

OHCHR in the field: Europe and Central Asia



Type of presence	Location
Stand-alone office	● Kosovo*
Regional offices	● Central Asia (Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic) ● Europe (Brussels, Belgium)
Human rights advisers in UN Country Teams	● Republic of Moldova ● Russian Federation ● Serbia ● South Caucasus (based in Tbilisi, covering Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) ● Tajikistan ● The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ● Ukraine

* Reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

The countries in the vast region of Europe and Central Asia (ECA) extend to members and associated members of the European Union, the Russian Federation, countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Turkey and South Caucasus and countries of Central Asia. The region also includes some disputed territories, which continue to present particular difficulties in terms of human rights protection.

Human rights challenges in Europe and Central Asia cover a wide range of issues, including the enjoyment of economic and social rights, particularly in the context of the financial crisis, as well as challenges in implementing the rights of persons with disabilities, despite relevant commitments by governments in the region. Multiple forms of discrimination; the rights of migrants and in particular the situation of unaccompanied children; the situation of the Roma; gender inequality, violence against women and trafficking; torture and ill-treatment; inadequate detention conditions; administration of justice and independence of the judiciary; freedom of the media; and the situation of human rights defenders continue to draw the attention of the Office and the human rights mechanisms.

In Europe, OHCHR engaged in various activities concerning, for example, the situation of Roma in the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, aimed at greater enjoyment of the economic, social and cultural rights by this group which faces widespread discrimination and social exclusion. OHCHR has also been involved in advocacy concerning forced evictions of Roma

and travellers in the Czech Republic, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, in close cooperation with civil society, and has been leading efforts within UN regional mechanisms on Roma-related issues.

The follow-up to concluding observations and recommendations of international human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies, special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review, as well as the implementation of human rights projects on the ground, continued to be a focus of OHCHR country-engagement work. Notably, OHCHR's ECA Section supported two regional workshops aimed at strengthening national implementation of recommendations from UN Human Rights Mechanisms in a holistic way, through introduction of relevant tools and sharing of good practices, including on a high-level State coordination mechanism for implementation.

In 2012, OHCHR pursued work under its mandate in the context of protracted conflicts in Europe, including through continued participation in the Geneva International Discussions. The Office continued reporting to the Human Rights Council as requested on the question of human rights in Cyprus. OHCHR also supported the UN engagement of the Senior Human Rights Expert in the Transnistria region of the Republic of Moldova with a view to strengthening human rights there. This is in line with the High Commissioner's general mandate to protect all human rights for all, including through seeking access to and working with de facto authorities to ensure that there be no human rights protection gaps in areas under their effective control.

The ECA Section supported the country visits of the High Commissioner to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (7-13 July); Belgium (31 May - 1 June and 5-6 December); and Switzerland (14 June). The ECA Section provided input for the week-long visit in July of the UN Secretary-General, accompanied by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

To advance human rights in the region, OHCHR maintained close contacts with regional organizations such as the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, UN departments and agencies, governmental institutions, national human rights institutions, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, academia and human rights activists, and produced thematic studies on specific areas of human rights interest. With the Council of Europe,

OHCHR continued the desk-to-desk level annual consultations, leading to the proposed development of a joint declaration between the two organizations to consolidate existing cooperation at headquarters and in the field.

In 2012, OHCHR maintained 10 field presences in Europe and Central Asia: two regional offices, (Europe and Central Asia); one stand-alone office in Kosovo; and seven Human Rights Advisers (Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Serbia, South Caucasus, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine).

Stand-alone Office

Kosovo¹

Year established	1998
Staff as of 31 December 2012	11
Expenditure in 2012	US\$ 977,464

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- OHCHR, in cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, contributed to the enhancement of capacities of the Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo (OIK) to effectively fulfil its mandate to promote and protect human rights. Technical assistance on strengthening the cooperation between the OIK and human rights defenders and civil society organizations was provided and a regular dialogue between the OIK and civil society organizations was promoted by OHCHR and its partners. The Office also provided assistance to promote strengthened interaction between the national human rights institution and international human rights mechanisms.
- In 2012, OHCHR continued its activities to promote the amendment of the Anti-Discrimination Law in order to establish an efficient mechanism for implementing the provisions of the Law and monitoring its implementation. In late 2012, the Office contributed to the recognition by authorities in Kosovo of the need to amend the Anti-Discrimination Law, including through direct

¹ Reference to Kosovo should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

advocacy; the organization of a roundtable on the implementation of the Law with representatives from the Government, Parliament, civil society and international organizations; the participation in hearings on the implementation of the Law before the Assembly's Committee on Human Rights; and support given to activities of civil society organizations. In addition, the Assembly's Committee dealing with the implementation of the Law prepared an as of yet unreleased report which recommended the Law's amendment. In 2013, the Office in Kosovo will continue providing technical support during the process of drafting the amendments.

