**Call for Proposals**

**Policy Research Fellowship Initiative 2014.**

The Policy Fellowship Initiative of the OSF-Armenia invites applications from junior and senior policy researchers eager to carry out rigorous and innovative study identifying the most critical open society challenges, developing practical policy solutions and working towards implementation of those. Aims of the fellowship are:

to enhance the capacity of researchers to influence the public policy-making process.

to encourage proactive cooperation between independent policy researchers, civil society organizations and policy makers to reach higher quality of policy research and higher quality of data based policy dialogue amongst wider stakeholders.

**Eligibility**

The fellowship program is open for civil society representatives, university faculty, policy researchers, analysts, and policy advisers. An advanced university degree in Political Science, Public Administration, Law, Economics, International Relations, or related field is required. Experience in policy formulation and analysis, advocacy, and implementation is desirable. Strong and proven research writing and methodological skills are highly desirable. Availability of the fellows to devote significant time to the fellowship is a must. Fellowship applications for projects that may last from 4 to 6 months will be accepted both from individuals and groups. Please note that during the selection process preference will be given to new applicants of the Fellowship Initiative.

**Application procedures**

Applicants are expected to fill in the policy research proposal form (see appendix 3 below). To be considered, interested applicants must also submit the resume with a full list of publications and copies of previous research work carried out by the applicant(s) if applicable. The research proposals shall be submitted in English and/or Armenian; the research itself is typically conducted in Armenian and shall have a policy brief in Armenian and English. Applicants may allow additional time and resources for preparing English/Armenian translation of the final report.

**Fellowship expectations and work product**

The Fellowship seeks for proactive people able to challenge conventional wisdom, advocate for their policy research findings, with a strong determination to communicate results of their work to broader audiences. The Foundation will work to integrate Fellows into the individual and organizational networks of partners and grantees with a special emphasis on collaboration between former and current Fellows so that to contribute to the exchange of policy research experience, methodology and bring the desired policy change though combined efforts. Selected participants may be given an opportunity to collaborate with think tanks in Eastern Europe. It is expected that the fellows will produce policy papers within the constraints of the 10,000 word limit with concrete recommendations in their respective areas. Depending on the chosen topic/topics fellows may also produce a variety of work products, including publications such as books, reports, shorter formatted series of articles, expert roundups, interactive, innovative public-education projects etc.

**Proposed policy research areas**

The Policy Research Fellowship has **two main thematic divisions**-**regional integration policies** **(see Appendix 1), and different economic, social, administrative educational policies (see Appendix 2).** List of proposed policy research areas is developed to introduce applicants to the key areas where the Foundations seeks informed policy analysis results and seeks to attract applications that explore policies hindering open society development in Armenia. As the field is much wider and the proposed list is clearly not conclusive prospective applicants are welcome to propose their own policy research project proposals as well.

**Application submission**

All interested applicants should submit fellowship proposals and supporting materials to OSF-Armenia via register@osi.am by **17.00**, **July 10, 2014.** Electronic submission of application is a must, while additional, not required hard copies are also being accepted by the address: 7/1 Tumanyan str., 2nd cul-de-sac. You have to receive an electronic confirmation of your application receipt to your e-mail, if you don’t please contact us. For questions and additional information you can contact Policy Fellowship Program Coordinator, Mariam Matevosyan via tel. 53-38-62; 53-67-58 or email: mmariam@osi.am.

**Application checklist**

Filled in policy research proposal form (see appendix 3) (required).

Resume, listing previous publications and relevant research experience (required).

Sample of relevant previous work (optional).

**Seminar will be held to answer questions from potential applicants at 17.00, July 3rd, in Verdi hall, Royal Golden Tulip Hotel, 14 Abovian St.,0001 Yerevan.**

**Appendix 1**

**Proposed Policy Research Areas**

**CU Roadmap** Soon after the declaration of the president of Armenia to join the Customs Union, the Armenian Government published the Customs Union Roadmap-an extensive document envisaging 260-steps in various, mostly technical fields, meanwhile declaring about their commitment to maintain trade relations with the EU. Nowadays Armenia stays committed to continue the program of reforms and to adopt European standards and provisions in line with its GSP+ commitments meanwhile negotiating with the Customs Union on the list of exempted goods and services. What resources are involved and are there any spheres where Customs Union integration contradicts RA existing legislation and international commitments? Moreover what are the possible economic scenarios in case Armenia enters the Customs Union and what are the specific costs and benefits associated with each scenario? In the contexts of each scenario researchers for example can look at the list of exempted goods[[1]](#footnote-1). Similarly a larger scenario on the integration to the Customs Union can be compared with the economic integration framework provided by Association Agreement based on selected criteria and exiting documents of Customs Union and Association Agreement texts in countries comparable to Armenia.

