and improve service delivery and policy implementation. In recent years there has been a proliferation of e-government services, the establishment of larger online footprints, and the increasing use of data, both for evidenced-

based policy formation and for more effective targeting of service delivery. This increasing use of technology can be clearly seen looking at the E-Government Index, where almost all countries in the region have made significant advancements. Technology and innovation are not only a means to improve government effectiveness but have also developed as key tools in efforts to ensure civic engagement and social accountability in the region.

⁴ The World Bank, "Worldwide Governance Indicators". Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators> (accessed 17 June 2016)

Source: UNIPACS⁵

WHAT WE DO

ANTI-CORRUPTION AND TRANSPARENCY

Corruption remains a major challenge throughout the ECIS region and, as a result, hampers development efforts, undermines effective and stable government, and complicates efforts to streamline services and processes. Combatting corruption is thus considered a high priority for UNDP. Yet corruption is almost always hidden, making it a difficult challenge to address. Corruption can take a range of forms, including nepotism, cronyism and patronage and typically occurs in environments where laws have been ineffectively implemented, there is a lack of transparency, and/or there are ineffective checks and balances. Corruption can also vary greatly in scale, ranging from petty corruption (e.g. low- and mid-level officials soliciting bribes) to grand (or political) corruption (e.g. high ranking officials embezzling public funds or subordinating the public good for the benefit of vested interests).

Corruption left unchecked can become systemic and entrenched to the point that it becomes perceived as a cost of conducting business. The normalization of corruption can often be observed through citizens' apathy towards this challenge, and highlights the importance of citizenry playing an active role in fighting corruption. Without citizen ownership and support of anti-corruption efforts, any gains are likely to be quickly eroded and reversed.

In the ECIS region, UNDP works on reducing corruption risks and supporting national anti-corruption efforts. At the central level, we support all institutions responsible for integrity checks and balances, and implementing the UN Convention Against Corruption. National Anti-Corruption Agencies are natural allies. 2015 saw the launch of two large projects in Ukraine and Moldova to support the establishment or the strengthening of such institutions. Corruption risk assessments conducted in 2014 with the Anti-Corruption Agencies of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Moldova and Kosovo were

⁵ UNIPACS, "E-Government Development Index". Available from <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data-Center> (accessed 25 August 2016)

also the basis for a broad regional consultation and advocacy event focusing on procurement standards and openness.

The focus on international standards also translates into support for legislative drafting. In 2015, UNDP worked both on important anti-corruption reforms, such as laws on access to information and public councils in Kazakhstan, the Anti-Corruption Strategy in Armenia, and the anti-corruption reform packages and mainstreaming of anti-corruption principles across all sectors in Ukraine. Based on this work, representatives of Moldova and the Kyrgyz Republic shared their experience in assessing corruption risks in draft legislation at the UNCAC Conference of States Parties in St Petersburg. Their experience in identifying opportunities for corrupt practices in legal acts in sectors as varied as education or extractive industries led representatives from four countries to envisage similar tools.

In its work, UNDP partners with global actors such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the OECD Anti-Corruption Network, as well as key sub-regional actors such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) and the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA). In 2015, UNDP also experimented with innovative approaches by working with the Behavioral Insight Team to promote soft strategies to reduce opportunistic corruption and informality in Belarus, Kazakhstan and Moldova.

Local institutions are often falling prey to tight local networks which promote corruption. At the same time, they also represent an opportunity to bring government closer to citizens and deliver key services. UNDP has been partnering with municipalities to develop transparency tools and strengthen integrity systems for a number of years. This work gained momentum in 2015 with the launch of the sub-regional project 'Promoting Integrity and Anti-Corruption in the Eastern Partnership area: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine', financed by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented in partnership with Partners

Foundation for Local Development. Local civil society practitioners from Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova were trained to accompany mayors in identifying and tackling vulnerabilities across their activities. Inspired by the success story of the city of La Paz, Bolivia, this project promotes a methodology which was recognized through the receipt of a UN Public Service Award. The ex-Mayor of La Paz visited Ukraine in December 2015 to launch the project in the presence of more than 150 practitioners and mayors from the ECIS region.



