



Annual

Report

**On the activities carried out by the Armenian Aarhus
Centers in the months of**

January-December, 2014

In 2014 the Aarhus Centers have continued their mission guided by the Aarhus Convention (access to information, public participation in decision-making process and access to justice).

Remaining loyal to their mission have provided platform for discussions of civil initiatives, meetings and formation of the ecological culture, served as a link between government and non-governmental organizations based on the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention: to promote environmental conservation and sustainable development of communities.

The Armenian Aarhus Centers have begun their official activities on March 1, but the work has not been stopped even a minute, starting from January 10.

The Aarhus Centers activity has been carried out in accordance with the Terms of Reference approved by the Annex 2 of the service contracts of coordinators, which in turn was based on the road map of Aarhus Centers and was coordinated with the agreement signed between "Blejan" NGO and the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

- ✓ In general during the reporting period the Aarhus Centers separately or in partnership with other organizations have implemented 505 events, including 261 events in direction of access to information, 77- in direction of public participation, 3 event dedicated to Access to Justice and 111 events in direction of eco-education, have initiated 36 public discussions, have participated in 15 public hearings, to which have participated totally 6233 people, of which 2977 were men and 3219 were woman. Have disseminated the acquired information on the discussed issues or projects. 73 times the centers have provided venues to various civil initiatives / in the attached files you can see the Aarhus Centers statistical report more detailed /.
- ✓ In cooperation with the all Aarhus Center Coordinators, experts and members of Eco Alliance have been organized and conducted an awareness raising seminar on environmental issues and procedures related to decision-making, in particular the EIAE draft law on the regulation of the mining industry: http://aarhus.am/?page_id=3257 :



- The Centers jointly, headed by Gavar Aarhus Center have implemented large scale activity regarding the draft law on the additional water outlet from Sevan: have informed the public, involved citizens in decision-making process; the coordinators of Gavar and Yerevan centers and

the press officer of the centers personally took part in the discussion organized by the National Assembly on this initiative, raised issues related to the problem, workshops, demonstrations associated with the issue were also held in other Aarhus centers, particularly in centers of Alaverdi, Aparan, Stepanavan, Ijevan, Kapan, supported to the activities of Gavar Aarhus Centre and Gegharkunik NGOs.



Aparan AC 29.04.14



Stepanavan AC, 30.04.14



Alaverdi AC, 29.04.14



Gavar and Yerevan ACs 29.04.14



Kapan AC, 29.04.14

- Gyumri Aarhus Center in association with the Third Nature NGO have conducted training courses under the theme “Methods of public monitoring of urban green areas and their management processes” in Gyumri Aarhus Center, coordinated the process of monitoring of green areas management in the city of Gyumri by the Youth Group. http://aarhus.am/?page_id=7782&lang=en
- Within the framework of the project has been implemented public monitoring of urban green areas in the city of Gyumri based on its results a report were drawn up, the co-author of which is as well Gevorg Petrosyan, coordinator of Gyumri AC. The electronic version of the report can be downloaded through this link. <http://www.3nature.am/docs/Report.pdf> :



For the officials of local self- governing institutions and regional government awareness raising events were held regarding their obligations undertaken by the Aarhus Convention and the national law, in particular.

In the Centers of Gavar, Hrazdan, Yeghvard, Kapan seminars were held; Kapan Aarhus Center even held a series of workshops for leaders and staff representatives of almost all rural and urban communities of the region.



Gavar , 30.11.14



Hrazdan, 22.10.14



Kapan, 9-17.09.14

The Aarhus Centres have jointly prepared informational leaflets, which have already been published under the themes "How to participate in environmental decision-making process?", "Where from and how to obtain environmental information?" and "Who to contact and what to do when your rights and environmental interests have been violated"/ you can see attached to the report /, which in further will be provided to the relevant structures.



