



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

**2014 ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

# **HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW IN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)**

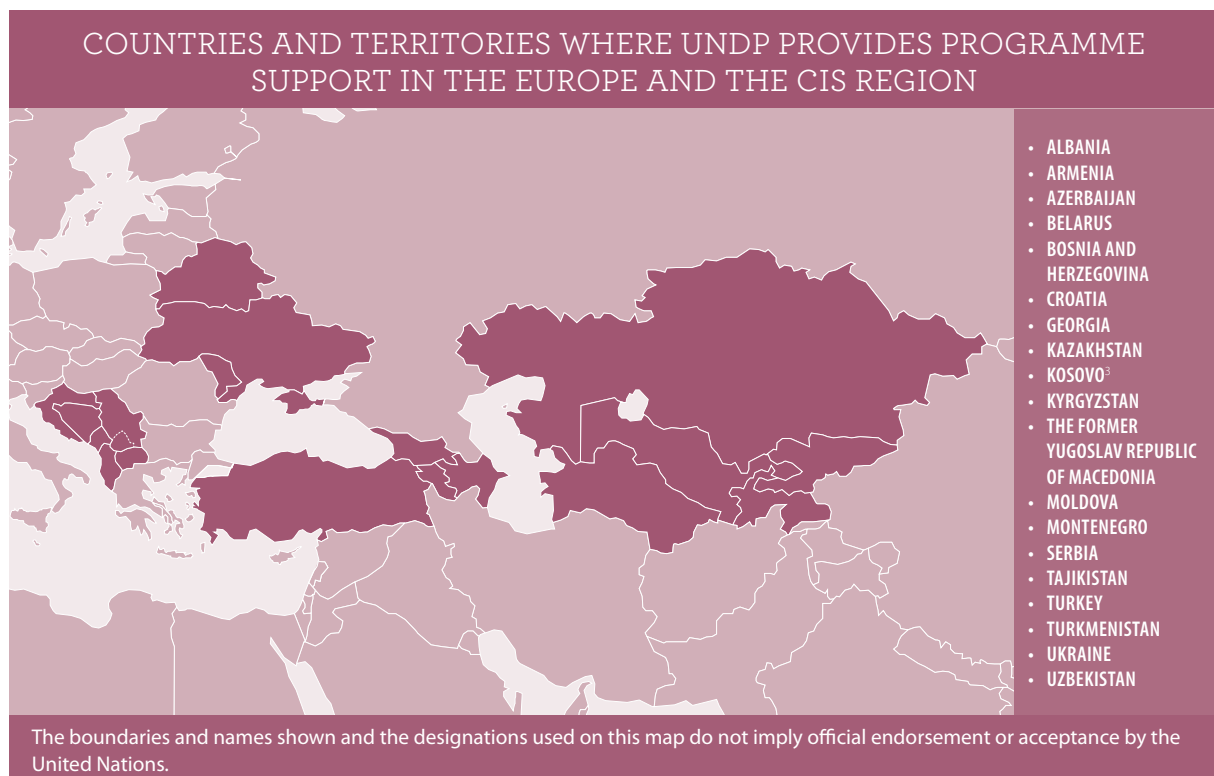


2014

# ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

UNDP's work in the area of rule of law and human rights in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is closely intertwined with socio-economic and political developments. Although Europe and the CIS comes second in the Human Development Index (HDI) rankings among developing regions—behind Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>1</sup>—poverty levels are disturbingly high, even in some upper middle-income countries.<sup>2</sup> In 2014, countries in the region have been struggling to return to robust economic growth. The entire region still faces the consequences of past authoritarian or totalitarian regimes and of recent and current armed conflicts. In many parts, democracy remains fragile and restrictions of political and civil rights continue to hamper progress. The crisis in Ukraine has dominated regional events, threatening regional stability with direct or indirect economic consequences for several countries in the region. Substantial progress has been made, however, in many countries towards political stability, consolidation of democracy, rule of law, and the improvement of human rights records.

Promoting human rights and strengthening the rule of law are essential to UNDP's mission of supporting countries to achieve sustainable human development, strengthen democratic governance, and prevent crisis. UNDP supports countries to apply the rule of law in a fair and inclusive manner, and to empower citizens to make the most effective use of protection offered by the law.