**Eastern Partnership under threat? EU’s new agenda: comparative aspect.** Will the EU revise its’ terms of working with the Armenian Government or go on with the same type and level of cooperation just shifting to more or less ‘neutral’ spheres of ‘sectoral’ cooperation. If yes what will be the effect of such ‘neutral’ inclusion on the cooperation between Armenia and the EU. What are the main directions, format of work and cooperation under new circumstances that the civil society would like to see in EU’s renewed agenda. How effectiveness of direct budget funding can be assessed so far? From the other hand there are number of questions that relate to regional developments i.e. how developments in other EaP countries may tend to affect the EU’s new agenda of work in Armenia, who benefits and who gains in the short and longer terms from Russia’s ‘invasion’ into the EaP cooperation framework and how different development scenarios in Ukraine may affect Russia’s role in the region.

**Value based EU integration and renewed normative diffusion tools**. The European Union declares that human rights are at the core of its relationships with the countries involved in the Eastern Partnership. This has to do with some of the most important norms that lie at the heart of the EU project, which EU as a normative power, is trying to diffuse via number of tools. Will the Europeans engage in justice and human rights reforms the same way as they have been doing before or will they try to initiate wider campaigns meant to internalize EU values and norms in the eyes of the wider public thus gaining an additional bottom up leverage when cooperating with the Armenian Government in the mentioned areas are yet some of question that need to be answered. A prospective study can look at the existing normative diffusion tools that have been employed by the EU so far (i.e. political party cooperation, grants, direct budge support etc.) and the effectiveness of those tools. Additionally new tools/renewed employment of the same tools and engagement mechanisms are going to be explored and put forward as direct recommendations to the EU.

**EaP’s Civil Society Forum after September three and renewed collaboration terms between the EU and civil society in Armenia.** In the course of its’ four-year existence much energy and time has gone into establishing the institutional structure of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, however assessment of its policy related outcomes are quite modest[[2]](#footnote-2). Taking this into account will the cooperation with the Civil Society Platform continue in the same way or some flexible and objective benchmarks of assessment of NGO’s work and impact inside and outside the Platform are to be developed to make platform work and have policy relates outcomes and impact in the nearest future? If yes a model assessment criteria/methodology of CSO’s work in the Platform are to be developed in close cooperation with CS organizations along with flexible mechanisms of employing those in practice.

**Visa Liberalization.** Now when Armenia has successfully completed the first stage of the scale process of visa liberalization process and meanwhile declared about the willingness to join the Russia led Customs Union, the EU may have an increased interest to foster the visa liberalization process. How and on what terms Armenia can still remedy the situation and fully benefit from such cooperation with the EU, how action plans for each stage of the process are to be met and whether there are any mechanisms of work that can prevent imitation of the reform in the mentioned specific areas, how the precondition of the antidiscrimination legislation and protection of the rights of minorities can be met in the given framework to the benefit of Armenian society at large?

**Political Implications of Customs Union Integration and Regional Security.**  Armenia has almost irremediably linked its security and economy, in particular its’ energy sector, to Russia. The country is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) — and has signed an extended Russian Armenian defence pact in 2010. Given Russia’s increasing military presence in the region applicants are invited to study policies regarding RA security and Nagorno Kharabagh conflict resolution in the context of new regional integration scenarios.