Justice and accountability mechanisms (EA 3)

- ▶ In 2012, the Office released the findings of its analysis of the victims and witness protection system in Kosovo. Challenges from a human rights perspective were identified and recommendations were made to relevant stakeholders. As a result, the Kosovo authorities requested OHCHR to provide technical assistance for the drafting of supplementary legislation for the Law on Witness Protection. The Office in Kosovo was able to ensure the integration of a human rights-based approach and a gender perspective in the process.
- ▶ A multidisciplinary working group, composed of representatives of various ministries, the police, the judiciary, civil society organizations and the UN, was established by the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality to draft the Action Plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325. The Plan aims at enhancing women's participation in peacebuilding processes, integrating a gender perspective in security sectors and addressing the rights of survivors of sexual violence related to the past conflict. Throughout the process, OHCHR and UN Women provided continuous advice which led to the increased knowledge of participants about the human rights-based approach. The Plan is expected to be formally endorsed in 2013.
- ▶ OHCHR initiated a comprehensive study, developed in consensus with stakeholders, on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) related to the past conflict, with the objective of recommending procedures and alternatives related to access to remedies and reparations. This initiative allowed for an open discussion on sexual and gender-based violence related to the conflict in Kosovo and contributed to an increased capacity of civil society organizations to conduct research on this topic. The process has also increased the level of knowledge of the Members of the Parliament and policymakers and



For Human Rights Day 2012, OHCHR-Kosovo, Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe organized a round table entitled *Participation and inclusion in Kosovo*.

provided an opportunity for survivors to better articulate their needs. The study will be finalized in 2013 and will serve as an evidence-based advocacy tool.

Participation (EA 5)

- ▶ OHCHR supported the NGO Mission of People of Good Will in organizing a training session on human rights monitoring for local NGOs operating in northern Kosovo. The participating NGOs acquired theoretical knowledge on principles and methods of human rights monitoring, fact-finding and information-gathering and, as a consequence, their overall awareness of how to identify and address human rights violations was increased. This contributed towards their mobilization and increased involvement in the promotion and protection of human rights.

Kosovo: Expenditure in 2012

	Regular budget expenditure in US\$	Extrabudgetary expenditure in US\$
Personnel & related costs	-	703,674
Consultants	-	-
Official travel	-	14,430
Contractual services	-	16,800
General operating expenses	-	53,800
Supplies & materials	-	6,700
Seminars, grants & contributions	-	69,608
Subtotal	-	865,012
Programme support costs		112,452
GRAND TOTAL	-	977,464

Regional Offices

Regional Office for Central Asia (Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic)

Year established	2008
Staff as of 31 December 2012	10
Expenditure in 2012	US\$ 1,313,775

Results

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- ▶ In June, the Kyrgyz Parliament passed a law, in line with the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT), providing for the establishment of a National Preventive Mechanism, following more than three years of advocacy efforts by OHCHR in partnership with other organizations. The importance of establishing a National Preventive Mechanism in line with OP-CAT was also raised by the Special Rapporteur on torture during his country visits in 2011 and 2012.
- ▶ In July, the Parliament in Kyrgyzstan approved amendments to the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure to bring the definition of torture in closer compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and set stricter penalties to reflect the gravity of this crime. The Regional Office for Central Asia (ROCA) advocated for this change by lobbying with the relevant Parliamentary Committee and pointed out several provisions of the law that were not in line with CAT.
- ▶ In April, draft laws were presented in the lower chamber of the Kazakh Parliament on the establishment of a National Preventive Mechanism and civil monitoring of human rights in closed institutions. The Parliamentary Committee Working Group tasked with developing these draft laws encouraged a participatory process by including NGO representatives in the discussions. The inclusion of civil society representatives in the process was due to the successful lobbying undertaken by OHCHR and Penal Reform International.
- ▶ In Kyrgyzstan, OHCHR organized two public hearings in the Parliament, with the participation of government bodies, experts, NGOs and international organizations, to discuss the draft

Housing Code. These events raised the awareness of relevant Parliamentary Committees about the importance of human rights considerations when drafting legislation. The Office also provided the drafting team with a human rights assessment of the draft Housing Code. As a result, the text now integrates many aspects of the right to adequate housing.