1 UNDP Press Release, "Progress slowed by social exclusion and environmental vulnerabilities in developing countries of Europe & Central Asia," 24 July 2014.

2 UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, "Poverty, Inequality, and Vulnerability in the Transition and Developing Economies of Europe and Central Asia," October 2014.

3 All references to Kosovo are to be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).



**“ UNDP assisted the Government to reach out to the leading non-governmental organizations, civil groups and the media, making the process of developing and adopting the Law (on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination) truly inclusive.**

**– Tea Tsulukiani, Minister of Justice of Georgia**

In the Europe and the CIS Region, UNDP works with national and international partners to protect and promote human rights, strengthen the rule of law and enhance social cohesion. UNDP's programmes aim to: strengthen national human rights systems; support the development and implementation of justice sector reforms and improve justice service delivery; address sexual and gender-based violence; and support transitional justice processes to promote redress for past violence and human rights violations. UNDP's community security approach helps communities to improve their safety and security and strengthen public services, enhancing inter-ethnic dialogue and promoting a culture of human rights.

# AREAS OF OUR WORK AND KEY RESULTS



## ENHANCING COLLABORATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM AND STRENGTHENING NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION

UNDP has been facilitating productive dialogue among governments, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), civil society, and other stakeholders. UNDP supports NHRIs and other independent oversight institutions to enhance their role as cornerstones of national human rights systems and to help develop their capacities.

UNDP, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), also supports states to prepare for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, including implementation of UPR recommendations as well as recommendations from other international and regional human rights mechanisms.

**In Georgia, the National Human Rights Strategy 2014-2020 and Action Plan 2014-2015 were adopted.**

**In Armenia, a large-scale joint civil society initiative to support the UPR follow-up has resulted in strengthened human rights dialogue between the Government and civil society; also, the 2014-17 Human Rights Action Plan was aligned with recommendations.**

**In Ukraine, a regional network of experts was established to assist the Ombudsperson with human rights monitoring in 10 regions.**



## PREVENTION OF TORTURE AND ILL TREATMENT, AND IMPROVEMENT OF DETENTION CONDITIONS

In their reports addressed to a number of countries in the region, the UN and other international organizations repeatedly include recommendations on the prevention of torture and ill treatment, as well as on improving detention conditions. Some governments, with the support of UNDP and other international partners, have taken important steps to address them. Several countries in the region, which have ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, have established a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) with UNDP's support.

**In Moldova, a Patients' Advocate was established in psychiatric institutions to provide legal counseling and to monitor patients' treatment and rights. From July 2013 to December 2014, around 3,091 patients benefitted from services from the Advocate.**

**In Georgia, UNDP has supported the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) - under the Public Defender's Office - to exercise its independent monitoring of prison conditions. In 2014, guidelines on monitoring penitentiary establishments were developed in line with UN and Council of Europe standards.**



## SUPPORTING ANTI-DISCRIMINATION MEASURES AND PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Many countries, composed of multiple national, ethnic, and religious minorities, have faced co-existence challenges that have fueled past conflicts. A number of minority groups still suffer from discrimination and exclusion in political, social, and economic spheres - a situation that continues to pose threats to future social cohesion. Discrimination based on gender, disability, and sexual orientation are also problematic across the region.

Addressing inequalities and fighting discrimination is one of the key human rights principles at the core of UNDP's efforts to promote human rights and strengthen the rule of law worldwide. UNDP collaborates with national partners in several countries to adopt preventive measures and promote and protect the rights of excluded and marginalized communities.

Many countries across the region have also made efforts to respect and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, persons with disabilities still face social exclusion, low educational attainment, unemployment, and limited opportunities to participate in political and social life.<sup>4</sup>

**In Uzbekistan, a National Action Plan for the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was drafted.**

**In Albania, increased outreach by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) among vulnerable communities, such as Roma and Egyptian, has led to an increased number of complaints received by this institution.**

**In Georgia, a new Law on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination was adopted, with UNDP's support, through a participatory preparation process.**

4 UNDP Regional Center for Europe and the CIS, "Promoting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Europe and the CIS: Guide," 2013.