- ✓ The Centers have simultaneously implemented an agreed activity regarding the draft law on the additional water outlet from Sevan and gave separate interviews over the issue, participated in TV programs



- ✓ particularly referring to the Aarhus Convention and highlighting the importance of informing and involving the local governments, especially the affected communities in the decision-making process. links on providing information and TV programs on Sevan are below:

<http://www.armeniatv.am/hy/programs/39041/45826#.UuKtb4fqIXY.facebook>,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDsCjkmxVCc>

<http://ecolur.org/hy/news/sevan/join-quot-save-sevanquot-marching/6080/> :

- ✓ The Centers have carried out activities in dissemination of best practices for effective environmental management existing in Armenia, particularly in the region, in presentation of the

best examples of collaboration of government agencies and the public, to propose effective measures and mechanisms of cooperation between the civil society organizations actively cooperating with Eco Alliance, “Ecolur” NGO, Pan Armenian Environmental Front, “Women” and other civic initiatives).



- Collaboration with the Center for Bird Lovers through organizing and conducting photography master classes for young people of communities in the expectation that young people will not be indifferent to their community's problems, will take photos and give information about concerning them issues.



- Organization of a series of events and actions in association with the EcoLur informational NGO,



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- Cooperation with the Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment NGO within the framework of the "Choose Safe Toys" initiative,



- Collaboration with the Centre for Geoinformation Science in terms of sharing experience in monitoring of Armenia's forests, organizing joint seminars in Idjevan, Alaverdi, Vanadzor, Kapan and Aparan Aarhus Centers.



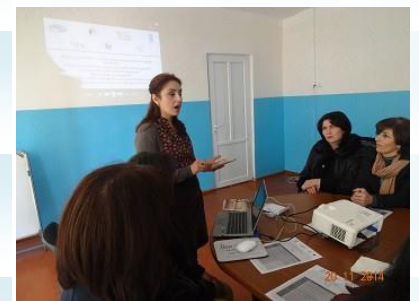
- Cooperation aimed at improving the management of hydropower sector with the expert arrived from German, ensuring participation of representatives of the Pan-Armenian Environmental Front and the Ecological Alliance and etc.



- Gavar Aarhus Centre in collaboration with the Martuni Women's Community Council NGO held a seminar under the theme of environmental problems in Martuni.



- In collaboration with "Khazer" Ecological and Cultural NGO the Armenian Aarhus Centers press officer participated in amendment of the "We and our planet," booklets, with the support of Yerevan, Gyumri, Aparan, Gavar, Ararat, Stepanavan, Dilijan centers have been implemented brochures presentations and training courses on topics included therein and the Aarhus Convention.



- ✓ The ACs have initiated or supported to organization of 111 ecological events with involvement of representatives of NGOs, students, youth, teachers, aimed at implementation the environmental issues of the region as well as the rights guaranteed by the Aarhus Convention.



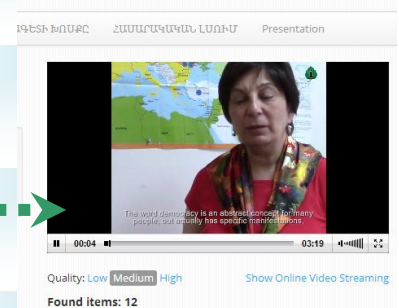
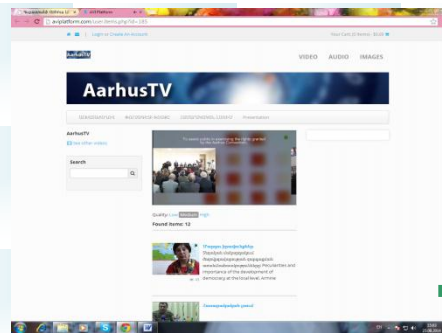
Gavar AC, 14.07.14