Opening of a 'one-stop-shop' in Uzbekistan, where users can directly pay their water bills, reducing the opportunity for corruption

Photo by: UNDP Uzbekistan

Beyond support for institutions, UNDP engages a broad range of citizens, media and groups on issues of corruption and accountability. In Turkey, 30 representatives from grassroots women organizations established formal channels to assess and monitor the work of their local government. Student and youth are also concerned by issues of corruption, and projects in Moldova, Kosovo and the Kyrgyz Republic gave them opportunities to report corruption instances and advocate for fair treatment for all. In Ukraine, UNDP worked with civil society organizations and other interest groups and established an Anti-Corruption School, providing exposure to the best practitioners in national transparency and integrity. In Serbia, UNDP supported journalists embedded in NGOs to investigate and write stories on corruption, resulting in over 100 articles written, and 20 cases where the Government commenced an investigation.

Some of the over 500 entrants in the 'Talent Does Not Take Bribes – Integrity in Images' contest in Moldova

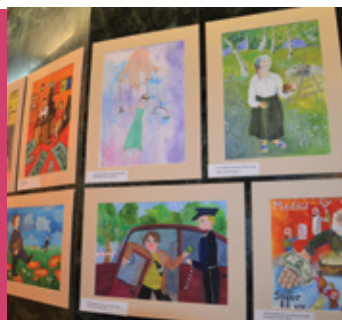


Photo by: UNDP Moldova

Engaging the public can also be an extremely effective way to identify where corruption is occurring, as has been shown by the establishment of web portals that provide for members of the public to report corruption in Albania and Kosovo. These portals have received approximately 10,000 and 5,000 reports, respectively, which have generated responses from government and rule of law bodies, including the opening of investigations and the dismissal of officials from their jobs.

Transparency and social accountability is also at the core of the open data focus of UNDP in the region. In Ukraine, for example, UNDP contributed to the drafting of open data legislation, providing a legal backing for the publication of public data going forward. In Uzbekistan, UNDP helped to both establish an open data portal and to publish data

in the portal. As a result, 748 datasets have already been uploaded by 64 government agencies, and those datasets downloaded over 294,000 times. In Serbia, UNDP and the World Bank partnered on an open data readiness assessment.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is an important partner in UNDP's open data programming. Working together through the Open Data for Development programme, IDRC funds enable UNDP to serve as the secretariat for Open Data in Europe and Central Asia (ODECA), and to organize regional activities related to learning, sharing and data literacy. In 2015, a notable result of this partnership was the open data side event at the G20 in Antalya which saw the launch of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Package, and the unveiling of the G20 Open Data Principles, which were adopted by the G20 Leaders in November 2015.

Open data has also been the focus of a major regional initiative in the Western Balkans, where in partnership with the Slovakian Ministry of Finance, UNDP is promoting the role of open data in improving transparency and building trust between governments and citizens. In 2015, the Slovakian Ministry of Finance agreed to extend and expand this partnership with the Transformative Governance and Finance Facility in 2016-2017.

"The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been working with UNDP on fighting corruption in Europe and Central Asia under the umbrella of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and the 'Going beyond the Minimum' campaign associated to the implementation of the Convention. Over the years, the two agencies have supported United Nations agencies in mainstreaming anti-corruption in their work, partnering notably to deliver anti-corruption training to the United Nations Country Teams in the region and provide input to the process of preparing United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. UNODC and UNDP have also worked hand in hand in numerous countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan or Serbia, in supporting national self-assessments of the implementation of UNCAC. UNODC has benefitted from

its partnership with UNDP and its Country Offices throughout the region while implementing national and regional initiatives. In Kosovo, UNDP and UNODC have been partnering on the implementation of the SAEK project, a comprehensive initiative supporting the institutional and civil society fight against corruption, with UNODC implementing the judicial integrity component of the project. The many success stories documented through the SAEK project are the best examples of the value of UNODC and UNDP's partnership. UNODC and UNDP are therefore committed to further streamline the efforts of the two agencies to mutually reinforce their work in the region."

– **Mr. Dimitri Vlassis**, Chief of the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch, UNODC

OPEN DATA, BETTER GOVERNANCE

Citizen demand for more government accountability, transparency, and investment in public services and citizen-driven initiatives is high across the ECIS. In their effort to improve governance, societies are striving to utilize new technologies to improve people's lives and ensure more inclusive governance. Open data can be a powerful tool in bridging gaps between institutions and communities, requiring a diverse set of skills and resources for achieving responsive institutions, efficient public services and active participation.