**Appendix 2**

**Proposed Policy Research Areas**

**Income inequality and state policies.** While the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2015 is close to being resumed, official statistical reports[[3]](#footnote-3) released by National Statistical Service of Armenia indicate that 32.4% of the Armenian population are poor and 2.8% are extremely poor[[4]](#footnote-4). Meanwhile even at times when the Armenian economy has recorded two digit growth rates poverty indicators still have been screamingly concerning. Taking this into account researchers under this title are invited to study government policies[[5]](#footnote-5) (fiscal, social etc.) designed to fight income inequality per different strata of the population in different fields of social life (education, healthcare etc.). A possible direction of the proposals may also look at how economic growth is related to reduction of income inequality in Armenia and vice versa, at the national poverty reduction strategy and its’ implementation, ask questions on the role and management of the international donor funded programs in fighting income inequality and development of market economy in Armenia, explore to what extent income inequality results on the rates of corruption both among rich and poor strata of Armenian society.

**Foreign direct investment, democratic institutions and interpersonal trust.** In 2014 Armenia has improved its overall ranking in ‘Doing Bussiness’ Index[[6]](#footnote-6) with three points still when looking at such sub-indicators of the index as ‘dealing with construction permits’, ‘getting credit’, ‘registering property’, ‘protecting investors’ all have registered setbacks. Possible policy research projects under this title can look at the structure and volumes of Foreign Direct Investment in Armenia and at possible correlations of those with the setup up of democratic institutions and level of interpersonal trust in Armenia.

**Government accountability, fiscal transparency and corruption control in the good governance framework.** Study of the systemic causes of corruption brings to the widely accepted convention that problems of low scale bribes or grand corruption shall be understood within the broader framework of public sector rules, procedures and macro-strategies that regulate the field. In the given context projects concentrating on the study of the budget cycle starting from the allocation of public funds through state revenue policies (tax collection and sharing or transferring of national budget funds to lower levels of government), spending (procurement, contracting) till audit and its information base, issuance of permits, licensing and service provision control at national and local governance levels (i.e. public transportation in major cities, licensing of mining companies etc.) constitute major areas within the Foundations interest. It will also interesting to look at the cooperation of the Government and the Parliament as they work though different stages of the budget cycle. From a different point studies may concentrate on the new ‘Concept of Fighting Corruption in the RA Public Administration System’. It is known that by July 15, 2014 the Concept will be followed by a draft Strategy with corresponding programs in selected fields. Applicants under this title may design policy research projects on anti corruption programs in the selected fields of healthcare, education, collection of state revenues and police as well as compare/combine those with the ones provided in the draft of the Strategy.

**Russian migration policies and Armenian workforce.** In 13 June, 2012 President Vladimir Putin endorsed the concept of a national migration policy for the Russian Federation until 2025. Among other things the new concept developed by the Federal Migration Service envisages wide scale programs to reunite ‘Russian Compatriots’ from CIS countries and attract educational migrants. Under this title researchers are invited to study the work of the Russian Federal Migration Service in Yerevan and regions, assess compatibility of employed policies with Armenia’s short and long term government policies in respective fields, conduct cost benefit analysis of specific migration policies.

**Young skilled labour migration-motivations and perceived conditions for return**. Brain drain of skilled labour in Armenia started right after independence: mass and rapid privatization and 'shock therapy' have been perceived as the pillars of change in the country. However, the reform was accompanied by a number of negative factors, including fast-growing unemployment, poverty, a sharp decline in industrial and agricultural output and loss of foreign markets. All together these problems in addition to the earthquake and the Nagorno Kharabakh conflict have led to contraction of the local labour market and mass outflow of the economically and scientifically active part of the population. However since then the reasons and underlying motivations for migration of young skilled labour have undergone through major transformations. One of the prospective studies under this title can look at recent trends in migratory routes and destinations of skilled young labour migration based on education, age, underlying reasons for leaving and perceived sufficient conditions for return. The study will also aim to identify whether there are any differences based on the specific motivation to choose the given country, the level of education and the kind of the skills that migrants offer.

**Human rights protection policies and improvement mechanisms:** Under this title the researcher/s can look at legal practices and processing of typical violations of civil and political rights in Armenia, conduct a comparative analysis of different national referral mechanisms in the former Soviet Union member states with the aim to bring out certain general development trends and recommendations for policy improvement in Armenia. Laws regulating civil society sector in post-Soviet arena, violations of the right of the freedom of expression, manifestations of hate speech are yet other areas where comparative analysis can result in developing more efficient policies of human rights protection in Armenia.

