



**Final independent evaluation report
of the “Eastern Partnership Minorities Network” Project
implemented by Minority Rights Group Europe and funded by
the European Union**

April, 2016

Report prepared by:

Gheorghe Caraseni – Program Evaluator, OCT CARASENI

**Evaluation & Capacity Building Services
2, D. Cantemir Str., Cricova, m. Chisinau
MD 2084, Republic of Moldova**

Tel/fax: +373/22 844230

Mob: + 373 69129998

Email: consulting@caraseni.md

Skype: [gheorghecaraseni](https://www.skype.com/people/gheorghecaraseni)

Acknowledgements

The evaluator expresses his sincere thanks to Minority Rights Group Europe for providing this opportunity to carry out the final evaluation of the project "*Eastern Partnership Minorities Network*" funded primarily by the EU.

Special thanks to Shorena Kobaidze, EaPMN Project Coordinator, and representatives of implementing partners Giorgi Bobgiashvili – European Centre for Minority Issues (Georgia), Agit Mirzoyev – Analytical Centre for Interethnic Cooperation & Consultations (Georgia); Stepan Grigoryan and Armen Grigoryan – Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation (Armenia) and Irene Fedorovich – Social Action Centre "No Borders" (Ukraine) who provided excellent, cordial, timely assistance and logistics in conducting the project evaluation and the field missions in project sites of the EaP countries.

Evaluator also appreciates the opportunity to interact with Zsofia Farkas, Managing Director, Europe and Central Asia, Minority Rights Group Europe and to get her opinion, as well as to gain insights of the project partners and beneficiaries in the targeted project EaP region and intervention areas.

Disclaimer

This project evaluation report presents the view of the evaluator and does not necessarily fully correspond to the opinions of MRGE staff or other stakeholders referred to in this report.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information given here is correct. Any factual error that may appear is unintended and falls under the responsibility of consultant.

Acronyms

AA	Association Agreement/s
ACICC	Analytical Centre for Interethnic Cooperation & Consultations
ACGRC	Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation
CNM	Council of National Minorities
CoE	Council of Europe
CPA	Central Public Authorities
CSF	Civil Society Forum
CSO/s	Civil Society Organization/s
CSP	Country Strategy Plan
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EaPMN	Eastern Partnership Minorities Network
EC	European Commission
ECMI	European Centre for Minority Issues
EQ	Evaluation Question
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
FGD	Focal Group Discussion/s
FPE	Final Project Evaluation
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
LPA	Local Public Authorities
MG	Minority Groups
MN	Minority Network
MR	Minority Rights
MRGE	Minority Rights Group Europe
MRGI	Minority Rights Group International
KDF	Key Driving Force
NGO/s	Non-Governmental Organization/s
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation
ROM	Results-based monitoring
RM	Republic of Moldova
SAC	Social Action Centre
TOR	Terms of Reference
UA	Ukraine

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	2
Disclaimer.....	2
Acronyms.....	3
Executive Summary.....	5
Part I. INTRODUCTION	
A. Background and the project context.....	9
B. Overview of the project	10
Part II. SCOPE OF EVALUATION AND METHODOLOGY	
A. Scope and objectives of the final project evaluation.....	11
B. Expected use of the final evaluation results.....	11
C. Evaluation Approach and Methodology.....	12
D. Limitations in Data collection and Methodology.....	12
E. Management of Evaluation.....	14
Part III. EVALUATION FINDINGS	
A. RELEVANCE.....	14
1. Relevance of project design and intervention logic.....	14
2. Relevance of the actors involved	16
B. EFFECTIVENESS.....	17
1. Project effectiveness in context of results achieved.....	17
2. Stakeholders satisfaction.....	30
3. Key effective approaches and strategies used in achieving the results.....	31
C. EFFICIENCY.....	33
1. Cost effectiveness of the project.....	33
2. Efficient use of resources and timeliness of outputs.....	33
D. SUSTAINABILITY.....	34
1. Sustainability prospects of benefits from the project.....	34
Part IV. CONCLUSIONS, BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED.....	35
Part V. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	38
Part VI. ANNEXES.....	43
Annex 1: Questionnaires for Stakeholders	
Annex 2: List of Documents Reviewed	
Annex 3: List of Stakeholders Consulted	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the final evaluation of the *Eastern Partnership Minorities Network* project implemented by MRGE and its EaPMN national partners.

The overall objective of the project was: *To strengthen the capacity of CSOs in EaP countries, to empower minority communities to effectively participate in reforms and democratic changes that affect their lives.*

Specific Objective: *Increased capacities and networking between minority activists and CSOs leading to their increased engagement with relevant national authorities and their strengthened role within the Eastern Partnership, enabling them to effectively participate in democratic and policy processes positively impacting development and human rights for their communities.*

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the performance of the EaPMN project against key parameters, including the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and its strengths and weaknesses and to provide MRGE with a technical and professional assessment of results, achievements, key challenges and lessons learnt from the implementation of the project. Additionally, the project evaluation had a task to deliver recommendations for further actions necessary in the field.

Given the wide geography of the EaPMN project, multi-stakeholder approach and quite limited time for in-country field missions, the final evaluation encountered some difficulties in gathering accurate data regarding the quantitative and qualitative achievements of the project.

The evaluator attempted to mitigate limitation issues by triangulation of information from stakeholders, including the MRGE project team, and corroborating the information obtained from all perspectives.

The evaluation proves that the project was an ambitious, relevant, structured and flexible initiative, which represented a multi-country and multi-stakeholder and "up-down" and "bottom-up" approach. It has been specifically designed to address the challenges mentioned in the project context, i.e. to involve key actors CSOs and national and local authorities in mainstreaming the minority issues in the EaP region, to increase knowledge on EaP related issues and to consolidate networking.

An analysis of the intervention logic and the links between the outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs shows that the project design reflects Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) because interventions target both "*duty bearers*" (national and public authorities) and "*right holders*" (minority communities and NGOs). However, the MRGE project had a greater accent on the "*right holders*" targeting their empowerment and mainstreaming minorities' issues.

The final evaluation reveals that the project shows progress toward its outcomes and there are tangible results in all components (advocacy, capacity building, publications and research, awareness raising), which represents a variety of pieces of success, which are getting incorporated by the project team in a complex puzzle.

Project scored well under all four expected results in four EaP countries (Georgia, Moldova, Armenia and Ukraine) and at the outputs level, it can be remarked that the MRGE project management team and national implementers managed to stay focused and to deliver most of the planned activities, regardless of the internal and external challenges and difficulties.

However, the project encountered great difficulties in Belarus and Azerbaijan and it proved to be unrealistic to deliver most of the planned activities in those two countries due to the political contexts and legal constraints, therefore MRGE and its implementing partners adjusted the project design and implementation and proved to be flexible.

The MRGE project managed to establish an informal network of minority CSOs for a broader cooperation, information sharing and coordination on minority issues. It was the only network in the EaP region specifically for minority CSOs and minority activists. This coalition expanded and includes about 80 minority and human rights CSOs, as well as think tanks and individual minority leaders.

Partners have undertaken EaP training, which capacitated and enhanced their knowledge and understanding of the regional policy framework. Replicated trainings in EaP countries for national and local CSOs multiplied the capacity building effects and due to this approach a broader coalition has the knowledge to engage in the EaP process. Evaluation shows that live and online trainings on minority rights and international standards for CSOs in countries, created a critical mass of regional CSOs in four (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia) out of six project countries that were able to engage, understand and advocate for minority rights. The evaluation reveals that project encountered some challenges with delivering the on-line courses, because many local stakeholders have limited access to and skills of using IT. In some of the cases the online courses were affected by the problems with the limited access to electricity.

Representatives of local authorities in the region, as "duty bearers", have increased knowledge and awareness of minority issues and their obligations as a result of program activities and informational campaigns undertaken by CSOs and this underlines the HRBA of the project. There are good examples coming from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia of increasing engagement, collaboration and dialogue between minority community CSOs and decision makers on addressing minority rights at various levels. However, some local authorities still do not always understand and are not always willing to include citizens, particularly local minorities in decision-making process, and this leads to the conclusion that LPA are not yet fully inclusive in including minorities in policy making.

The policy paper proved to be one of the best practices and key tangible results of the EaPMN project, which describes comprehensively the: EU policies on minority rights, EAP aspects, evidence-based minority issues in EaP countries etc and provides specific recommendations to a wide range of stakeholders: EU, EU states, EaP countries, EaP Platform, Minority CSOs etc. The Policy Paper influenced to a certain level the national policy makers and raised awareness of the needs and gaps to be addressed. Nevertheless, many of the local stakeholders, including local minority NGOs in the EaP region, which benefited

from the project are not familiar with the Policy Paper (PP) leading to the conclusion that the PP was insufficiently promoted.

Delivering and getting involved in the shadow reports proved to be an appropriate tool for increasing the engagement and dialogue between minority community CSOs and national decision makers, but also an effective tool on holding Governments to account. However, it did not prove possible to implement this activity in Belarus, Azerbaijan and Moldova.

The evaluation revealed that, as the result of the project activities, minority representatives/CSOs to gained a greater understanding of the EaP, were more able and willing to promote awareness of the EaP amongst their communities, to inform EaP policy development and implementation, as well as to increase engagement in local and national advocacy relating to EaP and minority issues.

Minority representatives interviewed during the field mission confirmed that they increased understanding and importance of the EaP in their work and they have engaged in advocacy campaigns related to the EaP and minorities issues.

Some of the local advocacy campaigns encountered some implementation challenges, while others in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia (described below) were well delivered and can be assessed as successful, regardless of the challenges encountered. In a way, they managed to sensitize minorities and/or influence the local decision makers and to mainstream HRBA, gender and the cross cutting issues in the local policy-making. This represents a best practice, which could/should be replicated.

The EPMN project scored well in providing national advocacy campaigns in Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia, while in Belarus and Azerbaijan these activities proved to be unrealistic to be delivered. In the former four countries, the project was successful in collaboration with the national public authorities and the cases described in the report represent eloquent evidence of this.

The key project strategies, which worked well, are: Partnerships with key EaPMN implementers; *Networking*; *Re-granting and supporting the local initiatives and capacity building of the minority NGOs*. Project partially worked in Belarus and Azerbaijan and details are provided in the report. Also shadow reporting did not work in Moldova.

The evaluation findings show that the resources were invested in the project (human resources, advocacy visits, seminars, informational materials, advocacy and informational campaigns, etc) adequately and mostly sufficiently in terms of reaching the planned results of the evaluated project.

The information and products provided by the project team revealed that the management of the project respected financial management and procurement procedures and open selection rules, for instance during the re-granting. The project procurements and costs were mostly in accordance with the adjusted budget lines. The resources were used economically and the project follows the established project management procedures.

Evaluation showed that, in terms of the likelihood of sustaining the benefits of the project, the results achieved to-date at the strategic, institutional and grass roots levels are particularly important, even if there are no financial commitments from the "duty bearers" and the project mostly represented an

awareness raising and a capacity building intervention. Firstly, it empowered minority NGOs from four EaP countries (Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine) on minority and EaP issues, increased project management capacities of the local "grass roots" level CSOs and effectiveness of their activities with the local and national public authorities by supporting their initiatives through re-granting scheme and delivering capacity building interventions.

Secondly, the project succeeded to build links and networks, (even if fragile) among minority NGOs and with the relevant public authorities. Examples are in Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine. Of course, as mentioned the minority NGOs network is still fragile, and there is no yet a vision on its set up. Most of the minority NGOs support the idea of a non-registered platform with a consolidated communication and information sharing. In this respect, the web-portal, and Facebook page created by the project team represent sustainability prospects provided that they are maintained.

The most important added value provided by MRGE related to setting up a communication and experience-sharing platform, which is an important aspect in empowering the "right holders" (minority organizations and communities from EaP countries) and increasing the responsibilities of the "duty bearers" (national and local authorities).

In the opinion of the evaluator, the project provided some *best practices* related to local and national advocacy campaigns, best practice seminars, involving Vishegrad countries etc. and there are at least three lessons that should be learned by all key actors involved in the project, specifically by the MRGE, as the key driving force of the initiative. Both best practices and learning lessons are described in the report and the lessons are related to project design, project implementation and matching funds.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the final project evaluation, the evaluator suggests some strategic recommendations to MRGE, specific recommendations for MRGE and its implementing partners and a strategic recommendation for EU. Thus recommendation are:

Strategic recommendations to MRGE.