To harness this, UNDP and the Slovak Ministry of Finance jointly organized the Ministry of Data, a public finance challenge targeting the Western Balkans. The initiative offered a platform for citizens to present creative data-driven tools and solutions to the abstract and detached nature of public finance data. 38 teams from five different countries and territories presented their innovations and five governments contributed data for the purposes of the competition, namely Slovakia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Albania. The projects presented featured open data portals, cross-country comparisons, and simplified asset declarations of public officials. The winning innovation, *www.relatewith.it*, simplifies large infrastructure projects into relatable concepts, such as how many schools could have been built or average salaries paid, applying and presenting this breakdown to data from three different countries in the region.

By bringing together problem-solvers from the Western Balkans to develop tools and contribute to greater transparency and accountability in public finance, the Ministry of Data demonstrated the demand for such initiatives, and their high potential to engage governments and empower citizens. In December 2015, the Slovak Ministry of Finance and UNDP built on this engagement to develop a significant regional project entitled the Transformative Governance and Finance Facility, which aims to harness the potential of technologies and innovation for improved governance.

This represents a continuation of UNDP's long-term partnership with the Slovak Republic for the support of official development assistance (ODA) delivery and capacity building, and reforms in public finance management across the ECIS region. The project aims to achieve the following outputs: enhanced knowledge and skills to use data for good governance and social impact in public sector institutions; empowerment of citizens to generate and use data to strengthen design and delivery of public services; regional collaboration and knowledge transfer between regional and national entities; and the development of a range of alternative financing mechanisms to be applied by governments and citizens in policymaking and public service delivery. By building links between governments, the international development community, civil society, start-ups, and individuals interested in social change, this project rallies actors around public sector innovation and uses creative minds to transform societies.

"Our collaboration for the Ministry of Data, regional open data challenge, has demonstrated that by joining forces, we get better at innovating, working with communities on the ground and improving development and governance results."
 – **Martina Kobilicova**, Director General (DG) of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Slovakia.

Highlights



Open data portal established in Uzbekistan, with 748 datasets available from 64 government agencies.



Partnership with Slovakia on Ministry of Data results in Transformative Governance and Finance Facility.



New Anti-Corruption Council established and anti-corruption strategy developed in Armenia.



Launch of the 'Promoting Integrity and Anti Corruption in the Eastern Partnership area: Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine' regional project.

CORE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS

Societies across the world are increasingly demanding better access to higher quality services, while also expecting governments and institutions to deliver on key functions. In response, many governments in the ECIS are now prioritizing institutional efficiency and effectiveness. While the move to improve core government functions is positive in itself, it can also help to reduce corruption and public distrust and disillusionment in the political system, all of which can be driven by inefficient and burdensome processes and regulations. That said, significant challenges remain before the benefits of many reforms can be realized.

A key challenge for many countries in the region is the ability to set up the machinery of government to function in less than optimal conditions. That is, to enable the provision of government services to continue through transitions of government, disasters and economic downturns, and for institutions to remain strong and independent in the face of government pressure, conflict, and extremism. Accordingly, UNDP's work in this area aims not just to improve government functions, but also to develop this resiliency.

Where governments are initiating new reforms, UNDP provides guidance and expert advice on high level strategies, action plans, and their implementation. For example, in Belarus, UNDP played a key role in the implementation of a recent government strategy to deliver more inclusive and responsive public services and improve public administration by securing commitments from partners to jointly enhance the capacity of civil servants and citizens in this area. In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP supported development of standards for 196 public services designed to make them more responsive to the needs of citizens. In Albania, UNDP helped to build the capacity of the newly established Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services through technical expertise and by providing office infrastructure. In Turkmenistan, UNDP supports the Civil Service Academy in enhancing its organizational strategy to ensure strong competencies for and professional development of civil servants. Similarly, in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, UNDP helps formulate and implement national strategies to improve service delivery and institutional capacities.