- ▶ In 2012, there was a reported increase of complaints and appeals addressed to the regional Office of the Ombudsman in Osh, showing the augmented trust in the institution by rights-holders. OHCHR contributed to the increased capacity of the staff of the Kyrgyzstan Ombudsman central and regional offices by organizing trainings in cooperation with UNDP on international human rights standards and human rights monitoring, regularly meeting with Ombudsman staff and distributing publications on human rights.
- ▶ In Tajikistan, staff members of the Office of the Ombudsman improved their capacity to guide State authorities on human rights education. OHCHR contributed to this result by organizing a training of trainers on various methodologies related to human rights education. In addition, advocacy by OHCHR led to an increased willingness of the Ombudsman to carry out monitoring of closed institutions as a step towards the prevention of torture.
- ▶ The Regional Office, along with other international partners, supported the development of the National Gender Strategy until 2020 and the National Plan of Action for 2012-2014 on achieving gender equality in Kyrgyzstan by, for instance, sharing information on human rights indicators with the consultants involved in the drafting process. Following the endorsement of the National Strategy and Plan by the



Participants in a workshop on *Protection of Human Rights in the UN System* organized by OHCHR, the EU and the Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan.



The Special Rapporteur on torture visits Tajikistan.

Government, relevant State and local authorities developed their own sectoral plans. OHCHR facilitated two seminars which led the city of Bishkek to develop its own Gender Action Plan.

- The Regional Office, together with a local NGO, produced a report on the rights of ethnic minorities in Tajikistan, which provides an analysis of relevant national laws and makes policy recommendations on the matter. This report will assist future OHCHR advocacy efforts to increase understanding of minority rights protection in Tajikistan.

Participation (EA 5)

- OHCHR produced a study on minority participation in decision-making bodies at the national and local levels. The outcome report, entitled *Realization of the right to effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public affairs*, analysed the right to effective participation in practice, identified gaps regarding the inclusion of minorities in decision-making structures and provides recommendations for addressing them. The findings of this study will be shared with relevant national authorities and stakeholders, hence filling a gap of disaggregated data in terms of minority participation.

State engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 6)

- In March, the Government of Kyrgyzstan submitted its reports to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention against Torture (CAT), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights (ICESCR), including those that were overdue. They were prepared with the assistance of the Regional Office. In addition, OHCHR facilitated the preparation of the fourth national CEDAW report by providing training on the reporting guidelines to the inter-ministerial working group tasked with drafting the report and supporting the Government's initiative to hold consultations with NGOs, independent experts and international organizations on the draft report. The report was approved by the Government on 31 December 2012.

- In Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare developed an action plan for implementation of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Concluding Observations and the Agency of Construction and Utilities developed a plan to implement recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing. These positive developments also resulted from the participation of the above-noted government bodies in a training that was co-organized by ROCA on the right to adequate housing.

Civil society engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 7)

- As a result of the trainings and mentoring provided by the Regional Office, defence and NGO lawyers in Kyrgyzstan increased their knowledge of human rights mechanisms and jurisprudence of the Human Rights Committee and improved their capacity regarding strategic litigation and the drafting of individual petitions to the Human Rights Committee. Following these capacity-building activities, 11 individual complaints were submitted to the Human Rights Committee, three of which have been communicated to the Government.



Local women take part in a police and gender meeting at the police station in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, March 2012.

Responsiveness of the international community (EA 10)

- The international community and other stakeholders in Central Asia continued to seek guidance and advice from OHCHR on human rights developments in the region. For instance, in Kyrgyzstan, the Regional Office took the lead in organizing a round table on human rights and urban development with the participation of representatives from the international community, among others. Following the event, the international community was better informed about how to discuss these issues with the Government, including by making reference to relevant international human rights standards.

Regional Office for Central Asia (Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic): Expenditure in 2012		
	Regular budget expenditure in US\$	Extrabudgetary expenditure in US\$
Personnel & related costs	514,474	136,920
Consultants	6,000	12,716
Official travel	13,877	41,500
Contractual services	2,400	1,800
General operating expenses	55,386	89,242
Supplies & materials	7,399	4,150
Seminars, grants & contributions	29,000	320,078
Subtotal	628,536	606,406
Programme support costs	-	78,833
GRAND TOTAL	628,536	685,239

Regional Office for Europe (Brussels, Belgium)

Year established	2009
Staff as of 31 December 2012	4
Expenditure in 2012	US\$ 1,340,605

Results

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- The *Trainers' Manual on Anti-Trafficking Training for Border Guards of Frontex* (EU external border agency) was finalized in 2012. The Regional Office for Europe contributed to its compilation, in cooperation with other UN

agencies in Brussels, in particular by ensuring the manual reflected a human rights-based approach. The Regional Office also contributed to another document, the Human Rights Training Manual for Border Guards, in particular the module on migration. The trainings and awareness-raising activities linked to these documents have contributed to an increased awareness among border guards of the human rights-based approach to combating and preventing trafficking in persons.