Idjevan AC, 28.05.14

Goris AC, 12.04.14

- ✓ ✓ Through various means and methods: web pages, newsletters, information stands, articles, etc., have assisted to dissemination of environmental information and raised the level of public awareness promoting the availability and accessibility of environmental information (using opportunities of www.aarhus.am website, the local electronic networks and various mass media).
 - The ACs have released a message on the propaganda of Sevan issue and especially inclusion it in the list of the UNESCO Natural Heritage, which had been used by the media, particularly <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dY3ks1tLz8Y> AR TV News - 21.04.2014
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYjpk0ZHzO4> 29.04.2014 Free Zone – at 14: 00 minute telephone conversation with Dilijan AC coordinator: presentation of information on the water quality collected by the Centre and official inquiry.
 - Representatives of the ACs have participated in various TV programs, presenting both the ACs activity and variety of information of the field <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ib7OAC301E>, Ecology - 02.05.2014: participation in the peaceful demonstration at the entrance of the NA on the day of discussion of legislative initiative on the additional water outlet from Lake Sevan.
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJa3XiIL9YE> AR TV Road program - 05.05.2014: the issue of additional water outlet from Lake Sevan.
 - Gavar Aarhus Center had quickly responded to the problem caused by the Argichi SHPPs pipes explosion and provided information for the AC website, on the basis of which has been prepared a press release and distributed to the media; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVPZC7gWJ5M> Ekologika 16.05.2014:

- The report on changes in Lake Sevan level has been published in various media, including: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EESXBiunHbI> Ekologika-News 23.05.2014, <http://www.ecolur.org/hy/news/officials/lake-sevan-level-equal-to-last-years-indicator/6209/> EcoLur21.05.2014:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVqEd1uBnIQ> Free Zone -21.05.2014` Sevan Issues.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_uu9Cjv-no Tree pruning in Stepanavan region, etc.
- In order to disseminate accurate and high quality information has been created the AarhusTV, which as of June 30 was completed with experts interviews, accompanied by English translation, bilingual video films on the Aarhus Centers activity, and complete records of public hearings and discussions. <http://aviplatform.com/user.items.php?id=185>: The TV enables you to view both the online transmission and the optional interested program. It provides an opportunity for those who can not directly participate in public discussions or hearings, to watch and listen to the raised issues at a distance and impact on the final decision.



- The ACs have released a message on the propaganda of Sevan issue and especially inclusion it in the list of the UNESCO Natural Heritage, Gavar Aarhus Center have coordinated the activity of Gegharkunik Province NGOs in this direction: <http://armtimes.com/hy/read/50087>, <http://armtimes.com/hy/read/49854>
- The AC of Gyumri has repeatedly referred to the landscape issues, illegal logging and the options of solving the problem at the local level, provided information to the media: <http://tsayg.am/mainpage/7601-insls-eu-sl-usl.html>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EssSYwaobbE>) <http://hetq.am/arm/news/54019/gyumrium-tsareri-ety-katarvum-e-komunal-bazhni-peteri-tchashakov.html#.U00A2R-o8uQ.facebook>
- ✓ AC representatives have participated in various TV programs, presenting both the AC activity and various information of the field.

- Gavar AC made recommendations to the Commission on the Sevan Lake issues under the President of the RA to prevent the dangers posed by the project of fishery through network economy and on the alternative approaches of Sevan Lake biodiversity conservation.
- On April 29 the ACs jointly filed a letter to the RA Prime Minister and put forward proposals on making Amendments and Additions to the package of the RA Law "On purposeful use of environmental charges paid by companies" presented by the Ministry of Nature Protection for the benefit of communities and civil society, <http://aarhus.am/letters/Harcim%20karavarutyun.pdf>, response: http://aarhus.am/letters/Mari_Patasxan.pdf:
- As its continuation awareness raising activities have been initiated in the communities. A major event was held in Alaverdi:

<http://hetq.am/arm/news/54776/pordzaget-bnapahpanakan-vtcharnery-nvazecvel-en-khardakhutyan-ev-manipulyaciayi-ardyunqum.html>, http://aarhus.am/?page_id=7561, <http://lori.gov.am/news/item/2014/11/20/news/>, <http://ankyun3.am/haxordumner/qaxagapetarani-jam/qaghagapetarani-zham-23-11-14.html#.VlfsU8koQwA>



- ✓ For promotion of public participation have been initiated 15 public debates, the centers served as a platform for conducting environmental consultations, negotiations and training courses.