REGIONAL HUB OF CIVIL SERVICE IN ASTANA

The Regional Hub of Civil Service in Astana (the Hub) is an initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP established in March 2013 when representatives of 25 countries and five international organisations unanimously adopted the Hub's Founding Declaration. Financially and institutionally supported by the Government of Kazakhstan, with UNDP serving as the implementing partner, the Hub is a multilateral institutional platform for continuous exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of civil service development, aimed at stimulating civil service transformations in the region through fostering:

- Partnerships;
- Capacity building and peer-to-peer learning; and
- Evidence-based solutions, informed by a comprehensive research agenda.

As part of the Hub's work in 2015, in June an international conference entitled 'International Cooperation on Civil Service Excellence: A Bridge to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals' was held at the UN Headquarters in New York. Organized by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, the Hub and UNDP, the event gathered over sixty representatives

and experts from UN Member States, academia and civil services. One of the main outcomes of the conference was the launch of the Innovative Solutions Scheme. Designed to identify effective and innovative solutions in civil service and public service delivery, the Innovative Solutions Scheme provide grants to disseminate these solutions as case studies and encourage replication in other countries. The first round of the scheme has already been completed with the results being presented to the Hub's participating countries for feedback.

There were also a number of other important developments in 2015. The Hub became a member of the OECD and UNDP-run Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) and initiated piloting on its own platform of the EIP's peer-to-peer learning guide through P2P learning alliances. As a result of a close and expanding partnership with the UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence in Singapore, the Hub co-organized an innovative 'foresightXchange' workshop for civil servants and jointly published knowledge products on meritocracy, public administration and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, the UN Office on South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) praised the Hub with an award for strengthening regional and interregional South-

▶ South cooperation in the field of civil service. The Hub plans to continue to expand collaboration and experience sharing with the UNOSSC and related partners through various avenues.

Looking forward, the Hub will continue to look for innovative and effective ways to champion civil service excellence, with plans in place for a number of activities, including on-demand innovative trainings and labs on a range of topics, development of case studies and manuals for replication of various cutting-edge solutions and further strengthening of expert networks.

With its membership having now expanded to include 36 countries from around the world, the Hubs activities

are actively co-organized (and cost-shared) by its partners and participants such as the EU, OECD, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Georgia, China, and the Kyrgyz Republic, amongst others.

For more information, please visit www.regionalhub.org

"... We are delighted to be working closely with Kazakhstan on civil service excellence. Kazakhstan's strong commitment in this area makes it a logical host of the Regional Hub of Civil Service in Astana, in which UNDP is proud to be a partner."

– Ms. Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, Speech at the VIII Astana Economic Forum, 21 May 2015

Ensuring the provision of relevant and high quality training to civil servants is also a key part of UNDP's work. For example, in Azerbaijan, UNDP assisted the establishment of the Strategy and Training Unit in the Civil Service Commission and supported staff training on a range of topics such as human resource management and communication skills. In Kosovo, in response to a request from the Ministry of Local Government Administration, UNDP facilitated training for government officials on the Stabilisation and Association process and negotiation structures.

UNDP also supports efforts to directly improve public service delivery, particularly for the most vulnerable. In 2015, UNDP's work in Georgia was notable with a newly introduced SMS and video call service that improved the accessibility of emergency services for people with hearing and speaking impairments. The enhanced service has already benefitted 270 people and was nominated by the European Emergency Number Association for the 'Best Innovation in 2015'. UNDP also assisted with the creation of an Innovative Service Lab within the Public Service Development Agency to engage government ministries in using innovation to improve the quality of public services. The Lab has already achieved several notable results, including working with government partners to develop a user-friendly national ID card website, renovating the National Scientific Library, and designing a new strategy for the National Tourism Administration. With innovation being a key focus of UNDP in Armenia, cooperation was extended in 2015 to UNDP of-



Head of United Nations in Georgia – Niels Scott, the 112 team and information campaign leaders salute the launch of the new service in sign language

Photo by: Vladimer Valishvili/UNDP

fices in Moldova, Belarus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Georgia, amongst others, to promote social innovation tools in the public sector, environment and social impact investment.