- In 2012, the Regional Office presented its study entitled *Judicial Implementation of Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Europe: the case of migrant children, including unaccompanied and separated children* during a plenary session of the Committee on Civil Liberties of the European Parliament (LIBE). The study is a key advocacy tool, and its dissemination in LIBE, which is the parliamentary committee tasked with discussing human rights issues within the EU, has contributed to an increased awareness and understanding of the importance of the role of the judiciary in determining the best interests of migrant children. While highlighting good practices in judicial decision-making concerning migrant children, the study also provides evidence of differences between and within States of the European Union.

Access to justice and basic services (EA 4)

- In 2012, the Regional Office assumed co-chairmanship of the European Expert Group on Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (EEG), a broad coalition of European NGOs and intergovernmental organizations aiming at reform of services for vulnerable groups (children, persons with disabilities) in line with international human rights standards (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children). The Regional Office presented its study *Getting a Life: Living Independently and Being Included in the Community*, which argues that continued use of EU structural funds in favor of segregating institutional care would be a violation of the EU's obligation under the CRPD. The study is widely used as an advocacy tool by civil society and other stakeholders in the negotiations concerning the *ex ante* conditionality clauses in draft EU legislation for the next programming period of EU structural funds. The EEG carried out a training of European Commission officials responsible for EU structural funds, thus raising awareness of international human rights obligations. The



A Conference on non-discrimination and development hosted by the European Commission. Pictured from left: the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the EU Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs, and Michael Cashman.

EEG also launched its Guidelines and Toolkit on the use of EU funds for the transition from institutional to community-based care and at the launch, six States (the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia) declared their commitment to use the Guidelines and Toolkit in major policy reforms which are being developed. The Regional Office also supported a similar reform process under way in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- The Regional Office's study entitled *Rights of Vulnerable Children under 3: Ending their placement in institutional care*, published in 2012, outlines the human rights-based approach to alternative care for children, with a particular focus on the situation of children in institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. The study makes a strong case that institutional care is a violation of the rights of the child, as set out in key international standards. Since its publication, the study has been widely disseminated and has contributed to an increased awareness by Member States in the subregion about the relevant international standards on the issue. At a conference in Sofia, organized by UNICEF and with prominent participation by the Regional Office, a number of States from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe declared their political commitment to such reforms. Furthermore, the Czech Republic, with the support of the Regional Office, adopted an amendment to the Act on Child Protection, representing a major step towards the implementation of the aforementioned obligations.

Human rights mainstreaming within the United Nations (EA 11)

- As part of the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework, the UN Brussels Team provided commentary to drafts of EU financial instruments for the new programming period

(2014-2020). In this regard, the Regional Office provided input to the draft documents related to the European Instrument on Democracy and Human Rights with a view to reflecting a human rights-based approach in the issues covered under the Instrument. The Office ensured the integration of human rights references and concerns in the UN Brussels Team's Issues Paper submission to the European Commission in order to guide the EU's ongoing reflection on the role of social protection in EU Development Cooperation.

- The Regional Office assumed chairmanship of the Roma Task Force of the UN Regional Directors' Team and drafted the first joint position paper of the UN on Roma, *The Role of the United Nations in Advancing Roma Inclusion*, thus increasing coordination among the participating UN agencies and mainstreaming a right-based approach to Roma issues.