- ✓ The Centers coordinators have participated in 15 public hearings supported their organization, 4 of which were held in Aarhus centers.

For example, public hearings on Dilijan wastewater treatment plant, Dilijan NP management plan, resort



design documents were held in Dilijan AC, on the other cases the AC assisted to those organization.

- ✓ Aiming at ensuring broader and informed public participation in public hearings the links of announcements and draft documents published at the www.mnp.am website were also posted at the www.aarhus.am website, have been disseminated through electronic networks ensuring proper creation of public awareness.
- ✓ The ACs have promoted the affected communities public participation in the public hearings, conducted public consultation meetings if necessary.
- ✓ In this direction especially actively has operated Aparan Aarhus Center, the all process of public hearings have been fully recorded and disseminated informing broader public.



- ✓ Together with the members and experts of NGOs of the Ecological Alliance have been held consultation meetings for the public, informed the population of Meliqgyug village on the organizing and conducting public hearings as well as about decisions further process made during the hearings.
- ✓ Aiming at more active engagement of citizens in the environmental protection cause have applied to the competent authorities and received the EIA draft on the planned activities and conducted informational meetings with representatives of the interested public.



- ✓ In order to collect information on the condition of the components of the surrounding environment the ACs have made various information requests addressed to the competent authorities possessing information. http://aarhus.am/?page_id=132, if needed, public debates were organized based on the available information.
- ✓ In the months of January-December, 2014 the ACs have made various information requests addressed to the competent authorities possessing information to collect information on the surrounding environment The total number of requests is 101, one of which, have made all the centers jointly.

- ✓ The considerable part of requests were addressed to the government, mainly the Ministry of Nature Protection, to which accounts 1/3 of the total requests, in the second place are the requests addressed to Yerevan municipality(6) and the LSGs(13). In 6 cases necessity arose for re-survey, because of incomplete answer or failure to respond to the request, in case of the repeated information request the response was received in the shortest term and completed.

The most conscientiousness has been displayed by Yerevan Municipality, which had always maintained the 5-day period responding the questions completely, only once did not provide the requested copies offering to become familiar with them in the place, but had provided them later after the repeated information request, when in the request had been mentioned the inconveniences of getting acquainted in the place.

The 5-day time period have been maintained by the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Stepanavan Forestry of the "ArmForest" SNCO within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, Anti-Epidemic Center of Tavush province within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Dilijan NP.

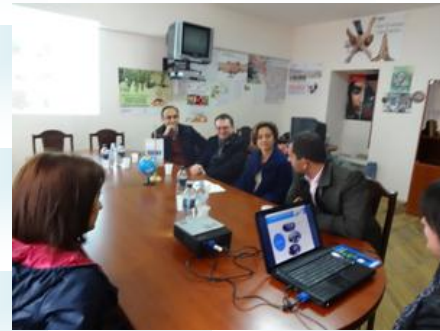
Within the 5 day period the MNP has only sent notification about the receipt of the letter, but mostly maintaining responses maintaining the 1-month period.

However, most of the responses have not contained answers to the specific questions raised in the letter of inquiry, in some cases, have been missed the response date, 1 letter was remained unanswered: the latter was about ensuring security of the abandoned mines in the area of the city of Kapan, sent on March 17.