1. Keep developing new initiatives on minority and EaP issues in the EaP region and consolidate networking of minority NGOs.
2. Undertake KAP assessment and use the findings for development of other minority issues initiatives.
3. Keep 6-country format of the initiatives in the EaP region, but tailor interventions especially in Belarus and Azerbaijan.
4. Have implementing partner in each country from the EaP region.
5. Plan for exchange of experience/study visits within EaP region.

Specific recommendations for MRGE and its implementing partners.

1. Create of Platform for Roma organizations in EaP region.
2. Target shadow reporting on minority issues in Moldova and Azerbaijan, continue providing support for minority NGOs in Transnistria and involve more actively minority NGOs from Gagauz Autonomy.

3. Plan for tailored interventions in supporting NGOs of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine. Build links between CSOs of Crimean Tatars from Ukraine and CSOs of Gagauz from Moldova.
4. Provide a more in depth support to Yezidi communities, especially NGO "Sinjar" in Armenia.
5. Capitalize on cooperation with ECMI Caucasus in Georgia and develop further joint initiatives.
6. Consider sharing the legal research experience of the Belarus human rights NGOs with other minority NGOs from EaP region.

Strategic recommendation for EU.

1. Continue providing support to the actions that targets minorities' issues in the EaP region.
2. Reduce level of co-financing for projects working with particularly vulnerable and excluded groups.

Part I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and the project context

The newly developed EaP (Eastern Partnership) of the ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy), provides a privileged status for partner countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus (although progress towards Belarus' participation has been suspended at the state level, civil society still remains part of this project), Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This status relies on commitment to common European values, including protection of human rights, specifically rights of vulnerable communities, such as minorities.

Minority communities across the 6 countries represent the most marginalised and vulnerable segments of society. That there is a lack of a disaggregated data to give precise levels of minority exclusion, poverty and discrimination, is one of their main challenges. Comparative analyses shows regions with substantial minority settlements regions are often where unemployment and poverty is the highest. Minority populations are significantly under-represented (and in some cases not at all) in national parliaments as a proportion of the electorate.

MRGE and partners have recorded continued and substantial violations of minority rights and cases of discrimination over the last decade. There is a clear link between the failure to realise minority rights and their lack of participation in civil, political and economic life, their marginalisation and relative poverty.

Although each country operates in its own context, there are common challenges facing minorities in the region, for example the process of nation building, since independence has been founded on nationalist discourse, which usually defines the state by its majority ethnic group. In this context minorities are still treated as guests, regardless of their historic relationship to a particular territory. Ethnic/ regional conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia & Transnistria, have created a climate where the public and authorities treat calls for greater autonomy by minorities with hostility and suspicion. Therefore, the growth of an independent and pluralistic Civil Society is essential to ensure all group interests are reflected in public discourse.

The role of CSOs is even more vital for minority communities, who lack a substantial stake in their nations' economies and development policies, suffer inadequate means of political participation and have few opportunities to influence decision-making.

In negotiations over EaP Association Agreements with 5 partnership countries and the Country Strategy Plan for Belarus, the need to address incursions and restrictions on the freedom of CSOs is a common issue. Hindrances to official registration and obstacles in receiving funding implemented by target countries' and even intimidation and harassment are common.

Minority CSOs operating in this environment face additional challenges including a lack of resources, lack of acceptance by mainstream Civil Society and difficulties associated in working in remote environments. They lack the capacity to undertake effective advocacy to increase awareness of the challenges they face, and resources to operate beyond a local level to bring these issues to the forefront of national/regional debate.

The years covered by the EaPMN project (2013–2015) have seen several important changes, which impacted/affected the development in the EaP region. For instance, Annexing of Crimea by Russia and civil war in Ukraine, multiple cabinets reshuffles and ongoing protest meetings in Moldova (five prime-ministers during 2014–2015), the refusal to sign the Associated Agreement and reorientation of the external vector of Armenia etc. All these macro-political changes were not possible to be predicted but they contributed to polarization of population groups (Moldova, Armenia) and internal refuges (Ukraine). For different political, ideological and socio-economic reasons the majority of members in minority groups have shown significant prejudices towards EU integration.

2.2 Overview of the project

Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), a Budapest-based non-governmental organisation has implemented¹ a 3-years primarily EC-funded programme in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, especially Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine that aims at increased capacities and networking between minority activists and organisations. MRG works with activists and civil society organisations, including ethnic, linguistic, national, religious minorities, indigenous peoples and visible minority communities.

The results originally foreseen for the MRGE implemented project were as follows:

Overall Objective: *To strengthen the capacity of CSOs in EaP countries, to empower minority communities to effectively participate in reforms and democratic changes that affects their lives.*

Specific Objective: *Increased capacities and networking between minority activists and CSOs leading to their increased engagement with relevant national*

¹ MRGE has worked in partnership with European Centre for Minority Issues, Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation, Social Action Centre, Analytical Centre for Interethnic Cooperation & Consultations and MRG International.

authorities and their strengthened role within the Eastern Partnership, enabling them to effectively participate in democratic and policy processes positively impacting development and human rights for their communities.

Expected Result 1: Enhanced capacities of and networking between CSOs working with minority communities to effectively advocate for inclusion and implementation of their human rights in the EAP region.

Expected Result 2: Increased knowledge/awareness at the local, national and regional levels of the various development issues minority communities face and the need for their inclusion in development processes.

Expected Result 3: Increased engagement and dialogue between minority community CSOs and decision makers at various levels leads to increased commitment and collaboration to address minority rights.

Expected Result 4: More minority representatives are able to inform Eastern Partnership policy development and implementation at the national and community levels.

The total budget of the project is EUR 981,673, with EUR 736,255 contributed by the European Commission.

Part II. SCOPE OF EVALUATION AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Scope and objectives of the final project evaluation

The final evaluation was expected to generate relevant findings, lessons, recommendations and learning, which will be shared with key stakeholders of the MRGE project, including project beneficiaries and used by the key strategic implementing partners to guide and inform future programming around EaP and minority issues in the EaP countries.

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the performance of the EaPMN project against key parameters, including the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and its strengths and weaknesses and to provide MRGE with a technical and professional assessment of results, achievements, key challenges and lessons learnt from the implementation of the project. Additionally, the project evaluation had a task to deliver recommendations for further actions necessary in the field.

B. Expected use of the final evaluation results

It is expected that the findings of final project evaluation will be used as a basis for further possible improvements of the similar initiatives related to the minority and EaP issues in the EaP countries, as well as generally for improvement of similar projects` design and implementation. The evaluation will also fulfill MRGE's contractual requirement for an independent external evaluation of the project.

C. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

Any external evaluation is an opportunity for learning for the project staff, and, therefore the final evaluation adopted a strong participatory approach involving and engaging EPMN project staff and key stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. Stakeholders' participation was absolutely necessary for accountability, promoting ownership and sustainability, facilitating buy in, and further use of the evaluation recommendations. The participatory approach was very useful in engaging stakeholders and gaining their insights, experiences with the project and the benefits accrued to them as a result of the project. The evaluation methodology was "fine-tuned" and approved after discussing with MRGE project staff. It was guided by the DAC Criteria, as laid out in the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability)².

The evaluation examined project interventions strategies, but also the evaluation approach was results oriented to provide evidence of achievements and the results obtained by the project (or not) as set out in the project proposal. Both primary and secondary data were used in the evaluation, and collected from a diverse range of primary and secondary sources.

Secondary information was collected from the documents provided to the evaluator. Primary information was collected from the stakeholders of the project through on site direct observations, in-depth interviews, and individual and focus group discussions with the project stakeholders, including local implementing partners in EaP countries.

The outlined methodology, which included desk review, focus groups, „face to face“ interviews, Skype discussions and phone interviews, was capable of capturing information necessary to present an informed, professional and independent judgment on the MRGE project. The evaluation process ensured triangulation, i.e. findings and results were crosschecked between the evaluator, project team and project stakeholders: public authorities, minority and human rights CSOs, EU officials. The list of stakeholders consulted is attached to the evaluation report (Annex 3).

Since the evaluation in question was an external and a final one, the evaluator put emphasis on identifying lessons learned, especially in the context of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, where it can be expected that MRGE project staff may be in a position to reinforce certain strategies during the follow up projects.

The evaluation respected the rights of all stakeholders consulted regarding voluntary participation in the project evaluation process, including their right to withdraw at any stage, if they so decide.

D. Field Mission

The main aim of the field mission was to obtain primary data and information, observe first hand field level operations, and validate the information provided

² The DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD (1991), Glossary of Terms Used in Evaluation, in 'Methods and Procedures in Aid Evaluation', OECD (1986), and the Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM) Terms, OECD (2000).

in the documents through a participatory process of engaging diverse regional, national and local stakeholders/beneficiaries. The site visits were particularly useful to ascertain the translation of project activities to the field situation and the benefits (advocacy campaigns, capacity building interventions, informational campaigns etc) that have accrued to the target group and beneficiaries.

The geographical areas covered in the field mission included 4 of the EaP countries: Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova, where evaluator met project participants; project team and project stakeholders; and collected information in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the evaluation design and evaluation matrix. There were about 22 evaluation meetings and, as well as Skype and phone discussions with about 11 stakeholders from different regions of these countries.

The sampling framework included: (i) Project team, (ii) grantees, (iii) national CSOs, (iv) representatives of national authorities, (v) implementing partners and (vi) representatives of EU Delegation. Please see Annex 3: *List of Stakeholders consulted*.

E. Limitations in data collection methodology

While the final project evaluation used primary and secondary data sources for data collection as explained, there are limitations related to obtaining accurate, objective and in-depth data, such as difficulty in verifying the reliability and validity of the some quantitative indicators of the project.

Given the wide geography of the EPMN project, multi-stakeholder approach and quite limited time for in-country field missions, the final evaluation encountered some difficulties in gathering accurate data regarding the quantitative and qualitative achievements of the project. Most of the primary data regarding the achievements are available in partners' reports³, but nevertheless, the cumulative progress reports, per se are mostly action based (using mostly „action language”, i.e. describing what and how things happened, than highlighting the changes as results of the actions developed, i.e. „change language”). In other words, progress reports are rather describing with great details *what has been done*, than *what has been changed as the results of what has been done*.

The evaluator attempted to mitigate limitation issues by triangulation of information from stakeholders including the MRGE project team, and corroborating the information obtained from all perspectives. However, triangulation of data proved to be difficult, because the final evaluation was looking for outcome-based achievements, while the project documentation provides mostly action-based information and occasionally outputs based achievements, for instance nr. of participants, minorities CSOs etc.

It is also because the narrative reporting templates of the EC are not structured from the results based reporting point of view, i.e. does not distinguish outputs-based and outcomes-based performance, and does not require analysis of the achievements.

³ Some of them (from Ukraine, Moldova) were consulted by Evaluator

E. Management of Evaluation

An Evaluation Reference Group was set up to ensure an efficient, participatory, accountable evaluation process, and to provide timely and comprehensive assistance and feedback on key project evaluation deliverables. The reference group comprised MRGE project team Shorena Kobaidze and Zsofia Farkas.

The Project Coordinator and national EaPMN implementing partners, namely Stepan Grigoryan – ACGRC (Armenia), Georgi Bobgiashvili – ECMI (Georgia), Irene Fedorovich – SAC (Ukraine) and Agit Mirzoyev – ACICC (Georgia) provided support during the evaluation missions, informing about the evaluation the selected key stakeholders and providing necessary logistical support. The management of the evaluation ensured that key selected stakeholders were consulted. As mentioned, the evaluation was conducted following the DAC norms, standards and evaluation guidelines.

After the completion of the project evaluation, a final stage of the process will take place, including dissemination of the findings, conclusions, lessons learnt, and the management response to the recommendations of the final evaluation. The MRGE team will manage these activities.

Part III. EVALUATION FINDINGS

This part of the report presents the output and outcome-based findings and analysis of the final independent evaluation organized to highlight project **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability**, including the questions pertaining to each of the evaluation criteria, as required in the ToR developed by MRGE and specified in the evaluation methodology developed by the external evaluator.

3.1 RELEVANCE

3.1.1 Relevance of project design and intervention logic

EQ. To what extent project is relevant to the country context?

Final evaluation shows that *MRGE project priorities were relevant to the national minorities rights contexts⁴ of all 6 EaP countries and to the CSOs and minority groups`/communities` needs.* In 5 out of 6 countries (except Armenia) the population of minorities represents more than 15%. The MRGE project was developed in a participative manner and the CSOs and other minorities' representatives from EaP countries, including from Transnistrian region of Moldova were consulted during the project design stage and their inputs were incorporated into the project framework.