Regional Office for Europe (Brussels, Belgium): Expenditure in 2012

	Regular budget expenditure in US\$	Extrabudgetary expenditure in US\$
Personnel & related costs	701,122	2,194
Consultants	41,601	63,700
Official travel	-	59,083
Contractual services	-	61,250
General operating expenses	86,661	60,013
Supplies & materials	1,000	14,418
Seminars, grants & contributions	-	190,865
Subtotal	830,384	451,523
Programme support costs	-	58,698
GRAND TOTAL	830,384	510,221

Human Rights Advisers in UN Country Teams

Republic of Moldova

Year established	2008
Staff as of 31 December 2012	1

Results

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- ▶ The Republic of Moldova adopted a comprehensive anti-discrimination law in May 2012. The Human Rights Adviser (HRA) supported Government and civil society efforts in adopting the Law by providing advice on international standards and comments on the draft. In parallel, the HRA also provided relevant training for policy- and lawmakers, thereby contributing to their increased understanding on the scope and content of international human rights legal provisions related to the prohibition of discrimination. While the Law is far-reaching in its scope, it does not include legal provisions to protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation outside the work place. As a result of OHCHR engagement with national and international partners, however, the Government has committed that it will comprehensively implement the ban on discrimination.
- ▶ Also in May 2012, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Republic of Moldova's 2005 Law on HIV/AIDS, including considerably strengthened guarantees concerning non-discrimination of individuals with HIV/AIDS, privacy in relation to medical treatment, confidentiality of information and data protection. The HRA, through the Resident Coordinator's Office, provided comments on the content of the draft Law and worked with the Special Rapporteur on the right to health, who communicated with the Government on issues related to the Law during the initial drafting process.
- ▶ A Law on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, containing essential guarantees against discrimination in line with international standards, was adopted in August 2012. The HRA worked with Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the United Nations Country Team to ensure that the Law included a guarantee of equal legal capacities for persons with disabilities, as well as a guarantee of reasonable accommodation.

- ▶ As a result of the HRA's advice to the Ministries of Health and of Justice on the need to bring human rights oversight into the national psychiatric service, patients of psychiatric facilities and services in the Republic of Moldova can now refer to an Ombudsperson who is specifically mandated to oversee psychiatric services.

State engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 6)

- ▶ In follow-up to a Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendation, the National Action Plan (2011-2014) for the inclusion of Roma was re-opened for amendments and revised. The new version of the Plan, adopted in January 2012, includes significant improvements on women's rights and anti-discrimination. The HRA worked closely with partners, including the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, to advocate for a change to the Republic of Moldova's Roma policy from a focus on cultural promotion to one that is human rights-based in order to combat discrimination in key sectors, including education, employment, health care and social services.

Human rights mainstreaming within the United Nations (EA 11)

- ▶ In February, a new UN Partnership Framework for the period 2013-2017 (UNPF) was signed. The HRA was highly involved in the development of the UNPF and contributed to the inclusion of specific outcomes and targets on justice, human rights, empowerment of women and anti-discrimination, as well as outcomes explicitly framed around implementing recommendations of human rights mechanisms and promoting an independent civil society.



Inmates of women's remand facility 3 (Tiraspol). Some of these women have been in pre-trial detention for four years and have not been allowed to see their children during that period – despite the fact that they have not been convicted of any offense.

- ▶ For the first time, a UN Senior Expert on Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, undertook a comprehensive assessment of the human rights situation in the Transnistrian region. Mr. Hammarberg completed three missions to the region in 2012, during which he held meetings with the de facto authorities and communities of the region and visited places of detention and medical facilities. The engagement of a UN Senior Expert is the result of extensive work undertaken by the HRA and the Resident Coordinator to follow up on the mission of the High Commissioner in November 2011 when she recommended that further attention be paid to the human rights situation in Transnistria.

Russian Federation

	2008 (formal establishment/ arrival of Human Rights Adviser). Preparatory presence of a national staff; adoption of cooperation framework in August 2007.
Year established	
Staff as of 31 December 2012	6

Results

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- ▶ The Regional Organization of Persons with Disabilities, Perspektiva, with the support of OHCHR, was able to increase the awareness of over 400 stakeholders, including government officials, educational workers, legislators, NGOs and journalists, about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the existing national legislation and policies that require amendment. As a result of this public discussion, the draft Federal Law on education in the Russian Federation now includes the phrase “inclusive and integrated education of people with disabilities” and indicates that the State must create the necessary conditions for high quality education without discrimination against people with disabilities.
- ▶ OHCHR facilitated the preparation and publishing of the *Juvenile Justice Manual* based on the global juvenile justice indicators that have been adapted to the Russian context. The Manual was shared with the judiciary, governmental institutions and civil society actors to promote the use of indicators and highlight the need for a systematized exchange of information among all institutions active in the field of juvenile justice.



Workshop on preventing and combating discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin and religion for the Federal and Regional Ombudspersons in Russia, November 2012.