- ✓ AC coordinators have participated in the activities of the Eco-Alliance, the 3rd working group of the EaP CSF, Climate national platform, as well as in the other networks and initiatives campaigns.
- ✓ ACs representatives, press officer, coordinators of Gyumri, Gavar and Stepanavan Aarhus Centers, have participated in workshops of the National Climate platform and presented their proposals on climate change and properly public informing on the adaptation issues, within the framework of the cooperation with the same platform the ACs press officer have participated in the training course of the mass media employees, presented presentation and lecture, took part in the development of the strategy of the platform's further activity.



- ✓ The ACs activity has constantly been in the spotlight of the international organizations.
- ✓ To get acquainted with the centers positive experience on the spot, on January 28 the delegation headed by Yves Rossier, Swiss Foreign Affairs State Secretary visited Hrazdan Aarhus Center.
- ✓ On March 28, Ms. A. Ifkovits Horner, Policy Advisor of the Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations and other international organizations, Mr. T. Dembski, Economic and Environmental Programme Officer at the OSCE Office in Yerevan, paid familiarization visit to Hrazdan and Dilijan Aarhus Centers.



- On 17 April, Ambassador Angelo Gnaedinger, the Special Representative of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship for the South Caucasus visited Dilijan Aarhus Center accompanied by L. Gasser, Swiss Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia, Economic and Environmental Programme Officers at the OSCE Office in Yerevan to get acquainted with the Aarhus Center activity and at the same time to meet and listen to the OSCE Youth Ambassador N. Beglaryan's report.



- On September 1, Ms. Desiree Schweitzer Deputy-Coordinator of the OCEEA – Office of the Coordinator on Economic and Environmental Affairs accompanied by T. Dembski, Economic and Environmental Programme Officer at the OSCE Office in Yerevan, G. Ghazinyan and A. Shahbazyan, officers of the same department visited Gavar and Dilijan Aarhus Centers, got acquainted with the centers activities and achievements.



✓ ACs have participated in international meetings.

- On January 14-18, the coordinator of Yeghegnazor Aarhus Center, as the OSCE Young Ambassador took part in the Model OSCE's first meeting held in Vienna, about which has presented information to his colleagues and launched active work especially with the youth. The latter offered support in preparing a letter containing the ACs concerns addressed to D. Burkhalter, the President of the Swiss Confederation, Foreign Minister and OSCE Chairperson-in-Office.
- Gavar AC coordinator has successfully participated and gave a speech in the 22nd Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum held in Vienna on 27 January.



- At the invitation of the Ministry of Nature Protection the Coordinator of Yerevan Aarhus Center have participated in the consultation, where the Aarhus Convention National Focal Point in Armenia had presented the National Report on the implementation of the Convention, which will be officially presented at the 5th meeting of the Parties in the city of Maastricht, Netherlands. During the meeting have been discussed the draft decision on compliance by Armenia with its obligations under the Convention by the Compliance Committee.



- ACs representatives have participated and the coordinator of Gavar AC has presented a comprehensive slide-show based on the ACs activity and experience under the theme “Nature protection issues in the context of the development of renewable energy in Armenia”.