The evaluated initiative represents a premiere both for MRGE and for minority organizations from all 6 EaP countries trying to capacitate key minority rights actors, to mainstream advocacy at the local, national and regional levels and to set a common platform on minority issues and to act as „one voice” at the policy and grass roots levels.

⁴ See the and National Policies of several EaP countries (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) and the Policy Paper produced by the MRGE project (pages 14-19)

Overall, the MRGE project design proved to be ambitious setting up very enthusiastic and high expected quantitative⁵ and qualitative⁶ results comparing to the number of planned activities and implementation challenges.

An analysis of the project intervention logic and the links between the outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs shows that the project design reflects Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) because interventions target both "*duty bearers*" (national and public authorities) and "*right holders*" (minority communities and NGOs). It worth noting, that the MRGE project had a greater accent on the "*right holders*" targeting their empowerment.

The intervention logic of the project is mostly consistent and coherent, i.e. in most of the cases there is logic between the planned activities and expected results. The action has a strong advocacy mainstreaming component (at the local, national and regional levels) and capacity building aspects with different capacity strengthening interventions, such as: regional and national trainings, EaP minority meetings, best practice seminars etc. Regardless of the fact that the project was consulted with the local stakeholders, some planned activities proved to be ambitious and even unrealistic to be developed mostly in Azerbaijan and Belarus (for instance, country shadow reports –one per each country). In Azerbaijan the CSO environment has been worsen during the EaPMN implementation because public authorities were shrinking the CSO space actively from 2014. The partner NGO leader that implemented NAC had left with no alternative but to search for asylum in Germany.

It is important to remark that project's activities were designed to be appropriate to particular conditions and contexts of EaP countries. However, in some EaP countries the implementations challenges proved to be greater than initially assessed. Thus, the political context in the EaP countries during the project implementation dramatically changed (in Ukraine – civil war and annexing of Crimea, Armenia – refusal to sign EU–Armenia association agreement, Moldova – political crisis – 4 Prime–Ministers during the 2015 year, Azerbaijan tightening the CSOs and imprisoning Human and minority rights activities) and these factors sidestepped issues of civic and political inclusion of minorities within the EaP processes. Project proved to be flexible, because some delivery adjustments in Belarus and Azerbaijan were necessary after facing different implementation difficulties and they were done on as needed basis, e.g. changing activities and even the responsible implementing partner in Belarus. Targets were updated to reflect changes in the implementation of activities and delivery of outputs, which were reduced in Belarus and Azerbaijan and increased in other project areas, for instance re–granting and supporting "grass roots" level initiatives on minorities' rights.

In the opinion of the evaluator and according to some stakeholders consulted, the key innovation element in the MRGE project is creation of the Minority Rights Group Network in EaP region and boosting the communication, exchange of experience and inter–countries empowerment activities of the key actors, such as minority organizations.

⁵ For instance expected results R 1.4: At least 54 CSO implement joint advocacy/ campaign initiatives for the 1st time, as a result of the program;

⁶ For instance, expected result R 4.5: 250 CSOs engaged in EaP advocacy, state that their advocacy approach has improved as a result of using materials and resources in the EaP Advocacy Guide

Another innovative approach was mainstreaming the advocacy component at the local, national and regional levels and bringing to the international (human rights) mechanisms of minority/human rights organizations from all EaP countries. The evaluator appreciates the efforts of MRGE and its implementing partners to conceptualize and integrate this approach, despite the obvious challenges of such a region-wide and diverse national contexts.

The final external evaluation proved that the project implemented by MRGE and its national implementing partners, scored well under the relevance evaluation variable. The interviews with the key stakeholders, including national public authorities, minority representatives and local grass roots level CSOs from EaP countries, proved that the project was relevant to the needs of the target groups and beneficiaries, as well as to the countries contexts⁷.

3.1.2 Relevance of the actors involved

The MRGE project targeted involvement of the key actors from EaP countries, i.e. well known on human and minority rights, as well as think tanks involved in policy development. Thus, in Georgia EaPMN implementing partners were ECMI and ACCIC. ECMI are regionally recognized leaders in the provision of consultancy to authorities and inter-governmental bodies on minority issues, with a high level of technical expertise and research background. Through their trusted reputation and substantial contacts with national and local authorities in target countries, ECMI played an important role in ensuring dialogue with decision makers.

In particular, ECMI's background in Belarus recommended them as EaPMN implementing partner in Belarus. ECMI was responsible for developing the capacity of the stakeholders in Georgia and provided direct links to a range of (minority) communities in Georgia.

ACICC, a newly founded CSO and think tank, monitored the impact of dialogue processes involving minorities and it provided analytical support by getting involved in shadow reporting. Both implementing partners ECMI and ACICC are members of the National CSF Platform in Georgia.

SAC (Ukraine) is known as an anti-discrimination NGO. It provided legal assistance for refugees/asylum seekers and victims of hate crime and discrimination. It had strategic litigation experience at national and European level, and is a leading member of the Ukrainian national coalition on anti-discrimination. As well as implementing Ukraine activities, SAC provided competencies in working with non-traditional and visible minorities, as they have the most experience with these groups.

ACGRC provided an Armenian presence where minority communities are particularly small and have the least developed CSOs. ACGRC delivered regional expertise in the EaP, contribution to shadow reporting, including direct links to National Platforms and CSF working groups.

⁷ Antidiscrimination Laws (Moldova, Georgia), Strategy for the Protection & Integration of the Roma Minority into the Ukrainian Society (Ukraine), Visa Liberalization Action Plan with a Minority rights chapter and State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration (Georgia), etc

In Republic of Moldova and Azerbaijan the project activities were coordinated mainly directly by MRGE, including project coordinator. At the initial stage, in Moldova MRGE had a focal point⁸. Nevertheless, interviewed Moldovan stakeholders, suggested for future similar activities to consider having an implementing partner in Moldova, as well.

As for the grass roots level implementers, they were selected by national implementers and/or by MRGE through the open small grants competition targeting minorities related issues and EaP aspects ownership. This approach increased also the ownership and promoted the minorities and EaP aspects to the minority communities.

3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

3.2.1 Project effectiveness in context of results achieved

EQ: To what extent did the Project reach the objectives?

The following part of the report presents the findings of the final evaluation related to the effectiveness of the project "Eastern Partnership Minorities Network" implemented in the EaP countries in collaboration with the national EaPMN implementing partners.

The findings are reflected at the level of expected outputs and outcomes (results) achieved, and in the context of the evaluation questions. Before going into the evaluation findings it is important to bear in mind the social and political differences between the EaP countries and different environments in which the project was operating and how these factors may have directly or indirectly affected project implementation.

Prior to describing of the outcomes-based achievements remarked by the final evaluation, it is worth reminding that the MRGE project operated in an extremely challenging external environment, which was different from country to country. Not having national implementing partners familiar with the national contexts and anchored in overall project implementation in three (Moldova, Azerbaijan and Belarus) out of six EaP countries, also diminished the effectiveness, because it affected the mainstreaming and monitoring of the project implementation, networking among minority NGOs and sometimes setting up relations and involvement of the public authorities and the visibility of the project. As mentioned one of the key stakeholders from Moldova: "*the project would had been more visible and it would had been achieved more results, if it had a national IP*". Therefore, in the future would be highly recommendable to have national implementing partners in each country (Please see the *Recommendations* part of the report).

The project implementation challenges also generated some internal difficulties and discrepancies at the management level among some implementing partners and MRGE, mainly due to diversity of visions.

The final evaluation reveals that the project shows progress toward its outcomes and there are tangible results in all components (advocacy, capacity

⁸ Nicolae Radita, Executive Director of the Roma National Center

building, publications and research, awareness raising), which represents a variety of pieces of success, which are getting incorporated by the project team in a complex puzzle.

Project scored well under all four expected results (ER), as follows: ER 1: *"Enhanced capacities of and networking between CSOs working with minority communities to effectively advocate for inclusion and implementation of their human rights in the EAP region"*; ER 2: *"Increased knowledge/awareness at the local, national and regional levels of the various development issues minority communities face and the need for their inclusion in development processes"*; ER 3: *"Increased engagement and dialogue between minority community CSOs and decision makers at various levels leads to increased commitment and collaboration to address minority rights"* and ER 4: *" More minority representatives are able to inform Eastern Partnership policy development and implementation at the national and community levels"*.

At the outputs level, it can be remarked that the MRGE project management team and national implementers managed to stay focused and to deliver most of the planned activities, regardless of the internal and external challenges and difficulties. It adjusted the project design and implementation and proved to be flexible.

Final evaluation concludes that most of the activities contributed to the planned results. Please see below the description of the key achievements per each expected result.

Expected Result 1: Enhanced capacities of and networking between CSOs working with minority communities to effectively advocate for inclusion and implementation of their human rights in the EAP region.

The EPMN project scored well under this expected result and in the evidenced-based opinion of the evaluator, it represents one of the key strengths and successful project components.

The MRGE project managed to establish an informal network of minority CSOs for a broader cooperation, information sharing and coordination on minority issues. It has been shown to be the only network in the EaP region specifically for minority CSOs. This coalition expanded and includes about 80 minority and human rights CSOs, as well as think tanks.

Partners who have undertaken EaP training were capacitated and enhanced their knowledge and understanding of the regional policy framework. Replicated trainings in EaP countries for national and local CSOs multiplied the capacity building effects and due to this approach a broader coalition has the knowledge to engage in the EaP process. Evaluation shows that live and online trainings on minority rights and international standards for CSOs in countries, created a critical mass of regional CSOs in four (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia) out of six target states who were able to engage, understand and advocate for minority rights. They interacted over network building meetings and learned from each other during the best practice seminars. This also allowed CSOs from EaP countries to learn from examples of regional civil society practice. The CSOs capacities were enhanced and EaPM networking was boosted through

collaboration in joint local advocacy and awareness campaigns and partially by the resource web portal and social media (Facebook).

The evaluation reveals that project encountered some challenges with delivering the on-line courses, because accordingly to ECMI Caucasus representative, many local stakeholders have limited access to and skills of using IT. In some of the cases the online courses were affected by the problems with limited access to electricity in Belarus.

Some Local Public Authorities (LPA) still do not always understand and are not always willing to include citizens, particularly local minorities in decision making process, and this leads to the conclusion that LPA are not fully inclusive in including minorities in policy making.

Thus, it can be concluded that CSO participants trained by the program and interviewed during the evaluation confirmed that their knowledge and awareness of minority rights, the EaP and advocacy skills has significantly increased as the result of the project interventions, such as: best practice seminars, EaP minorities meetings, national trainings on minority rights and minority advocacy rights and on-line courses on minority issues. As mentioned one interviewed stakeholder: *"the project helped us to understand what is EaP all about and how to struggle for our rights. However for me the most useful were Best practice seminars, because we had a chance to get to know other minority NGOs to see how they are dealing with their problems and to learn from each other. This is important, because we grow faster."* As the result of the project, participants have exchanged and used information from a CSO in another EaP country and implemented joint advocacy/campaign initiatives for the first time (see examples and evidences below).

Expected Result 2: Increased knowledge/awareness at the local, national and regional levels of the various development issues minority communities face and the need for their inclusion in development processes.

The evaluation remarks that the EaPMN project contributed to increasing the knowledge and awareness at the local, national and regional levels of the various minority development issues, because one of the obstacles preventing minority communities from achieving rights implementation is the lack of understanding of minority issues amongst relevant decision makers. Representatives of local authorities in the region, as "duty bearers", have increased knowledge and awareness of minority issues and their obligations as a result of program activities and informational campaigns undertaken by CSOs and this underlines the HRBA of the project. There are examples of increasing engagement, collaboration and dialogue between minority community CSOs and decision makers on addressing minority rights at various levels. Good examples are coming from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia.

A success story can be considered the activities undertaken in Kremenchug (Ukraine), where local implementing sub-grantee NGO "Cultural Dialogue" managed to create an effective communication platform bringing together representatives of the local national ethnic and religious minorities (Muslims, Jewish, Catholics, Orthodox incl. Armenians, etc) and local public authorities to set up counseling structure for a productive dialogue with the representatives of Kremenchug authorities.