- ▶ Consolidation of the Human Rights Master Programme continued, in part due to the efforts of OHCHR, with the establishment of an inter-university partnership that enabled the Consortium of Russian Universities to jointly develop and implement the next cycle of the programme covering the academic year 2011-2012. The Consortium's development of a comprehensive multidisciplinary curriculum for the Human Rights Master Programme was also a major step towards the consolidation of the programme. The International Human Rights Protection specialization within the Master of Law Degree is now institutionalized through its accreditation in compliance with the standards of the Ministry of Education.
- ▶ The capacities of national human rights institutions were strengthened following two workshops organized by OHCHR. The first workshop held on 17 May was dedicated to UN human rights mechanisms and gathered together commissioners from approximately 65 regions of Russia. The second workshop took place on 12 November and dealt with issues of discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity and religion and gathered together commissioners from 20 regions of Russia. The seminars informed the participants about the role of ombudspersons in supporting the engagement of their Government with human rights mechanisms as well as good practices in addressing discrimination issues.

Ratification (EA 2)

- ▶ Following advocacy actions undertaken by OHCHR, the UN Information Centre and several national partners, the Russian Federation ratified the CRPD in 2012. In particular, OHCHR conducted a number of meetings and discussions with the State Duma deputies, national human

rights institutions and civil society organizations to promote the ratification. On 3 May 2012, the President of Russia signed the Federal Law on the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

State engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 6)

- ▶ Through the advocacy efforts of OHCHR and its partners, the National Strategy for Action in the Interest of Children for 2012-2017 was adopted in line with recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Strategy proposes key actions to be undertaken by the Government, including the assessment of institutions and services in charge of children and an improved analysis of policies related to juvenile justice in accordance with international standards.

Serbia

	Office in 1996 and Human Rights Adviser in 2007
Year established	
Staff as of 31 December 2012	1

Results

Access to justice and basic services (EA 4)

- ▶ Human rights defenders (HRDs) in Serbia continue to work under difficult conditions as they are often exposed to threats and violence. For instance, in late 2012, right wing organizations published a list of ‘unfit’ NGOs and media on internet portals, referring to them as traitors for allegedly recognizing the independence of Kosovo in their activities and therefore working against the Serbian Constitution. There has been no improvement in this situation and a comprehensive national policy on HRDs has yet to be adopted. The Human Rights Adviser (HRA), together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission in Serbia, provided support to the HRDs by helping to raise awareness about their situation and the importance of their work for the advancement of a human rights culture and democratic values in the country. The key issues faced by HRDs, as noted at the November 2011 National Conference *Towards the National Policy on HRDs* (published in 2012), are misperceptions about HRDs in the wider society, insufficient financing and the need for protection.

State engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 6)

- ▶ In order to contribute to improving Serbia’s compliance with its obligations under the international human rights mechanisms, especially in terms of reporting, the HRA partnered with the OSCE Mission in Serbia to organize a workshop in March 2012 on the revision of Serbia’s Common Core Document which had been submitted in 2010. The Common Core Document was revised through an inclusive process involving representatives of relevant line ministries and institutions, independent and regulatory bodies and civil society organizations.

International and regional laws and institutions (EA 8)

- ▶ At an international seminar co-organized by the HRA, held in Belgrade on 22 and 23 February 2012, the principles defining the relationship between national human rights institutions and Parliaments, named the “Belgrade Principles”, were adopted by consensus. The Belgrade Principles define six areas of significant importance for framing and strengthening the cooperation and interaction between Parliaments and national institutions with a view to comply with the Paris Principles. In May 2012, the Belgrade Principles were presented in a report to the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/20/9).

Human rights mainstreaming within the United Nations (EA 11)

- ▶ The United Nations Country Team (UNCT), led by the HRA, drafted its first report on the state of human rights in Serbia and submitted it for Serbia’s second Universal Periodic Review (UPR)



A Roma settlement on the outskirts of Belgrade, Serbia.

scheduled for early 2013. The report contains views on the state of human rights in Serbia from the perspective of UNCT members' mandates as well as their assessment of the extent to which the recommendations from Serbia's first UPR cycle have been implemented.

- ▶ In relation to the resettlement of the largest Roma settlement (Belville) in Belgrade in April, the HRA provided guidance to the UNCT by: outlining the human rights monitoring methodology to be used that is based on the Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Resettlement; organizing monitoring visits and compiling and presenting the related findings. The resettlement was carried out in compliance with international human rights standards. The HRA's work, which was assessed as extremely valuable by the authorities, the UNCT and the international community, resulted in OHCHR being recognized as a principal actor in Serbia with regard to human rights standards related to the right to adequate housing. The HRA also continued to provide advice to all stakeholders to ensure that a human rights-based approach is applied in all phases of programming for durable housing solutions for the Roma. For example, following the resettlement of Belville, the EU Delegation decided to allocate funds to address the housing needs of resettled families and, upon invitation from the *United Nations Office for Project Services*, the HRA ensured that the housing project was developed with a human rights-based approach.