New technology also provides an opportunity for governments to be more transparent, efficient and accessible. As such, UNDP looks to leverage technology to improve the methods governments employ to provide services and the way that civil service and institutions manage their responsibilities. In the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, UNDP supported the development of a web-portal that informs citizens of the ways to receive and claim their rights for public and municipal services. In Turkey, UNDP supported the enhancement and expansion of the e-visa system, significantly improving ease of use and the number of users. In Montenegro, UNDP supported the introduction of the new Social Card – Social Welfare Information System, which allows for better targeting and more efficient delivery of services, and provides a wealth of data for evidence-based planning.

Highlights



Assisted the establishment of a Strategy and Training Unit in the Civil Service Commission and supported staff training on a range of topics in Azerbaijan.



Improved the accessibility of emergency services for people with hearing and speaking impairments in Georgia with a newly introduced SMS and video call service that was nominated by the European Emergency Number Association for 'Best Innovation in 2015'.



Innovation in public service delivery across UNDP in Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova.



Supported the development of a web-portal in the Kyrgyz Republic that informs citizens of the ways to receive and claim their rights for public and municipal services.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

For the vast majority of people in the region, local government remains the most accessible level of government. It is the most direct way for people to access basic services and opportunities to improve their lives, to participate in public processes where decisions affecting their lives are made, and to exercise their rights and obligations. As such, effective local governance is key to inclusive and sustainable development. It is also essential for improving the quality of life of people both in urban and rural settings, reducing inequality across society, and enhancing relations between people and public institutions. For a region like the ECIS with its many ethnically and religiously diverse societies, increased power for local government is also a way to provide a stronger voice for minorities. In light of the above, UNDP works throughout the ECIS region to improve-

local governance and economic development, strengthen local democracy and, where the capacity is in place at the local level, support decentralisation.

Often a first step towards effective decentralization, UNDP supports efforts to build the capacity of local governance units (LGUs), enabling them to better plan and take on more responsibility. An example of this can be seen in Albania, where UNDP supports LGUs, formed as a result of the recent territorial and administrative reform, to develop Local Development Operational Plans, modernize services, and introduce innovative public service models including one-stop shops and e-services, which strengthen local data management. In Montenegro, UNDP has undertaken similar work with several local municipalities to improve their capacity for attracting investment through business zone management plans, promotional materials, and a web portal. In Kosovo, UNDP also

supported the strengthening of local capacities for economic and rural development in several municipalities, and enhanced inter-municipal peer-to-peer knowledge and experience sharing to facilitate local economic empowerment and job creation, particularly for those at risk of economic and social exclusion.

In Tajikistan, strong government commitment for the local development planning process resulted in the planning process becoming a mandatory exercise for all districts as of 2015. Currently, 90 percent of rural districts in the country now have District Development Plans (DDPs), including 13 new DDPs and 15 updated

DDPs in 2015. This was made possible through the provision of training and methodological support by UNDP for 1020 members of DDP working groups. In the Kyrgyz Republic, a new model of one-stop shop service centres established with help of UNDP by local municipalities in 30 rural areas was recognized as successful and has been further replicated in 58 localities. Moreover, UNDP's support to build the capacity of LGUs took on a new level of importance in 2015 due to the refugee and migrant crisis which heavily affected local border communities in Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey.

MIGRATION AND DISPLACEMENT: A RESILIENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

In its approach to migration and displacement, UNDP focuses on long-term positive impacts and resilience-based development solutions. In Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, the effects of large-scale movements of migrants and refugees provided an important opportunity to evaluate and enhance the resilience of affected municipalities and communities. The large number of people meant many municipalities struggled to provide basic services, including waste management, health care, and security to both migrants and host communities, while also preventing inhumane and degrading treatment, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). It became evident that contingency planning needed to be improved and recovery planning initiated.

The Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RRMRP) built on efforts to increase coordination of an effective national resilience-based response in affected countries, complementing humanitarian efforts led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The aim was to ensure that the response at the municipal level benefited from regional coordination, thus creating the foundations for a sustainable recovery. UNDP's work in the region added value in terms of support for local government response and resilience.