Another successful experience, at the national level can be assessed in Moldova. Association of Ukrainian Youth of Moldova "Zlagoda" has set dialogue with national public authorities involved in human/minority rights protection. As mentioned the leader of organization: "...Due to this project we had a chance to meet the MPs from the commission of Human Rights and National Minorities and to voice up our concerns, to learn how they promote minorities rights in the policy making etc. This project allowed us to our surprise to figure out that Ministry of Internal Affairs is also dealing with the minority issues. We managed to set up productive cooperation with them". Similar initiatives on increasing the awareness and dialogue were delivered by "Tolerance Club", Community of Jewish Associations; Transnistrian-based NGO "Society of Bulgarian Culture – Rodolubets". It is worth noting that "Rodolubets" is undertaken the second initiative in Transnistria targeting cooperation between the local municipality and minorities communities of Transnistrian region and involving minority youth into the activities. This is commended by the evaluator, taking into consideration the implementation difficulties and political context in the Transnistria.

In Armenia, a Yezidi NGO ("yezidis" belong to religious and ethnic minorities in Armenia) managed to set up constructive cooperation with the Armenian legislative body and facilitated the visit of Yezidit children to the Armenian Parliament. The Armenia MPs explained about the policymaking and legislative process, while Yezidi children informed about their wishes.

Similar successful stories of cooperation between minority NGOs and public authorities are in Georgia, for instance at the national/policy level Cooperation of ACICC with the Public Defender Office and Council of National Minorities (CNM), including within the framework of the project "Strengthening Civic Participation in Local Self-governance issues" and municipality meetings with the municipalities of Kvemo Kartli region. Boot camps with the participation of the Local Self-governance officials and elected members, Local NGO members, MP of Georgia, representatives of Public Defender office, NGO members of the CNM at the Office of Public Defender of Georgia, students and active citizens also represent an illustrative example. Also at the "grass roots" level are several good examples, including the "Teachers Twinning" pilot project implemented by "Civil Education for Lawful State" in cooperation with ECMI.

During the field mission it was revealed that the representatives of the national public authorities as decision makers in four EaP countries (Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia) increased their knowledge as result of the project initiatives, learning more about minorities' issues and relevant EaP process initiated by EU and its priorities. As mentioned one of the representatives of the public authorities from Georgia: "*it was a useful experience because we have learned from each other and from the international experience during the study visits that the minorities` issues are not minorities` issues and we should properly address them by involving/consulting them into the policy making*".

As for the local level, there is no evidence about similar achievements in regard to Minority Focus Groups in the local authorities of the EaP region, which leads to conclusion that this aspect turned to be a deficient one.

Due to the EPMN project, European decision makers, particularly EU officials

visited by the project stakeholders, also got first-hand information from the representatives of minority organizations and communities from EaP countries. Thus, on one hand they increased their knowledge about the minority issues at the "grass roots" and national policy levels and another hand they informed minority representatives about European instruments, European Policies and dialogue and human rights protection mechanisms. As a result EC Officials involved in the project, include reference to recommendations of MRGE policy paper, input to the EU Progress reports and the ENP review process in drafting of Country Strategy Papers. See the expected result 4 about the effects of the advocacy visits on the EU institutions.

Expected Result 3: Increased engagement and dialogue between minority community CSOs and decision makers at various levels leads to increased commitment and collaboration to address minority rights.

While it is important for stakeholders to be informed of the situation and potential models for improvement, it is also vital to go a step further than awareness-raising and increased understanding. Increased dialogue ensured decision makers are informed to address the minority issues at least in 4 countries (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). Although the international HR framework provides a basis for structured dialogue, implementation of HR recommendations in EaP countries is still slow, as it is either not prioritized or authorities lack means and capacity to effectively enact recommendations. Also very often authorities lack the political will to enact recommendations since in some countries, especially such as Azerbaijan and Belarus HR issues are treated in close proximity with security issues.

Evaluation shows that significant progress was made in equipping with advocacy and networking skills and minority CSOs are better placed to refer to international HR standards, good practice in minority protection and authorities' role as "duty bearers" to engage in dialogue. Local authorities representatives and minority community members increased dialogue with minority communities on development issues and collaborated on an EaP related pilot projects and plans are in place to continue collaboration to address minority issues beyond the project's duration, for instance in Kremenchug (Ukraine), Kvemo Kartli region (Georgia), Shamiram Village (Armenia), Tiraspol (Moldova) etc.

Policy Paper "Partnership for all? Measuring the impact of Eastern Partnership on minorities" represents a result of the joint efforts of the key policy level actors of the project led by an international expert. Policy paper proved to be one of the best practices and key tangible results of the EPMN project, which describes comprehensively the: EU policies on minority rights, EaP aspects, evidence-based minority issues in EaP countries etc and provides specific recommendations to a wide range of stakeholders: EU, EU states, EaP countries, EaP country Platforms, Minority CSOs, Civil Society Forum of the EaP etc.

Policy Paper was launched in Brussels and it was widely disseminated⁹. Project promoted the Policy Paper presenting and distributing among the participants of an International Conference in Yerevan (February 2015) entitled "Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the EU Eastern Partnership Program" which was organized by Latvian Embassy, EU Delegation and EaPMN project partner ACGRC. Policy Paper was distributed among officials, MPs, minority organizations, diplomats and representatives of international organizations. Policy Paper has been used as the key advocacy document at all Brussels level advocacy meetings and among the national decision makers. It was also widely promoted at one of the broadest CSOs gatherings, such as Civic Society Forum in 2014 in Georgia (2014) and 2015 in Ukraine (2015).

Evaluation proves that Policy Paper was well promoted among Brussels officials, NGOs and EU Delegations, national decision makers, as was initially planned. As for the local stakeholders, including local minority NGOs in the EaP region, which benefited from the project, evaluation shows that they are not familiar with the Policy Paper (PP). It worth noting that language of the PP is difficult enough to be understood by minority populations in most of the cases, due to the complexity of the EaP policy and EU approach. This was preliminary discussed by stakeholders and the project team tried to make the language more accessible for a non-expert on EU Policy. But again, due to the policies and mechanisms, instruments and tools used by the EU, it was not always possible to „interpret” the EC jargon.

The Policy Paper as such has influenced at certain level the national policy makers and raised awareness of the needs and gaps to be addressed. However, the knowledge over the EaP among the national and ethnic minorities has been mostly delivered as a result of the information campaigns, and not necessarily by the PP, while national and international decision makers had been sensitized through the PP, as was targeted by the project design. The EEAS progress report analyses prove that MRGE reports were analyzed and integrated to the progress reports of the EU. Also ENP consultations build on Policy Paper findings, which proves its relevance.

The effects of the Advocacy Guide cannot be assessed, because it was developed in 2015, in the last year of the project development and launched in Brussels in March 2016 at the Civil Society Forum event. It was intended to enhance the ability to advocate at regional and EaP level by publication of the first CSO Advocacy Guide to the EaP, but this intervention was rescheduled, because the project team decided and got approval to issue it at the end of the project and to insert in the Guide not only theoretical information about advocacy but also practical success stories of local, national and regional advocacy campaigns, encouraging in such a way as “learning from each other”.

Thus, the Advocacy Guide developed by MRGE offers an important and useful amount of information about the basics of advocacy, particularly: What is advocacy? ; What is advocacy for? ; Who does it? ; What major strategies are applied? ; NGO advocacy in the EU: opportunities and distinctive features. It

⁹ Please see: <http://www.minorities-network.org/policy-paper-partnership-for-all-the-impact-of-eastern-partnership-on-minorities/>

also offers specific information on advocacy, for instance: The major institutional setting of advocacy; Distinctive features of advocacy in the EU and recommended strategies, European Neighborhood Policy; Possible advocacy issues; Some specific advocacy tools at the disposal of minority rights activists; EE mechanisms (EU Parliament, European Commission, EaP Civil Society Forum etc) and how to engage them advocacy effort of the minority organizations. The Guide also provides practical advocacy cases, and involvement in /visits of the EU mechanisms of minority organizations from Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova.

Overall, the Advocacy Guide represents a useful resource for minority rights advocates from EaP countries in their effort to mainstream minority rights in the relationship with the EU and to contribute to change and the improvement of the position of the most vulnerable groups in their societies.

Delivering and getting involved in the shadow reports proved to be an appropriate tool for increasing the engagement and dialogue between minority community CSOs and national decision makers, but also an effective tool on holding Governments to account. As remarked one of the interviewed stakeholders: *"our involvement in shadow reporting increased the responsibility of our Government and public officials are getting more sensitive to the minorities` issues, while policy making and reporting"*.

It can be remarked the two success stories.

For instance in Ukraine, the EPMN national implementing partner SAC "No Borders" got involved into the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) report drafting input on minority issues, refugees, and asylum seekers, in addition to hate crimes, xenophobia, equality, and non-discrimination. The SAC prepared answers to particular questions set by the Committee to Ukrainian officials and participated in formal and informal meetings of the Committee raising concerns on the relevant human/minority rights. As an effect of intervention many of concerns were reflected in the concluding observations of the Committee¹⁰. The shadow report was translated into Ukrainian and disseminated among the state actors and CSOs in Ukraine. SAC had a number of meetings with special representatives and other monitoring bodies to raise awareness on the situation of minorities in Ukraine.

In Georgia, EPMN implementing partner ACICC¹¹ within the Coalition of the CSOs got involved in drafting the report on the situation of minority rights in Georgia. The Shadow Report on implementation of the ICCPR was presented in Geneva during the 108th Session of the UN Human Rights Committee. During the visit to Geneva, representatives of the ACICC also raised concerns about minorities issues in Georgia during the meetings with representatives of the UN Special Procedures, i.e. the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, the UN Special Rapporteur on All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the UN Special

¹⁰ *"The Committee is concerned at reports of hate speech, threats and violence against members of ethnic groups, religious and national minorities, in particular Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses and Crimean Tatars, resulting in physical assaults, acts of vandalism and arson.."; "...While welcoming the steps taken by the State party to improve the situation of Roma, including the adoption of "The strategy on protection and integration of Roma minority into the Ukrainian society for the period up to 2020", the Committee remains concerned at the prevalence of discrimination, including the difficulties encountered in access to personal documents, education, health care, housing and employment..."*

¹¹ In 2015 another EPMN implementation partner ECMI in Georgia was involved in the shadow reporting.

Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Thought, desk officer on Georgia within the OHCHR and representatives of the UPR Section of the OHCHR. ACICC, being supported by MRGE, also contributed to the drafting of the UPR progress implementation report based on the recommendations received by Georgia. Subsequently, ACICC was supported to make a statement at the OSCE HDIM in Warsaw, Poland (2013) about the recommendations and key findings of the UPR progress implementation report.

Thus, this intervention worked well in some EaP countries (Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia) while in other countries (Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan) it did not work proving to be, too ambitious, mainly because of lack of national implementing partner (Moldova) and difficult country context (Belarus and Azerbaijan).

Another EPMN project output, web portal (www.minorities-network.org) represents an excellent opportunity for networking, information sharing, increasing visibility, getting expertise etc. It is well-designed, updated and informative tool containing numerous relevant documents. However, again, evaluation shows that it is accessed and used mainly by policy level CSOs. As for the "grass roots" level CSOs in EaP countries, which benefited from the project, they are not familiar with it, and are not using it for promoting their experience and getting others` experience on minority issues, mainly due to the reasons that the web-portal is unknown by them. In the opinion of evaluator, this represents a gap in information sharing among the all-level stakeholders, their visibility increasing, communication and consolidation of the network of minority NGOs in the EaP region.

It worth noting, that the MRGE project team used also social media, particularly Facebook¹² as a more dynamic information-sharing tool. The Facebook (FB) page is more comprehensive, more visible and provides operative information about the EPMN project and about minorities and human rights issues. In a way it fills in the above-mentioned gap and de-facto they complement each other. The FB page of the project is connected with and shares information from other pages, for instance of: Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Council of Europe/European Neighborhood Policy, Ambassador of Sweden for the Eastern Partnership; the national EPMN implementing partners, such as European Centre for Minority Issues Caucasus (ECMI), Analytical Center for Interethnic Cooperation and Consultations (ACICC), etc. However it seems like the FB page of the project is not promoting enough the above mentioned web-portal and vice-versa. Therefore, it further mutual promotion should take place.

Translation and distribution of Minority Rights Advocacy materials, including the Policy paper into minority languages (12 items translated – 2 per EaP country) proved to be unnecessary, because Russian and English versions were sufficient and accessible for stakeholders.

In conclusion, it can be remarked that increased engagement and dialogue between minority community CSOs and decision makers at various levels in four EaP Countries (Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) led to increased commitment and collaboration to address minority rights, although minority issues still need to be mainstreamed into the local and national policy making.

¹² See the Facebook page of the Eastern Partnership Minorities Network, which has got 803 likes (April 2016). www.facebook.com/EasternPartnershipMinoritiesNetwork/?ref=bookmarks

Expected Result 4: More minority representatives are able to inform Eastern Partnership policy development and implementation at the national and community levels.