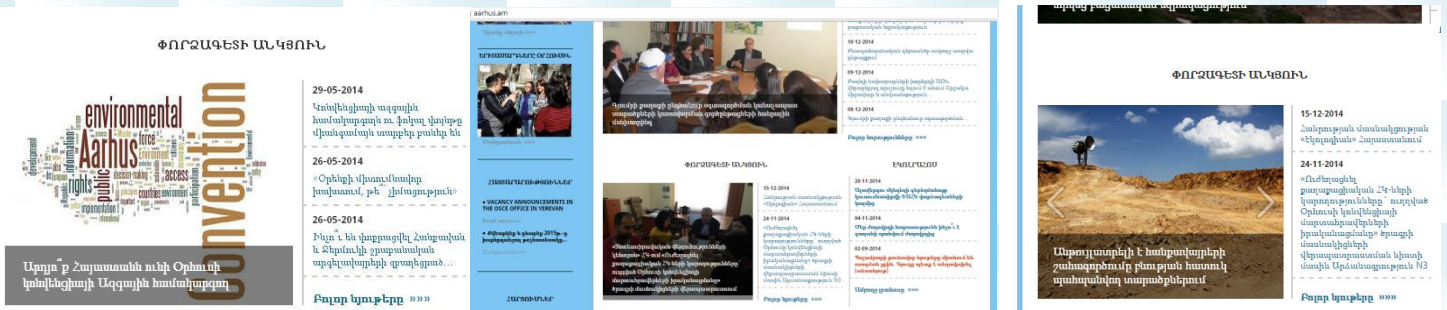


- ✓ All Aarhus Centers have presented quarterly reports to the project manager. In the end of the year on the basis of these through the efforts of the Aarhus Centers had been made a film in the form of a report / CD is attached /.
- ✓ Sessions of board of expert were convened by Kapan, Hrazdan, Dilijan, Yeghvard, Ararat, Gyumri ACs, the other centers have submitted reports on their activities to the Board of Experts by e-mails, particularly Gavar Aarhus Center has coordinated the activity of the board of experts online.
- ✓ The all centers have presented reports on the activities carried out during the second quarter to the project manager.



- ✓ Summary reports on the Center's current activities and materials have been presented by the ACs (event records, photographs, registration forms, videos, agendas, announcements, presentations, etc.), to the project manager and the Centers Press Officer, according to established procedures.
- ✓ As a result of ten years activity the Aarhus Centres have improved their skills, now they serve as a source of information producing high-quality, reliable and reasonable environmental information.
- ✓ At the “Expert's Corner” section of the Aarhus Centers www.aarhus.am website are regularly being represented unbiased analyzes and professional opinions on a number of hot ecological issues, vivid evidence of which demand and consumption is the interest of a variety of mass media, as well as the number of the website users on the presented information.
- ✓ This section of the website also provides a platform for covering information requests Centers addressed to the authorities possessing information made by the NGOs cooperating with the Aarhus and making their answers available to the public.
- ✓ This quarter the number of visitors to the www.aarhus.am website amounted to 33 641 and the number of viewed pages was 93 352.

- ✓ In addition to the news on the Aarhus Centers activities, on the website also were posted expert analysis, opinions on the environment and human health threatening issues, illegalities in the field of underground mining, Armenia's participation in international processes.



In the months of September-November within the framework of the "Aarhus centers capacity building in raising awareness of local communities to disaster risk reduction" project the Centers coordinators have taken 3 training courses making acquisition of knowledge and skills in disaster risk reduction strategy, crisis management, making cities resilient processes in Armenia.



- ✓ In accordance with this year's program the centers have worked with 3 experts: Gevorg Danielyan, Arthur Grigoryan and Naira Mandalyan / their reports are attached /
- ✓ Detailed information on the rest of activities undertaken by the Centers can be seen in the Aarhus Centers statistical report, in which have been recorded daily activities / the 15 centers statistical reports and 1 generalized report are attached with Excel files /

In addition to the achievements, there have also been some obstacles

During the year there was a great demand for lectures for local authorities, youth groups, NGOs, especially in rural or urban communities far away from the regional center on the covering the Aarhus Convention and other international documents as well as the national legislation, involving activists in the processes of the field, but the Centers due to the lack of travel expenses did not have the opportunity to visit communities. The lack of travel expenses has also hindered to participation in public hearings in the remote communities. Otherwise the participation of the centers and the public could be greater and more effective.

The Aarhus Centers on their own initiative have created the Aarhus online TV, which in the case of sufficient financial capacity could activate and disseminate a greater number of expert opinions, record public debates and hearings, montage and offer the real picture to the public.

In order to study the best practices of other countries it is desirable to make mutual visits to other Aarhus Centers, to have information exchange meetings both in Armenia, as well as in abroad, which will be useful for the Centers capacity building and improving the management.

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