South Caucasus (based in Tbilisi, covering Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia)

Year established	2007
Staff as of 31 December 2012	7

Results

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- ▶ The Ombudsman of Azerbaijan was re-accredited with "A status" by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions. Staff of the Ombudsman Office, as well as a number of civil society representatives, strengthened their knowledge in the application of international human rights standards and the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations through the training workshops organized by OHCHR, in cooperation with the Ombudsman, the NGO's Alliance for



People attend a protest rally outside a prison in Tbilisi, September, 2012. The High Commissioner for Human Rights called on Georgia to prosecute prison officers caught on videos torturing and raping inmates.

Protection of Child's Rights and the Citizens' Labour Rights Protection League, in July 2012.

- ▶ The new Georgian High School of Justice's module on UN Treaties and Mechanisms for Human Rights Protection was incorporated as an integral part of the existing educational curriculum of the school. The module has a particular focus on the international standards related to the role of judges in combating impunity, based on the UN Manual and Facilitator's Guide on human rights for judges, prosecutors and lawyers and was developed with the support of OHCHR. Starting in 2013, all trainees will take part in sessions on human rights based on the new module.
- ▶ In Azerbaijan, OHCHR participated in the consultation process with members of the Working Group engaged in preparing the draft law on Legal Aid. The Working Group, comprised of legal scholars, members of the Bar Association, independent law practitioners and civil society representatives, prepared the draft "Constitutional Law on Free Legal Aid," which was submitted to the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Policy and State System in 2013 for its review.

Participation (EA 5)

- ▶ A legal clinic focused on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in Zugdidi, Western Georgia, was established in September 2012 with the financial assistance of OHCHR. The provision of free legal assistance to persons with disabilities was complemented by multiple advocacy campaigns and roundtable discussions between NGOs and representatives of the Executive Government in the Samegrelo region in Western Georgia.

State engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 6)

- ▶ In February, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association visited Georgia for the first time following a request issued in 2011. OHCHR provided logistical support and organized meetings for the Special Rapporteur with representatives of civil society and political parties and the Ombudsman. Some of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations on legislative changes, such as the removal of provisions unduly restricting political party financing, were implemented later in the year. This contributed to the creation of spaces within which the rights to freedom of assembly and association could be exercised during the electoral campaign in the autumn of 2012.
- ▶ Armenia made some progress on the implementation of recommendations issued by human rights bodies following a number of roundtable discussions organized by the UN Office in Armenia to which OHCHR significantly contributed. For instance, discussions related to the signature and ratification by Armenia of the second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at abolishing the death penalty took place. In addition, a draft law on gender equality is currently being considered in the Parliament which would lead to the implementation of a number of recommendations related to gender equality.

Civil society engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 7)

- ▶ Following awareness-raising activities, as well as specialized training sessions on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) organized by OHCHR, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Azerbaijan and a number of NGOs, including the NGO's Alliance for Child's Rights Protection, Reliable Future, Citizens' Labour Rights Protection League and Union of Persons with Disabilities, submitted their reports to the UPR in a timely manner.
- ▶ In 2012, OHCHR strengthened its work on promoting the engagement of human rights defenders, NGOs and the Georgian Bar Association with UN human rights mechanisms by, for instance, organizing two training workshops for human rights defenders and NGOs on the submission of communications to UN human rights protection mechanisms. As a result, five Georgian NGOs submitted a total of 10 communications to special procedures mandate-holders in 2012 on issues such as torture and other forms of ill-treatment, arbitrary detention

and violations of the right to fair trial, freedom of speech and peaceful assembly and association.

Human rights mainstreaming within the United Nations (EA 11)

- ▶ The Human Rights Adviser promoted the integration of a human rights-based approach in programmes of other UN agencies in a number of countries of the subregion. For instance, a human rights-based approach was integrated into UNDP's justice and governance programmes in Georgia and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework document in Azerbaijan. In the latter, a special focus was placed on the development of a matrix to follow up on UPR recommendations.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Year established	2007
Staff as of 31 December 2012	1

Results

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- ▶ The new Gender Equality Law adopted in January 2012 was aligned with international human rights standards and significantly improved the national legal and institutional framework. Throughout the drafting process, OHCHR provided technical advice to the drafting committee, both directly and through other UN agencies, such as UN-Women, which also contributed to the drafting of the first National Strategy on Gender Equality that was adopted at the end of 2012.

State engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 6)

- ▶ In 2012, the Government made significant steps to improve its compliance with the guidelines on reporting to international human rights mechanisms. In July, following advice from OHCHR, the Government established an inter-sectoral body on human rights to coordinate the reporting and follow-up to recommendations from international and regional human rights mechanisms. OHCHR engaged with the new body to support the preparation of the overdue Common Core Document by organizing a drafting workshop for State officials in November. The draft will be discussed with representatives of civil society and other stakeholders before its finalization and submission in March 2013.

- ▶ The Government increased the transparency of its reporting process to international human rights bodies following training organized by OHCHR in 2011 and technical advice received by State officials responsible for drafting the periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. For the first time, the Ministry of Justice posted the draft State Party report on its website (June), providing an opportunity for civil society and other actors to engage in discussion and share their views on the text with the Government. The report will be submitted in April 2013.
- ▶ Following the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2011, and with the guidance of an OHCHR thematic study on national mechanisms under CRPD, in November the Government established a National Coordination Body to oversee the implementation of the Convention. At the request of the new body, OHCHR and the Resident Coordinator's Office are providing its members with advice and training to increase their capacity to fulfil their obligations.

Women's organizations, with the support from UN and the Human Rights Adviser, marked Human Rights Day 2012 by organizing a national conference to discuss gender equality and women's political participation in the country.

The Conference, entitled *Local Elections 2013 – for Gender Equality*, aimed at bringing the issue of women's underrepresentation in local policy and decision-making to broad public debate and garnering political parties' attention to take

action in changing this situation. Over 130 women activists and human rights defenders, as well as representatives from most political parties and many civil society organizations gathered on Human Rights Day in Skopje and discussed key mechanisms that exclude women from the policy and decision-making structures at the local level. Women's organizations, but also political parties' representatives, pointed to the fact that women lack opportunities to achieve balance between private, public and political life.

Leaders of political parties invited to the conference presented their parties' plans and concrete actions to achieve gender equality in local policy and decision-making structures. Both governing and opposition parties recognized the challenges women face in the electoral processes and expressed their support to increase the number of women mayor candidates in the upcoming local elections.

Ukraine

Year established	2011
Staff as of 31 December 2012	1

Results

National laws, policies and institutions (EA 1)

- ▶ The effectiveness of the Office of the Ombudsperson in Ukraine increased as a result of the support provided by the UN system, including OHCHR. A Memorandum of Understanding in the sphere of human rights and freedoms was signed with the United Nations Country Team and a functional assessment led to improvements in the structure, management and operational capacities of the institution. UN engagement also helped build closer partnerships with civil society organizations.



A woman casts her vote in the town of Irpin during Ukraine's parliamentary elections on 28 October 2012.

- ▶ Largely based on recommendations from the treaty bodies, OHCHR partnered with international organizations, civil society and the Office of the Ombudsman to generate support for the adoption of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law (Law on the principles of combating and prevention of discrimination), which was adopted by Parliament on 6 September 2012. OHCHR will strive to ensure that Ukraine's legal anti-discrimination framework is further improved and that the Law fully complies with international standards.

Justice and accountability mechanisms (EA 3)

- ▶ The Office of the Ombudsman became the country's National Preventive Mechanism after the Parliament adopted amendments to the Ombudsman law and expanded its powers to visit detention centres, prisons and similar facilities. A National Preventive Mechanism department was created within the Office of the Ombudsman and OHCHR and UNDP provided training to assist department staff in the implementation of its efforts to prevent torture.

State engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 6)

- ▶ Ukraine prepared for the second cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and submitted a national report which conformed to the reporting guidelines. The UN encouraged a broad consultative process, involving the Government, civil society and the Office of the Ombudsman, through a series of capacity-building and awareness-raising activities carried out by OHCHR and UNDP.

Civil society engagement with human rights mechanisms (EA 7)

- ▶ After the Ukrainian authorities submitted the country's initial State Party report under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on April 2012, a coalition of three Ukrainian NGOs drafted and submitted an alternative report in August 2012.
- ▶ OHCHR mobilized and supported civil society organizations for the preparation of alternative reports for Ukraine's second UPR cycle, the number of which significantly increased as compared to the first cycle (29 were submitted to the second UPR cycle while only eight were submitted to the first cycle).