As a new policy, the EaP is still not publicly known in target countries, greatly hindering the realization of its priorities that rely on public and CSO support. The EaP and EU were the least understood regional mechanisms for HR advocacy amongst participants, which was reflected in the lack of minority participation in EaP processes. This lack of awareness and participation of minority CSOs in EaP civil society advocacy has resulted in the lack of prioritization of minority issues amongst national authorities and within EU initiatives under EaP. Therefore, MRGE and its EPMN implementing partners targeted to address this challenge and support and promote awareness of and increase engagement in advocacy relating to EaP. The project targeted a three dimensional approach on advocacy: local advocacy campaigns, national and regional. Through structured advocacy at national and regional levels, CSOs and partners were expected to use their skills to participate in minority informed EaP policy development and implementation. Local and national advocacy was expected to ensure implementation of recommendations resulting from regional advocacy.

The evaluation revealed that, as the result of the project activities, minority representatives/CSOs were able to gain a greater understanding of the EaP, and to promote awareness of the EaP amongst their communities, to inform EaP policy development and implementation, as well as to increase engagement in advocacy relating to EaP and minority issues.

Minority representatives interviewed during the field mission confirmed that they increased understanding and importance of the EaP in their work and they have engaged in advocacy related to the EaP and minorities issues. Advocacy Guide did not contribute to this (as initially planned) because, it was issued at the end of the project and it is expected to generate results in the future. Nevertheless, some of the local CSOs in EaP countries are still confusing the advocacy initiatives with the informational campaigns and, as remarked one of the key representatives of EPMN implementing partners in Georgia: *"Advocacy at local level is not fully understood, because it is a still new approach and local community and stakeholders are not fully familiar with it"*.

Usually, the effects of the advocacy and informational campaigns are difficult to be assessed by any evaluation and this evaluation is not an exception, especially taking into consideration that the data provided by key informants is mostly perception-based and there was no any Knowledge-Abilities-Practices (KAP) assessment at pre- and post-intervention stages and the results-based monitoring mechanism was not foreseen. The consulted stakeholder underlined some key challenges encountered during local advocacy campaigns related to complexity and difficulty of communication with local authorities, misunderstanding, fear of innovations, insufficient political will and mistrust among local actors. There are also some challenges related to involvement of the minorities in local advocacy campaigns. Thus, in some cases

representatives of minorities are not speaking official/state language, in other cases their family and community traditions hinder their social integration¹³.

Nevertheless, some of the local advocacy campaigns in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia (described below) are worth mentioning, because were well delivered and can be assessed as successful, regardless of the challenges encountered. In a way, they managed to sensitize minorities and/or influence the local decision makers and to mainstream HRBA, gender and the cross cutting issues in the local policy-making. This represents a best practice described below in the report, which could/should be replicated.

Thus, local advocacy campaigns were implementing through small grants components in four (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia) out of the six EaP countries and targeted mainly promoting minority rights, inter-community advocacy efforts, disseminating knowledge amongst relevant local decision makers with the view to improving cooperation between LAs & CSOs and anchoring the EPMN project at the local level.

Some good examples of local advocacy campaigns were developed in three regions of Georgia: Samtskhe–Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti. For instance, a local NGO (Education and Labor Association) has completed the local advocacy campaign in September 2015 by capacitating ethnic Azerbaijanis with information about values and principles of the EU and why and how would they benefit from the Georgia's EU integration.

Another local minority NGO (Association UDI) has conducted 6 working meetings with the local Resource Center in Kvareli¹⁴ in order to exchange the information about preparation of the upcoming textbook and make the textbook in line with the standards approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia to introduce teaching of minority language Udi in the school. As a result of the initiative the Udi language alphabet that was approved by state authorities, published books and 6 schools with about 120 Udi children have been studying their mother tongue since December 2015. Other minorities, such as Ossetins and Avars are also advocating for mainstreaming in the schools` curricula their languages for their kids. This represents a good example of "bottom-up" cooperation with local and national institutions and mainstreaming minority issues in the policymaking.

In Armenia local HR NGO Center for Strategic Litigations Human and Center of HRE for the National Minority Representatives in Lori region developed a manual "Know Your Rights" and capacitated about 25 persons on: international covenants on human rights, Ombudsman office competence, Council of Europe Human Rights Committee and European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg. The campaign targeted representatives of such minorities as: Assyrian, Belarusian, Yezidit, Georgian, Greek, Polish and Ukrainian communities leaving in Lori region of Armenia.

¹³ For instance, because of their traditions Yezidi families in Armenia are reluctant to send their girls to the schools. As a result, many Yezidi girls do not get primary education. Providing an advocacy campaign on this issue would be challenging because, there is no a common vision among Yezidi NGOs and Armenian authorities are not tackling this sensitive issue.

¹⁴ Resource center is a local entity of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

NGO "Creative Youth Partnership" in partnership with Standing Committee on Protection of HR and Public Affairs, National Assembly of Armenia undertook the campaign – "*Raising Awareness of the National Minority activists on EU–EaP Riga Summit Outcomes*". National minority activists were informed about the EU–Armenia relations, visa liberalization process, future EU–Armenia cooperation in the areas of local self–governance, education, HR issues, civil society monitoring of EU– Armenia cooperation.

Similar advocacy campaigns were developed also in Ukraine, for instance by NGO "Tolerance Space" and Moldova, where has been conducted trainings on advocacy, afterwards with graduated participants carried out advocacy campaigns.

It is important to mention that as an additional unintended result confirmed by some EPMN national implementing partners, can be perceived that fact that they learned how to work with grantees (to organize open calls, to assess the applications, to monitor the implementation and to have a management response to reporting. Of course, local NGOs also increased their project management capacities.

The EPMN project scored well in providing national advocacy campaigns (NAC) in Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia, and occasionally in Belarus and Azerbaijan. The project was successful in collaboration with the national public authorities and the cases described below represent eloquent evidence.

The Association of Ukrainian Youth of Moldova "Zlagoda" implemented one of the most successful national advocacy campaigns in 2014 "EU Pro–Active", which also could be a best practice. During the campaign, young Moldovan leaders learned about the European values and EaP cooperation principles, minority communities in Moldova etc. Evaluation proved that the training topics were indeed interesting and relevant to their priorities and national context. The advocacy campaign continued with several meetings with key national institutions (such as: State Chancellery, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and EU Integration, Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and National Minorities, Ministry of Internal Affairs etc), international, inter–governmental organizations (EU, OSCE) that play an important role in the EU–Moldova relations, as well as human and minority rights protection system. Due to the activity participants could better understand how human and minority rights protection infrastructure looks like in Moldova, what is the role of governmental institutions, where do the international organizations play its role, how to address and which are the human–rights defending organizations.

In addition to the national level advocacy visits, three regional visits and campaigns have been organized in the minority–populated regions of Moldova and a final round table concluding the outcomes of the advocacy campaign. As a result of the national advocacy campaign, importance of the ethnic diversity in Moldova has been brought to the attention of the Moldovan civil society, national level institutions and international organizations. Targeted groups have been reached and were informed about the EU integration, European values and ideas etc. In the opinion of evaluator, the latest effort has been especially valuable since the lack of information is predominantly stated as a serious barrier to Moldova's integration into the EU. The advocacy

campaign has considerably increased skills and motivation of the leaders and resulted in the planning and implementation of the advocacy visit of four minority activists from Moldova to Brussels.

EPMN partner ACICC in Georgia implemented national advocacy campaign targeting South Caucasus region¹⁵ and involving human and minority right activists from all three countries (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan). During the campaign, leaders from minority CSOs were capacitated on: providing anti-discrimination and tolerance issues. Regional workshop for experts and advocates increased their knowledge on: mechanisms of prevention of torture and crimes based on hatred and independent judiciary.

As a result of the workshop minority/human rights CSOs from the region had the opportunity to exchange information about the situation in their countries, provide recommendations, which were presented at the Civil Society Conference of the Ministerial Council (Basel, December 2014). This example illustrates the advocacy efforts of the EPMN actors in improving implementation of the human dimension commitments.

In Armenia EPMN implementing partner, ACGRC carried out the national advocacy campaign. During the campaign public opinion was informed about the EaP and meeting with EU officials and Latvian Embassy in Armenia were held for highlighting the national advocacy campaign progress, as well as underlining the importance of greater involvement of national minority organizations in EU–Armenia dialogue process. During advocacy campaign national minority NGOs were capacitated and learned about: preparation for European Commission CSO–LA calls, preparation of successful project applications to Foundations, fundraising, European Support Programs, how to write and implement successful project, information on European foundations, which are working on protection of human rights and democracy in Armenia. According to the evaluation provided by the training participants, for majority of them the information proved to be new and useful for their future work, as mentioned some interviewed stakeholders: *"We were not familiar with those kind of information, especially related to European support programs, therefore the project was welcomed because it increased our knowledge on this"*.

The initial project design foresaw that as a result of national monitoring reports, EU Officials in target countries will reference minority issues in CSP, leading to realized programs for minorities and reference to minority issues will be included in monitoring reports of EaP, CSF and national CSO platforms. However, there is no comprehensive information about national monitoring reports on the impact of EaP programs on minority rights. Therefore, it can be concluded that this target proved to be, too ambitious to be reached as designed.

Nevertheless, it worth noting that EaP Minorities Network produced instead brief country information reports that draw on desk analysis of the EaP

¹⁵ The national advocacy campaign was held during the OSCE Chairmanship of Switzerland, which focused on improving people's lives by implementing OSCE commitments in the human dimension and by strengthening the role and involvement of the civil society in the OSCE. Switzerland scheduled 4 regional workshops for representatives of this sector in: Belgrade, Vienna, Dushanbe and Tbilisi.

implementation and impact on minorities and complement EU cycles of reporting and ensure decision makers are informed of progress from a minority perspective. Shorter summaries of these reports are included in the Policy Paper on the EaP impact on minority issues. Country reports on minorities and HR issues were submitted to those countries that undergo the VLAP process¹⁶.

It is worth to remark that EaPMN project managed to put minorities issues on the Forum`s agenda, to get minority participants for the first time to be at the Forum, to raise awareness of the minorities about the existence and competence of the Forum and to create a subgroup on minorities under HR Working Group. It also succeeded in mainstreaming one recommendation on minorities into the Forum recommendations (Georgia, Batumi 2014) to provide links between grass-root minority organisations and the European Institutions¹⁷. Participation in EaP Civil Society Forums by minority CSOs proved to provide a mixed picture. On one hand, it represents an opportunity to minority representatives to influence Eastern Partnership policy development and implementation, of the other hand several CSOs consulted during the field mission, questioned its efficiency, underlining lack of in-depth approach and sophisticated and bureaucratic format.

Some of the success stories under this expected result are described below. For instance, the Yezidi Minority NGO "Sinjar" were elected in the National Platform of Armenia. EPMN project actively promoted "Sinjar" and it was selected for the first time as a full participant of the EaP Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) in 2013. One year later, in 2014, on behalf of EaP Platform of Moldova another minority organization, the Roma organization, was delegated to represent in the EaP CSF. In 2015 on behalf of National EaP Platform of Georgia was mainstreamed the NGO «Multinational Georgia», while from the National EaP Platform of Ukraine was delegated Charity Foundation «Rozvytok». All these accomplishments show the progress in bringing the minority NGOs from EaP countries to the EaP Civil Society Forum. This progress is commended by evaluator and should not be underestimated.

Advocacy visits to Brussels by partners and minority CSOs were highly appreciated by the interviewed stakeholders. Representatives of Roma, Jewish, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Ukrainian, Russian and other minorities communities of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia have held meetings with officials from European External Action Service (EEAS), DG for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, DG for International Cooperation and Development as well as country Missions to the EU.

As the result of the advocacy visits, the relevant international bodies were informed about the situation of ethnic, religious minorities in EaP countries and related policy and implementation challenges. Discussions covered the possible ways how the EU could mainstream and highlight these issues in bilateral and multilateral relations with EaP countries and Eastern Partnership region in general. Other discussion topics included the role of the civil society including national minorities in supporting the countries' European aspirations

¹⁶ Ukraine and Georgia, as Moldova already accomplished its in 2014

¹⁷ For instance, Association of Ukrainian Youth «Zlagoda» organising visit with key decision makers in Brussels or having accepted by Embassies and EU Delegation in Moldova, and applying for EU funds.

and values and funding opportunities and priorities for minority organizations, possible ways of reviewing the grant schemes for smaller organizations, as well as the capacity building actions. Public lectures at the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Secretariat highlighted the European Neighborhood Policy¹⁸, possible outcomes for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and role of ethnic minorities in this process.