## SUPPORTING LEGAL REFORMS AND STRENGTHENING EFFECTIVE JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Countries in the region face challenges in the justice sector ranging from inadequate legal frameworks to lack of implementing capacities of the judiciary and other enforcement mechanisms. The majority of these countries and, in particular those aspiring to EU integration, have undertaken or are in the process of undertaking, comprehensive legal and judicial reforms. UNDP has been a key partner of governments by contributing to the development of justice reform strategies, supporting adoption or amendment of key legislation in the justice sector, and facilitating dialogue between state actors and civil society on the implementation of reforms. Supporting the capacities of justice sector actors, and offering technical assistance to improve their efficiency, is another area of intervention.

**In Montenegro, the new Strategy on Judiciary Reform 2014-2018 was adopted.**

**In Turkey, a specialized Department on Rights of Victims was established.**

**In Tajikistan, a National Policy Dialogue Platform on Rule of Law and Access to Justice was established and the Government's new Judicial and Legal Reform Programme for 2015-2017 was adopted.**

**In Kyrgyzstan, with UNDP's support, several key pieces of legislation, including the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, were drafted and amended, following a number of public consultations.**



## PROMOTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH LEGAL AID FOR MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Access to justice enables individuals to seek remedies for their grievances through formal and informal justice systems in accordance with human rights principles and standards. UNDP promotes access to justice through legal aid as an essential element for a fair, humane, and efficient criminal justice system. UNDP also strives to extend legal services in civil, administrative, and other areas of law, and supports alternative dispute mechanisms.

Supporting national efforts to develop policies and national frameworks and systems on legal aid has been a key objective for UNDP in many parts of the region. Another priority for UNDP is to strengthen the capacities of state agencies and civil society providers to deliver adequate legal aid services. As a result of this support, thousands of victims of domestic violence, people with low-income, unemployed people from different ethnic or national minorities, persons with disabilities, youth, and those living in remote areas have been able to receive legal aid services and counseling, court representation, or basic legal information.

**In Kosovo, a total of 1,076 cases were referred for mediation to the Mediation Commission and a database was developed that produces reports and disaggregates data by gender and ethnicity.**

**In Bosnia and Herzegovina, legal aid services were provided in 11,726 cases through a free legal aid network that was established countrywide; a database was launched to connect all free legal aid providers and to ensure an efficient way for monitoring cases.**

**In Georgia, the Legal Aid Service became an independent institution and its mandate was expanded to civil and administrative cases.**

**In Ukraine, 4000 individuals (including those in areas affected by the conflict) received legal advice through local authorities and civil society organizations supported by UNDP.**

**In Turkey, the first 2000 mediators were selected to contribute to the implementation of the new Law on Mediation in Civil Disputes.**



## **ENHANCEMENT OF COUNTRY CAPACITIES TO PREVENT AND ELIMINATE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world and a common concern for countries in the Europe and the CIS region. Sexual violence is typically escalated in conflict situations, and in several countries in the region, such as in the Western Balkans, women and girls have been disproportionately affected by, and still suffer from, the legacy of conflict-related sexual violence.

UNDP is supporting a number of governments to adopt and implement comprehensive preventive and protection measures against SGBV. The reduction of SGBV is part of UNDP's strategic priority to contribute to citizen security and the reinforcement of the rule of law. Victims of SGBV are one of the groups that UNDP particularly supports through its legal aid initiatives in the region.

**In Albania, an online tracking system for domestic violence cases was established.**

**In The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Law on Prevention, Combat, and Protection of Domestic Violence was approved in 2014.**

**In The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a 33% increase of registered criminal offences for domestic violence was recorded as a result of capacity building of national institutions and public awareness on the prevention of gender-based violence.**



## **DEALING WITH THE LEGACY OF CONFLICTS/TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE**

Over the last 25 years, many countries in the region have experienced large-scale conflicts. The legacy of armed conflicts, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, continues to challenge political, economic, and social development. At the same time, it hampers inter-ethnic and inter-state reconciliation and the full enjoyment of human rights and the rule of law. Citizens continue to seek justice and accountability for war crimes, and dealing with the legacy of violence is an indispensable condition towards reconciliation. UNDP supports various nationally led transitional justice processes that contribute to atonement for past crimes and human rights violations, and that facilitate state accountability. These are key for re-establishing social cohesion, trust and reconciliation.