In Serbia, with the support of the regional programme funded by Turkey, UNDP worked to build the capacities of municipalities by focusing on public utilities, particularly water and waste management. In Preševo, continuous water supply for 35,000 people was ensured while simul-

taneously reducing water loss by 20 percent. Support was also provided for planning and organisation of waste management, including an improved waste collection plan, a unified financial system for utility services, and the provision of appropriate equipment to public utility workers, thereby allowing an additional 6,000 citizens to receive services. In Šid, two water wells were renovated to increase yields by up to 50 percent, ensuring uninterrupted water supply. These efforts have continued in 2016 with the support of the Government of Japan.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, UNDP donated new garbage trucks and containers, and introduced a new waste-management system, including a recycling system in Gevgelija and Kumanovo. Again with support from the Government of Japan, building up the resilience of infrastructure has continued in 2016, with the local water system is being updated in Gevgelija and roads reconstructed in Kumanovo.



The challenges of dealing with solid waste were exacerbated by the migrant and refugee crisis

Photo by: Ivan Zverzhanovski



In Turkey, the protracted displacement of over 2 million refugees is causing significant challenges. With more than 85 percent of Syrian refugees living outside camps, local service providers are struggling to meet basic needs, particularly when it comes to education, health and municipal services. Within this context, UNDP has strengthened local service delivery by providing emergency and municipality vehicles, and helped to increase solid waste management capacity,

both in camp and municipal settings. This includes developing waste segregation programmes in six refugee camps and the construction of two waste transfer stations, with support from the EU and US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. In addition, UNDP is facilitating training that covers vocational skills, employability, life-skills and entrepreneurship to maximise employment opportunities to both refugee and Turkish host populations.

A key aspect of UNDP's local governance programming is support for the effective participation and engagement of civil society and the public in local decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms. Primarily, this involves strengthening the ability of the public to monitor LGUs, as well as to engage with local government to work more closely together. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the introduction of 'My Municipality', a web-based tool for collection and data analysis offered an important alternative channel for citizens, in particular those from marginalized and vulnerable groups, to express their views on local development priorities and take a more active role through real-time tracking of progress and trends. In BiH, the long running Reinforcement of Local Democracy (LOD) project has improved cooperation between local governments and civil society organizations, enhancing the transparency and accountability of public spending at the local level, and allowing for the realization of grass-root initiatives. The success of this innovative approach has led the EU to partner with UNDP to replicate the project throughout the Balkans.

At the policy level, UNDP works with central governments to develop strategies, action plans and laws for devolving power to LGUs. One of the best examples of UNDP's work in this area was in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where UNDP supported the Ministry of Local Self-Government to prepare a new programme and action plan for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2015-2020. This was specifically noted as a point of progress in the latest European Commission report. UNDP also assisted the

Parliament in Turkmenistan to conduct a review of the administrative, legal, and financial systems of local governments in order to develop a list of proposals for improvement. The resulting recommendations, if adopted, will provide more independence for local communities and their representative bodies. With UNDP support, Georgia has also been making significant progress in decentralization, passing a number of acts and adopting a new Law on Mountainous Regions Development. This new law will provide LGUs with substantial social, economic and business benefits, and a guarantee of annual funds from the national budget.

The largest decentralization reform process in the region is currently underway in Ukraine. A priority set by the post-Maidan government in 2014, the reforms include a wide range of efforts including constitutional changes, territorial-administrative amalgamation, fiscal decentralization and tax reform. To support Ukraine in these efforts, UNDP held a two-day conference in Kyiv in December 2015 titled 'Making Decentralisation Reform Work: Opportunities and Innovations for Local Governance and Service Delivery'. The conference brought together over 150 local development experts, civil society activists and representatives of national and local governments from over 20 countries to discuss opportunities and innovations for local governance and service delivery. One of the key takeaways of the conference was the importance of transparent and inclusive reform processes. Ensuring transparency and openness are not only crucial for building political consensus for reforms, but also for finding innovative solutions to complex policy and service delivery problems.

Highlights



Two-day Making Decentralization Reform Work conference held in Kyiv, bringing together over 150 experts and activists from over 20 countries.



Assistance provided to local governments in Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey to help deal with the refugee and migrant crisis, including immediate support and assessments to determine future priorities.



Supported the Ministry of Local Self-Government in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to prepare a new programme and action plan for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2015-2020.



Supported smaller LGUs in Albania formed as a result of the recent territorial and administrative reform programme to develop Local Development Operational Plans, modernize services, create one-stop shops and employ a data management system.