As confirmed one of the representatives of a religious minority: *"I come from a religious minority, which had about 100 prisoners and 8 victims and for us it is important to voice up our problems and to advocate for our rights. Therefore, advocacy visits and activities gave us more confidence, increased the visibility of our activity and strengthened our capacity"*.

Another stakeholder remarked: *"...due to the advocacy visits we learned about the European and international human/minorities rights mechanisms, how they work and how we can get involved. We also had a chance to present the situation of minorities' rights in our country and the position of minorities toward EU integration of Moldova"*.

In conclusion it can be mentioned that the EPMN project managed to increase capacities and networking between minority activists and CSOs in EaP countries leading to their increased engagement with relevant national authorities and their strengthened role within the EaP, enabling them to effectively participate in democratic and policy processes positively impacting development and human rights for their communities.

3.2.2 Stakeholders satisfaction

EQ: *To what extent have stakeholders been satisfied with the results?*

The final evaluation showed that most of the interviewed stakeholders from EaP countries: public authorities, representatives of minority NGOs, and majority of implementing partners expressed a remarkable level of satisfaction with the results achieved within the evaluated project.

At the key strategic partners level¹⁹ stakeholders the picture is a mixed one. On one hand, the representatives of the national public authorities such as: MPs Public Defender Office, etc. expressed satisfaction with cooperation with the project, mentioning that the EPMN project was welcomed because it was relevant to the national priorities, for instance State strategy for Civic Equality and Integration (Georgia), Strategy for Protection and Integration of the Roma Minority into Ukrainian Society (Ukraine), EU-Moldova AA etc. On other hand, some of them expressed a willing for a more consistent cooperation and joint efforts in the future, mentioning that their involvement in EaPMN project was insignificant and they are not quite satisfied with the intensity of cooperation.

As for the national implementing partners, it is also a mixed picture: some of them (from Ukraine, Armenia) expressed satisfaction with the results and cooperation with the MRGE, while some of them (from Georgia) expressed a good level of satisfaction with the results, but a moderate level of satisfaction

¹⁸ ECMI Caucasus and Graham Donnelly, independent expert had previously contributed and submitted recommendations raised in the "Consultation Response" drafted and submitted on behalf of the EaPMN.

¹⁹ Representatives of the national public authorities and national implementing partners

with the cooperation with MRGE, claiming for a better communication, clearer project management rules and joint decision making.

At the "grass roots" level, the EPMN project covered several groups of stakeholders: "duty bearers" (local public authorities) and minority organizations and human rights activists (especially in the cases of Belarus and Azerbaijan), as "rights holders". The final evaluation revealed that both groups of stakeholders are satisfied with the project, because as mentioned several of the interviewed persons, the project helped them to learn more about EaP, to advocate for minorities` rights, to get useful information about minority issues and about international relevant expertise. They also suggested some recommendations for future similar initiatives (See the *Recommendation* part of the Report).

Altogether, it can be concluded from the focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews, that overall stakeholders are mostly satisfied with the project achievements and all of them expressed the willingness to continue collaboration with the MRGE.

3.2.3 Key effective approaches and strategies used in achieving the results

EQ: What were the key approaches and strategies the project used in achieving its results? What worked and why?

The evaluated project used a variety of key approaches and interventions to achieve the expected results on the EaP countries: advocacy visits, capacity building trainings, best practice seminars, informational campaigning, contest and video spot etc. The MRGE project also used several strategies toward achieving its planned outcomes.

The key project activities that have worked well in opinion of the evaluator, and can be taken forward for the next follow up initiatives include the following: advocacy visits, national and local advocacy campaigning (except Belarus and Azerbaijan), informational campaigns, sub-granting project component, Policy Paper and partially shadow reporting.

The key project strategies, which worked well, are:

** Partnerships with key EaPMN implementers*

A significant initiative of the project was aimed at building the capacity of the "duty bearers", i.e. national and local public authorities and maximizing the effects of the grass roots level interventions and interactions with the "rights holders" (minority NGOs) on the EaP and minority related issues. This strategy is closely aligned with the Prodoc, which calls for "partnerships with key actors from EaP region on minority issue". The project managed to set up productive partnership with EaPMN implementers in Armenia, Ukraine and eventually in Georgia, which boosted the project implementation and alongside with the project coordinator turned to be one the Key Driving Force of the project. The multi-country and multi-stakeholder undertaking (encouraging dialogue, pooling knowledge, developing skills, boosting local initiatives, outsourcing expertise in the case of Policy Paper etc) has been a core and underpinning theme in the project aimed towards advocacy, networking, increasing the awareness on minority issues.

* *Networking*

This strategy worked well, because the EPMN project offered generous support in creating a communication and information-sharing platform, providing numerous multi-country events, for instance Best Practice Seminars, promoting minority NGOs to the EaP Civil Society Forums etc. Networking links were also created among minority NGOs of EaP countries and among minority NGOs and national public authorities and international mechanisms, for instance as a result of advocacy visits, or national advocacy campaigns.

* *Re-granting and supporting the local initiatives*

Another key strategy that worked was re-granting or providing small grants for supporting the local advocacy and informational initiatives on the minorities and EaP issues in four out of six EaP countries. This aspect was described in the report and was underlined by several stakeholders consulted during the final evaluation of the project. This strategy revived in a way many local minority NGOs and generated tangible results described in the report. In most of the cases, the project moved proactively and seized opportunities to mainstream advocacy and informational campaigns to the local level and to increase visibility of the minority related actions.

* *Capacity Building of the minority NGOs*

Another key strategy that the project applied and one which worked well, is *capacity development of the minority NGOs from EaP countries* through various national capacity building trainings, international best practice seminars and international advocacy visits, which had also an empowerment. Desk review and filed mission consultations show that capacity development initiatives encompassed minority NGOs and community leaders. However, in the opinion of the evaluator, the capacity building would have worked better if the mentorship aspect had been planned. In addition to this, the feedback provided by the stakeholders proved that the capacity building events were one of the success factors of the project, which augmented the capacities of the Minority NGOs (increased subject and management related knowledge, developed skills on minority rights, advocacy and project management) and consolidated partnerships within the national and regional EaP network and, for instance successful advocacy and informational campaigns described are proving this.

EQ: What strategies did not fully work and why?

Usually, any strategy, which does not fully work, represents an excellent opportunity for learning a lesson. The majority of the strategies undertaken by the evaluated project worked well in four of the EaP countries (Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia), except translation and distribution of Minority Rights Advocacy materials into minority languages (12 items translated – 2 per country), shadow reporting in Moldova and some national monitoring reports.

As for Belarus and Azerbaijan, evaluation show that that the project almost did not worked in those countries given the political and legal constraints, except some insignificant activities. Therefore the activities planned in those two EaP countries were reduced considerable and funds re-allocated. Activities, which did not work at all in Belarus and Azerbaijan, were related to: national capacity building trainings on EaP, (3 per country) Local Level Public Information

Campaigns by CSOs on EaP and Minority Rights, shadow reporting (one per country), CSO Local Advocacy Campaigns on minority issues related to EaP priorities (3 per country) and national monitoring reports on the impact of EaP programs on minority rights (one per country).

3.3 EFFICIENCY

3.3.1 Cost effectiveness of the project

EQ: How well was the availability and use of inputs and resources managed by MRGE? Is the project cost-effective, i.e. could the expected results have been achieved at lower cost through adopting a different approach and/or using alternative delivery mechanisms?

The cost-effectiveness was examined in terms of the overall project costs and the major project activities and savings. The evaluation findings show that the resources were invested in the project (human resources, advocacy visits, seminars, informational materials, advocacy and informational campaigns, etc) adequately and mostly sufficiently in terms of reaching the planned results of the evaluated project.

The information and prodocs provided by the project team during the external evaluation revealed that the management of the project respected financial management and procurement procedures and open selection rules, for instance during the re-granting. The project procurements and costs were mostly in accordance with the adjusted budget lines. The resources were used economically and the project follows the established project management procedures.

Analysing the budget breakdown of the project costs in relation to specific objectives and complexity of activities carried out within each of the project component, one can conclude that the distribution of costs is also appropriate.

From the total amount of the budget, the project generated savings, mostly from the activities planned in Belarus and Azerbaijan, which were reallocated after a project extension approved by EU.

Given this, it can be concluded that the financial resources were used economically and project followed the established project management procedures. The evaluation did not find any alternative services and resources available locally, which could be provided at fewer expenses and which would be more economical for the project.

In sum, the project has performed well in achieving results in a cost-effective manner, and used appropriate delivery mechanisms.

3.3.2 Efficient use of resources and timeliness of outputs

EQ: What measures have been taken during planning and implementation to ensure that resources are efficiently used?

The project outputs to-date, in most cases, have been provided on time or with only insignificant delays, with some exceptions where greater delay was happened due to some implementation difficulties, the war in Ukraine, a

deteriorated civil society environment in Azerbaijan and Belarus, as well as partner initially agreeing to deliver project activities in Belarus, and later failing to do so.

This points to an efficient use of project resources and the scale of work that has been developed with numerous local stakeholders. Given the savings of the project, it is not clear how the outcomes and results could have been achieved at lower cost through applying a different approach. Therefore, the external evaluation cannot recommend any feasible options for costs reduction and costs saving alternatives for reaching the project results with less input.

The evaluation highlights that 25% of project funds (EUR 245,418) to be raised by five partners (MRGE, ECMI, ACICC, ACGRC and SAC) proved to be very high. It proved impossible for some partners to raise a share of this amount. Matching funds raised by MRGE are EUR 160,000, while ECMI – EUR 30,000 and ACICC EUR 5,000. Two other EPMN implementing partners SAC (Ukraine) and ACGRC were not able to contribute as was agreed. Even so, this represents a high accomplishment.

However, it is important to note that collectively, the total needed was successfully raised.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

3.4.1 Sustainability prospects of benefits from the project

EQ. What was done by MRGE to ensure the financial, institutional and policy level sustainability?

Evaluation showed that, in terms of the likelihood of sustaining the benefits of the project, the results achieved to-date at the strategic, institutional and grass roots levels are particularly important, even if there are no financial commitments from the “duty bearers” and the project mostly represented an awareness raising and a capacity building intervention. Firstly, it empowered minority NGOs from four EaP countries (Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine) on minority and EaP issues, increased project management capacities of the local “grass roots” level CSOs and effectiveness of their activities with the local and national public authorities by supporting their initiatives through re-granting scheme and delivering capacity building interventions.

Secondly, the project succeeded in building links and networks, (even if fragile) among minority NGOs and with the relevant public authorities. Examples are in Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine. Of course, as mentioned the minority NGOs network is still fragile, and there is no yet a vision on its formal setting up. Most of the minority NGOs support the idea of a non-registered platform with consolidated communication and information sharing. In this respect, the web-portal, and Facebook page created by the project team represent sustainability prospects provided that they are maintained.

The partnership approach adopted by the project at all components, helped enhance ownership of these commitments and supported their sustainability prospects by encouraging local minority CSOs to deliver further minority related activities. Thus, at the “grass roots” level some results achieved seems to be

institutionalised, for instance approved curricula by the Ministry of Education & Science and mainstreamed Udi language in some schools in Georgia; Council of Minorities created in Kremenchug (Ukraine) as consultative Body of local public authorities; on-going extracurricular activities on Yezidi language provided by Yezidi CSOs "Sinjar" represent a few eloquent examples of sustainability prospects.

The evaluation proved that the project was demand driven in all 4 EaP countries (Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia), since it got numerous local minority related initiatives and provided some sub-grants supporting and mainstreaming minority issues in the national and local policy making and increasing the visibility of minority issues.

As for the sustainability of the informational campaigns, these are usually ephemeral, even if a critical mass of people were informed about the EaP and minorities issues, it represents a continuous process, therefore further reinforcement is needed.

Evaluation revealed that there is no exit strategy and the project will likely remain mainstreamed in the new similar initiatives. MRGE undertook substantial fundraising efforts together with its partners and sub-grantees during and after the EaPMN project, providing an opportunity for them to have access to EU grants. Thus, MRGE submitted seven jointly developed applications on EIDHR calls for follow up projects (Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia), being successful in one of them. In this perspective the *Recommendation* part of the report could be helpful de design and implement new initiatives on minorities and EaP related issues.