**In Croatia, the Law on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence in the Homeland War was adopted by the Parliament in May 2015.<sup>5</sup>**

**In Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 900 victims and witnesses (of both war crimes and other criminal cases) received psychological, legal and logistical support, through victim and witness support offices.**

**In Ukraine, the establishment of the 15-strong civil society organization coalition, "Justice for Peace in Donbas," has been supported by UNDP to document human rights violations in the conflict areas.**

5 "Homeland War" is widely used in Croatia to refer to the 1991-1995 Croatian war of independence.



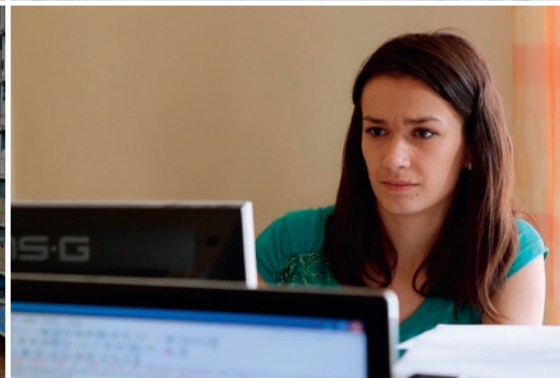
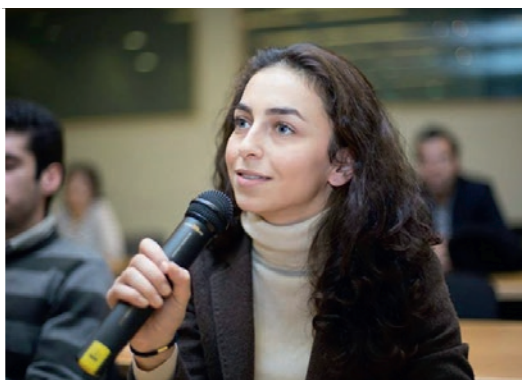
## INCREASING COMMUNITY SECURITY

Inter-ethnic tensions, circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), organized crime, and human trafficking, challenge security in many countries in the region. Lack of safety can perpetuate mistrust among individuals, communities, and the state. This can affect economic growth and investments, and absorb government resources, which could otherwise be spent on other areas of development.

UNDP's community security approach involves communities in identifying reasons for feeling insecure, as well as possible solutions for improving safety. Initiatives UNDP supports include enhancing human security for vulnerable communities and developing the capacities of law enforcement officials.

**In Kosovo, from 2009 to 2014, 31 safer community activities were implemented in 11 municipalities, covering 71 villages and 14 neighbourhoods. Three municipalities drafted safer community plans, installed surveillance cameras and established monitoring centers. There was a significant decrease in the number of criminal offences in the target region, including a 33% decrease in homicide cases.**

Credits for photos in this document go to: Vrezh Najaryan; Gor Kroyan; Elton Veliu; Daro Sulakauri; Maryia Malinouskaya; Department of Penitentiary Institutions of the Republic of Moldova; Meri Bekeshova; UNDP Turkey; David Khizanishvili; UNDP Macedonia; Alisher Primkulov; Mykola Tymchenko, The Day newspaper Ukraine; UNDP Ukraine; Len'yara Abibulayeva, The Day newspaper Ukraine; Gor Kroyan; UNDP Uzbekistan; UNDP Ukraine; UNDP Kazakhstan; Aleksandar Zahorodni. For additional photo details, please see the full report.



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.

View full report at <http://on.undp.org/RloQP>

United Nations Development  
Programme  
Istanbul Regional Hub  
Key Plaza, Abide-i Hürriyet Cd.  
İstiklal Sk. No 11, Şişli, 34381  
Istanbul, Turkey  
[www.eurasia.undp.org](http://www.eurasia.undp.org)