PART IV. CONCLUSIONS, BEST PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED

EQ: Are there any lessons learned that could be taken into consideration in future programming by MRGE?

At the outset of this final evaluation report section, it is important to emphasize that the MRGE project, was designed as a realistic one but during the project implementation turned into a very ambitious one, but structured and a flexible initiative, which represented a multi-stakeholder and both "up-down" and "bottom-up" approach.

The most important added values provided by MRGE are related to setting up a communication and experience-sharing platform, which is an important aspect in empowering the "right holders" (minority organizations and communities from EaP countries) and increasing the responsibilities of the "duty bearers" (national and local authorities). Public awareness raising and visibility-increasing on minorities' issues in EaP countries and strengthening capacities of the key minority rights actors from EaP region, especially from Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia by mainstreaming local, national and regional advocacy visits and providing a wide variety of capacity building interventions are key added value elements of the EPMN project. Providing links, contacts and meeting opportunities with European Institutions, European decision makers and shadow reporting and affiliation with the international treaty bodies are

remarkable achievements of the EAPM network. The project provided a valuable contribution in that regards for the key minority actors in EaP countries, due to the poor understanding among national minority NGOs of how international treaty bodies function. Evaluation shows that minority NGOs involved in the advocacy visits and communication and information sharing events (seminars, conferences etc.) have been capacitated in that regard and now can liaison with European and international mechanisms independently. This represents an important achievement at the outcome-based level.

The project performances in Belarus and Azerbaijan are significantly less, being affected mainly by the difficulties and impediments generated by the national political contexts and constraints. However, the MRGE project did not give up. It adjusted and/or reduced its interventions, but still continued to struggle for mainstreaming the project priorities related to EaP and minority aspects. The evaluator commends it.

Advocacy visits, boosting informational and advocacy campaigns at the regional, national and local levels, building the links between the minority and human rights CSOs from the EaP region and creating an empowerment environment through best practice seminars, meetings, and other joint events; providing capacity building interventions on minorities' rights and EaP; and delivering publications and research represented the key effective interventions of the project and majority of them generated tangible achievements mostly at the outputs level.

Final evaluation also shows that the project contributed to enhance the capacities of and networking between CSOs working with minority communities to effectively advocate for inclusion and implementation of their human rights. Interviewed CSO participants, trained by the program, confirmed that their knowledge and awareness of minority rights, the EaP and advocacy skills have significantly increased. However, some of the local stakeholders/grass roots level implementers still do not differentiate between the informational and advocacy campaigns and under the „advocacy” label, de-facto provided mostly informational campaigns and awareness raising. Therefore, grass roots level implementing organizations still need capacity building support (trainings, support materials and guides, mentorship), on advocacy and mainstreaming minority rights issues into the local policy making and this should be explored by future MRGE initiatives.

As for the national minority NGOs networks, they were not targeted by the project. Except Georgian network, the national networks on minorities issues are still weak and need more consistent capacity building input, intensive communication and joint initiatives development on some thematic areas (for instance setting up a network of Roma CSOs in the EaP region), which could be targeted by future MRGE initiatives. The success of the Georgian network is mainly due to its institutionalized form of the establishment, being independent and open for the cooperation. In all other EaP countries such networks are established under the state governed rules and principals as consultative bodies, which are mostly inefficient networks, being involved mostly in multi-cultural events.

Best practices

In the opinion of the evaluator, the project provided some best practices, which can be replicated in similar initiatives targeting minority issues in EaP countries.

Bringing together key minority and human rights actors from EaP countries and encouraging "learning from each other", as well as learning from the experience of Vishegrad group of 4 countries (Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary), proved to be a best practice and a winning strategy. Several stakeholders mentioned this approach, during the field missions, as an important empowerment and learning aspect.

The Policy Paper on the impact of the Eastern Partnership on Minority Rights proved to be one of the best practices and a key tangible results of the project, which describes comprehensively the: EU policies on minority rights, EAP aspects, evidence-based minority issues in EaP countries etc and provides specific recommendations to a wide range of stakeholders: EU, EU states, EaP countries, EaP Platform, Minority CSOs etc. Policy Paper represents a result of the joint efforts of the key policy level actors of the project led by an international expert.

Best Practice Seminars (BPS) – can be considered best practices, because they proved to be commended by several stakeholders from different EaP countries, for their effects, especially for the "learning from each other" and empowering each other. As mentioned one of the local stakeholders interviewed during the field mission: *"I would have preferred to have more of BPS, because these events provided us not only information, experience but also motivation to struggle for the minorities` rights."*

Almost each of the EaP countries has something to offer as best practice to be replicated by others, for instance Moldova– effective and visible national advocacy campaign and new links with the national public authorities as well as cultural cooperation among minority NGOs in Transnistrian region; Georgia – good collaboration with public authorities (Public Defender Office, Council of National Minorities and Ministry of Education and Science), effective local advocacy campaigning; good experience in shadow reporting; Ukraine – networking experience at the local level in Kremenchug and advocacy campaigns; Armenia – dialogue with and effective capacity building interventions of local minority NGOs/communities (Yezidit CSO "Sinjar"); Belarus – experience of research on HR legislation.

There are at least three lessons that should be learned by all key actors involved in the project, specifically by the MRGE, as the key driving force of the initiative. The first lesson is related to project design. Particularly, while designing the project it is important to have a more in-depth risks assessment in such countries as Belarus and Azerbaijan and to plan some more "realistic" and feasible (for those countries) interventions. Otherwise, future similar initiatives will face the same impediments and the interventions will be inevitable adjusted/reduced during the project implementation stage.

The second lesson is related to having implementing partners in each of the EaP countries involved in the project. This is important because it influences not only project development, but also monitoring implementation.

The third lesson is related to match funding, which on one hand should not be very high, but overall accessible for the implementing partners, on the other hand implementing partners should be sensitised during the project implementation about the necessity to cover it as was agreed at the project design phase.

PART V. RECOMMENDATIONS

This part of the report provides some key recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and are set forth for MRGE and its implementing partners and other stakeholders to use in a follow up initiative, if this is considered most feasible. The recommendations refer both to operational and strategic issues.

5.1 General framework of the recommendations

The diagram below presents the general framework of the recommendations of the external evaluation.

REC	Recommendations
Strategic recommendations for MRGE	
<i>Rec. 01</i>	Keep developing new initiatives on minority and EaP issues in the EaP region and consolidate networking of minority NGOs.
<i>Rec. 02</i>	Undertake KAP assessment and use the findings for development of other minority issues initiatives.
<i>Rec. 03</i>	Keep 6-country format of the initiatives in the EaP region, but tailor interventions especially in Belarus and Azerbaijan.
<i>Rec. 04</i>	Have implementing partner in each country from the EaP region.
<i>Rec. 05</i>	Plan for exchange of experience/study visits within EaP region.
Specific recommendations for MRGE and its EPMN implementing partners	
<i>Rec. 06</i>	Create of Platform for Roma organisations in EaP region.
<i>Rec. 07</i>	Target shadow reporting on minority issues in Moldova and Azerbaijan, continue providing support for minority NGOs in Transnistria and involve more actively minority NGOs from Gagauz Autonomy.
<i>Rec. 08</i>	Plan for tailored interventions in supporting NGOs of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine. Build links between CSOs of Crimean Tatars from Ukraine and CSOs of Gagauz from Moldova.

Rec. 09	Provide a more in depth support to Yezidi communities, especially NGO "Sinjar" in Armenia.
Rec. 10	Capitalize on cooperation with ECMI Caucasus in Georgia and develop further joint initiatives.
Rec. 11	Consider sharing the legal research experience of the Belarus human rights NGOs with other minority NGOs from EaP region.
Strategic recommendation for European Union	
Rec. 12	Continue providing support to the actions that targets minorities' issues in the EaP region.
Rec. 13	Reduce level of co-financing for projects working with particularly vulnerable and excluded groups.

5.2 Detailed recommendations

Below all recommendations are explained, which, as to the evaluator, could contribute to more efficient management and development of the new initiatives of the MRGE, as well as to its enhanced effectiveness and impact. The order in which the recommendations are listed does not reflect their value or importance, but is rather a certain logical framework for their presentation and assimilation.

Strategic recommendations for MRGE

Rec. 01	Keep developing new initiatives on minority and EaP issues in the EaP region and consolidate networking of minority NGOs.
---------	--

MRGE proved that it handles technical expertise, knowledge and capacities on Eastern Partnership and minority issues. Moreover, its tailored approach and best practices undertaken by the EPMN project proved its effectiveness on several EaP countries. The network of minority NGOs is unique in EaP Region and minorities NGOs have shown openness and readiness to continue cooperation with MRGE. Therefore, it is important to maintain this growing momentum and to develop new minority targeting actions and to replicate best practices in future similar activities.

Rec. 02	Undertake KAP assessment and use the findings for development of other development minority issues initiatives.
---------	--

The baseline findings of the KAP assessment could provide valuable information about the capacity building needs of the CSOs and minorities issues in the EaP countries. KAP assessment could highlight existing knowledge, competences and behaviors and provide some perspectives; therefore in the opinion of the evaluator such kind of information should be used in future similar initiatives as a baseline.

Rec. 03	Keep 6–country format of the initiatives in the EaP region, but tailor interventions especially in Belarus and Azerbaijan.
---------	---

This issues turned to be controversial, because during the field mission consultations some stakeholders were suggesting to include only four countries (Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia) in future similar initiatives, because there are more similarities in the national context, while other stakeholders were of opinion to keep two other countries (Belarus and Azerbaijan) as well. In the opinion of the evaluator it is important to keep 6–country format of the action, because human/minority rights NGOs and activists from Belarus and Azerbaijan could be empowered by the experience of the other four EaP countries.

Rec. 04	Have implementing partner in each country from the EaP region.
---------	---

In order to increase national and local ownership, as well as effectiveness of the project interventions and monitoring of the actions, it is highly recommendable to have implementing partner in each country from the EaP region, including Moldova, Belarus and Azerbaijan. The more difficult the national context the more important is to have an implementation partner. It could be difficult, especially in Azerbaijan, but at least in Republic of Moldova and in Belarus (for instance, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights) this recommendation seems to be feasible. It will bring added value.

Rec. 05	Plan for exchange of experience/study visits within EaP region.
---------	--

It goes without saying that it is very important to “learn from each other” not only during the best practice seminars or civil society forums, but also during the study visits. Therefore, it is important for the future similar projects to plan study visits in EU, but also more visits within the EaP region, for instance in Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine or Armenia, similar to those visits of Yezidi and Azeri communities in Armenia and Georgia.

In such a way, minority and human rights CSO leaders from EaP countries would have a chance to get in–depth experience from their colleagues, to create partnership links and would facilitate learning from each other. For instance, minority CSOs and representatives of local public authorities from other countries could visit and study the process and effects of the local advocacy campaigns from Georgia, or involvement and impact of shadow reporting. The same thing could be valid in the case of study visits to Moldova to lean the experience on national advocacy campaigning etc. This also would consolidate networking in the EaP region and increase probability of their joint initiatives.

Specific recommendations for MRGE and EPMN implementing partners

Rec.06	Create of Platform for Roma organisations in EaP region.
--------	---

This recommendation targets Roma people, as one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable ethnic community in the EaP region. Roma representatives are leaving compactly in Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania etc. Therefore, creating a platform for Roma organizations in the EaP region

and dealing with the issues characteristically for Roma CSOs/communities would increase the relevance and effectiveness of the MRGE interventions. Possible areas of intervention/tailored actions could be: exchange of experience with Roma mediators, increasing the access to school of Roma children, Roma women empowerment, fighting the begging among the Roma people etc. Cooperation with Roma Education Fund would be welcomed.

Rec. 07	Target shadow reporting on minority issues in Moldova, continue providing support for minority NGOs in Transnistria and involve more actively minority NGOs from Gagauz Autonomy.
---------	--

The meaning of this recommendation is to target shadow reporting on minority issues in Moldova, because in the country there is a tradition on shadow reporting and there are some well-developed policy-level NGOs, which are involved regularly on shadow reporting, for instance on: gender related (domestic violence, anti-trafficking) or children related (for instance, child protection) issues. Therefore, mainstreaming minority issues to the shadow reporting normally should not be too challenging for the Republic of Moldova. Another aspect of this recommendation is to support further development and activities of the minority NGOs in Transnistria, because as mentioned in the report, the EPMN project was the first initiative on minorities' issues in Transnistria. As for the Gagauz minorities (Turkish ethnicity), it is the biggest minority living compactly in Moldova and the only one having the autonomy, therefore it could represent an interesting aspect for future projects, involving more actively CSOs from this region.

Rec. 08	Plan for tailored interventions in supporting NGOs of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine. Build links between CSOs of Crimean Tatars from Ukraine and CSOs of Gagauz from Moldova.
---------	--

This recommendation is particularly important and politically sensible in the context of the events in Ukraine/Crimea. However, a more active work with the representatives of the Crimean Tatars and their capacity building on advocacy, as well as, on advocacy visits and campaigning would represent a tangible empowerment support for them and it would be an attractive aspect for EU as potential donor. Links between Crimean Tatars from Ukraine and Gagauz community from Moldova would be relevant and welcomed, because both minorities are of the same ethnicity.

Rec. 09	Provide a more in depth support to Yezidi communities, especially NGO "Sinjar" in Armenia.
---------	---

Relatively recently created NGO "Sinjar", proved to be one of the most dynamic and fast growing minority NGOs in Armenia, which is getting deeply anchored in the Yezidi communities' issues by delivering Sunday schools for Yezidit children, publishing books in Yezidit language etc. Civil Society Forum helped them to learn to and gain experience in ways of working, how to present their problems, plan their activity etc. However, they still need support in undertaking research and developing reports on Yezidit girls' access to education and Yezidit women's rights. This could represent the future tailored area of interventions and would be valuable because will target empowerment

of the most representative minority community from Armenia, and secondly because it will target a cross cutting issue as gender (girls and women).

Rec. 10	Capitalize on cooperation with ECMI Caucasus in Georgia and develop further joint initiatives.
---------	---

ECMI Caucasus proved to be the most developed, involved and dedicated EPMN national implementing partner with a greater human and financial potential. Productive cooperation between ECMI and MRGE, in the opinion of the evaluator, proved to be one of the key driving forces, which generated good results in Georgia on the most of the project components. Therefore, further development of joint initiatives seems to be a good recipe of success.

Rec. 11	Consider sharing the legal research experience of the Belarus human rights NGOs with other minority NGOs from EaP region.
---------	--

This partially happened during the Best practice seminars, however it could be more systematic and in-depth in future initiatives targeting minority issues. This would be important in policy-making and policy analysis from the minorities' lenses and Belarus experts gained appreciable experience in legal research, which could be capitalised. Involvement of the European Center for Non-Profit Law (ECNL) – Budapest, which has valuable expertise in the legal framework research and consultancy, would bring added value to the action and would be beneficial. Therefore, the MRGE and its implementing partners could take ECNL involvement into account.

Recommendations for European Union

Rec. 12	Continue providing support to the actions that targets minorities issues in the EaP region.
---------	--

This idea was suggested to MRGE to consider it in future project designing, but is recommended to be mainstreamed by EU, because it sets framework for transnational cooperation of the minority communities in the EaP region, which represents more than 15% of population in five out of six countries. Advocacy empowerment, transfer of expertise, capacity building of minority NGOs, supporting grass roots level initiatives of the minority NGOs could represent important key success factors in the long term perspective and mainstreaming Eastern partnership priorities.

MRGE, by implementing the EPMN project, proved that it is possible to contribute to networking and empowerment of minority actors even in some challenging and constantly changing political and legal context of the countries, being flexible, involving relevant EU experience (Vishegrad countries), boosting informational and advocacy campaigns, encouraging dialogue with the public officials and supporting networking. The project also revealed that there are many common lines in the EaP region and the key minority actors and public officials can and should learn from each other on how to empower their societies and to help minorities to preserve and promote their identity.

Rec. 13	Reduce level of co-financing for projects working with particularly vulnerable and excluded groups.
---------	--

The projects targeting vulnerable and excluded groups have fewer opportunities to raise financial resources, to provide paid services or undertake income-generating activities. Therefore, they face difficulties in co-financing of project interventions. Implementation of this recommendation by EU will increase access of such NGOs to EU funds, because it will reduce their financial burden.

PART VI. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 Questionnaire

Relevance

- To what extent project (both design and strategy) is relevant to the EaP countries contexts?
- Did the interventions respond to the needs of the target groups in the targeted EaP countries?
- Was the operation in line with EC development policy and National Strategies in the EAP countries?
- To what extent the project design paid attention to cross-cutting issues?
- Have practical and strategic gender interests been adequately considered?

Effectiveness

- How well were the activities implemented? Where they completed as planned?
- Did the activities contribute to the planned results? What are the evidences?
- What are the major changes, achievements at the outcomes level and key challenges, measured against the indicators set out in the prodocs?
- Can we affirm that:
 - *It was enhanced capacities of and networking between CSOs working with minority communities to effectively advocate for inclusion and implementation of their HR in the EAP region?*
 - *It was increased knowledge/awareness at the local, national and regional levels of the various development issues minority communities?*
 - *It was increased engagement and dialogue between minority community CSOs and decision makers at various levels to address minority rights?*
- Are there any unintended or unexpected achievements, positive or negative?
- What are the KDF (key driving forces) and "bottle necks" and how they influenced the program?

Efficiency

- How well was the availability & use of inputs & resources managed by MRGE?
- What measures have been taken during planning and implementation to ensure that resources are efficiently used?
- How far the cost of the project was justified by the benefits – whether or not expressed in monetary terms – in comparison with similar programs or known alternative approaches, taking account of contextual differences in EaP countries?

Sustainability

- What are the viability prospects of the continuation of benefits after the end of the program?
- What is the level of ownership of the operation by the target group and relevant stakeholders?
- How well were the implementing partners involved and contributing?

Impact

- What are the long-term effects of the project?
- Did the project contribute to partners' empowerment, networking and promotion of the minorities' rights in the EaP countries?
- What are the best practices and lessons learned out of the program implementation?
- What and how could be done better?

ANNEX 2 List of documents reviewed

1. EaPMN Grant Application Form, Number of proposal DCI-NSAPVD/2012/117.
2. EaP Annex C – Logical Framework.
3. Policy Paper “Partnership for all? Measuring the Impact of Eastern Partnership on Minorities”, Heidrun Ferrari, MRGE, 2014.
4. Overview of the Eastern Partnership Minorities Network Results, EAPMN, 2013– 2015
5. EaPMN Interim Narrative Report 2014, March 2013 – March 2014.
6. EaPMN Interim Narrative Report 2014, March 2014 – February 2015.
7. EaPMN Interim Narrative Report, March 2015 – January 2016.
8. Subgrant assessment tool
9. Final Evaluation – Terms of Reference and call for Expressions of Interest.
10. Draft Narrative report EaPMN Armenia, March 2016.
11. Consolidated ROM Report, January 2016.
12. Comments provided by MRG Europe for the ROM report/ EaPMN, Jan 2016.
13. Brussels advocacy program, June 2014.
14. EaP Minorities Network Progress Report input 2014.
15. Consultation Response to the European Commission and High Commissioner for External Affairs and Security Policy’s Joint Review of the European Neighborhood Policy, ECMI Caucasus, June 2015.
16. Analyses of the EU Progress Reports 2014 based on EaPMN recommendations, May 2015.
17. Minorities in Georgia and ENP review EaPM Network event, March 2016.
18. Poster MRG launch event 16.06.2014
19. “Change of Public Opinion Campaign (Kremenchug)” PPP, December 2015
20. Workshop results on Informational campaigns from Best Practice Seminar, Dec. 2015
21. Narrative report of the project, NGO "Cultural Dialog", Kremenchug, Ukraine, 2015.
22. Report “Advisory and consultative structures for dialogue with the authorities”, V. Radcenko, Kremenchug
23. MRG website: www.minorityrights.org
24. Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/EasternPartnershipMinoritiesNetwork/?ref=bookmarks>
25. Eastern Partnership Minorities Network: www.minorities-network.org
Links: <http://www.minorities-network.org/georgian-delegation-with-advocacy-visit-in-brussels/>
<http://www.minorities-network.org/brussels-advocacy-visit-of-moldovan-minority-leaders/>
<http://www.minorities-network.org/policy-paper-partnership-for-all-the->

[impact-of-eastern-partnership-on-minorities/](#)

26. Online Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples:

www.minorityrights.org/Directory27. Multimedia news portal: www.minorityvoices.org**ANNEX 3 List of Stakeholders Consulted**

Nr	NAME	ORGANISATION	FUNCTION
1	Tetiana Pechonchyk	Human Rights Information Centre, Kiev, Ukraine	Head of the Board, Head of AD Coalition in Ukraine
2	Irene Fedorovych	"NO Borders" Social Action Centre, Kiev, Ukraine	Executive Director
3	Stanislav Topolnynytsky	EU Delegation to Ukraine	Sector Manager Civil Society and Human Rights
4	Sergey Ponomariov	"Vozrojdenie" Fund, ex Representative of Ombudsman Office, UA	ex Vice-director on Human Rights, Non-discrimination and Gender Equality
5	Myroslav Grinberg	NGO "Tolerance Space", Kiev, Ukraine	Project Coordinator
6	Valentina Radchenko	NGO "Cultural Dialog", Kremenchug, Ukraine	Project Coordinator
7	Zola Kondur	"Roma Women Organisation in Ukraine", Chirilici, UA	Executive Director
8	Stepan Grigoryan	Analytical Centre on Globalization and Regional Cooperation, Yerevan, Armenia	Executive Director
9	Armen Grigoryan		Project Coordinator
10	Vrezh Madoyan		Programme Manager
11	Siaband Bakoyan	Yezidi Community, Armenia	Member of Co-ordination Council of President on National Minorities
12	Boris Murazi	"Sinjar" Yezidi NGO, Yerevan, Armenia	Executive Director
13	Edgar Sinjian		Member of organisation
14	Hamlete Samoyan		Member of organisation
15	Elinar Vardanyan	Standing Committee on Protection of HR and Public Affairs, National Assembly of Armenia	Chairperson
16	Edita Hovhannisyan		Expert in Committee
17	Nikolai Israelyan	Greek Language and Cultural Centre, Yerevan, Armenia	Head of International Relations Department, Yerevan State University
18	Shorena Kobaidze	Minority Rights Group Europe, Georgia	Project Coordinator
19	Zsofia Farkas	Minority Rights Group Europe, Budapest	Managing Director/ Head of Europe and Central Asia Programmes
20	Agit Mirzoyev	Analytical Centre for Interethnic Cooperation & Consultations, Georgia	Executive Director
21	Lela Fomeridze	Pentecostal Church, Tbilisi, Georgia	Representative of Pentecostal Church
22	Denola Chkhartishvili	Georgia's Reform Associates, Tbilisi, Georgia	Human Rights Policy Coordinator

23	Izabella Osipova	Council of National Minorities, Office of Public Defender of Georgia	Executive Secretary of the CNM, Expert of the Department of Justice
24	Ewa Chylinski	European Centre for Minority Issues Caucasus (ECMI), Georgia	Regional Director
25	Giorgi Bobgiashvili		Project Coordinator
26	Georgi Sordia		Ex- Project Coordinator, Expert on Minority Issues
27	Seda Melkumyan	Armenian Community, Akhalkalak, Georgia	Sub-grantee/ Beneficiary
28	Lia Gigauri	Ministry of Education and Science, Georgia	Deputy Minister of Education and Science
29	Tamar Toloraia		Ethnic Minority Coordinator
30	Tinatin Gogheliani	State Minister Office for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Georgia	Head of Department for Relations with International Organizations and Legal Provision
31	Mecka Hashoshvili		Chief Adviser, Department of Civic Integration
32	Medea Elibegova		Chief Adviser, Department of Civic Integration
33	Eka Gogushvili	MAOLI, Lagodekhi, Georgia	Project Coordinator
34	Nadejda Gavrilova		Member of organisation
35	Mamuli Neshumashvili	Association "UDI", Zanobiani, Kakheti region, Georgia	Beneficiary
36	Oliver Reisner	EU Delegation to Georgia	Former Project Manager
37	Nicolae Radita	National Roma Centre, Chisinau, Moldova	President of RNC, Beneficiary
38	Dmitrii Lecartev	"Zlagoda" Ukrainian Association of Youth, Moldova	Executive Director
39	Andrei Nikolaev	"Rodoliubets" NGO, Transnistria, Moldova	Project Coordinator
40	Ecaterina Postolatii	AO "Tolerance Club", Chisinau, Moldova	Project Coordinator
41	Veaceslav Balan	UN Moldova, Chisinau	Human Rights Adviser
42	Vasil Sankovich	Helsinki Committee, Belarusi	Member
43	Mihail Sirkeli	NGO "Pilgrim Demo", UTA Gagauziya, Moldova	Executive Director