**Renewed Role of Women in contemporary Armenian society**. In the post Soviet Armenian society women individually have gained renewed roles and responsibilities without adequate shifts in the mindset and behaviour of the public at large. What are the problems that Armenian women face in their everyday lives nowadays? Do the problems differ based on age, settlement type, education, profession or any other status? Can those problems be categorized and prioritized and what would be the single most prominent and distinctive issue/combination of issues, policies that interests all groups? How those issues can be utilized in digestible public messages and stimulate beneficiaries to fight for effective policy solutions? These are just several types of questions that can be raised to assess the magnitude of patriarchal values and norms that underlie many social institutions and structures in Armenia and their viability for contemporary Armenian society both in political and wider social dimensions.

**Domestic violence**. Although there is no right way to measure the economic impact of domestic violence, studies usually examine costs in terms of prevention, response and opportunity costs (Somach and AbouZeid, 2009)[[7]](#footnote-7), and may for example cover costs linked to: increased burdens on law enforcement structures, costs linked to the judiciary (civil, criminal and administrative), legal costs incurred by an individual party, health care costs, housing and shelters, lost wages and/or decrease in taxes paid to the state due to reduced employment and productivity, social services for women and their children, income support and other support services[[8]](#footnote-8). In addition, the study may distinguish between direct and indirect costs of violence against women in Armenian society. Direct costs for example may cover the amount that public authorities actually spend on services and measures linked to preventing and combating violence against women. Indirect costs are costs that result from the physical and psychological trauma and life-long effects that such violence has on victims, their children, decrease in the quality of their lives, and negative normative effect of ‘allowable’ violence on the society at large.

**Institutional autonomy in education:** Recent studies in higher education reforms[[9]](#footnote-9) take governance and institutional autonomy issues to be at the core of the reforms taking place in Armenia today. They focus on the legal aspects, structural reforms, roles of students and academic programs. Researchers are invited to use policy lens in identifying practices, policies and processes that hinder institutional autonomy of universities. Researchers may examine the polices that allow or restrict the power of universities to decide on degree programs, their monitoring and review, decide on the content of courses, to decide on the quality mechanisms,  selection of students, mobility, practice research etc. At the administrative level, examinations may be conducted for staffing policies and procedures, recruitment and retention of faculty and staff and management of budgets.

**Introduction of the ranking schemes in education system and their impact on the system and its elements**. From 2014 both general and higher education institutions have gotten involved in ranking schemes. Pilot schemes are being implemented at present that will later be included into the national system and may be used for determining funding laws and leverage for control. Researchers are invited to assess the methodologies and criteria that underpin the ranking schemes of universities and schools, estimate potential risks and their further impact on the system in general and on the governance and funding in particular. Researchers might also look at how ranking will affect existing education policies and the culture and behaviours of education institutions and academics.  Alternative indicators may be proposed to be developed based on academic criteria that would exclude corruption risks.

**Manifestations of ‘Banal Nationalism’ in Armenian society**. Simplistic and quasi-nationalist narratives dominate the Armenian political and societal discourse thus creating additional leverages of societal control and manipulation and providing necessary justifications for respective policies. In this context applicants are invited to choose much contested and misinterpreted concepts (i.e. gender, national values, European values, national family, national identity etc.) conduct methodologically sound research on their usage and ascribed connotations comparing those with their scientific definitions and ascribed meanings in the conventional usage of the terms and in selected state policies.

**Appendix 3**

****

**Policy Fellowship Initiative. Armenia. 2014**

**Proposal**

*This application form is designed to simplify the research proposal submission process and offer specific framework for proposal submission and evaluation. It highlights some of the key sections that a robust policy research proposal shall contain. Each section needs to be carefully addressed. Word limits are not meant as rigid rules but are expected to be taken into account. Preciseness, concision, clarity and clear cut scope are seen as an advantage of a potentially successful proposal.*

**Policy Research Project’s Title and Abstract**

Brief overview of your proposal: What do you intend to examine? What is the motivation /reason for your study? What is the current reform relevance? What are the questions you seek to answer and the existing policy(s)/policy alternative(s) that your paper will argue for? (150-200 words)

**Problem description and research justification**

Discuss the current state of the art in your proposed field of study, research/publications/policy alternatives in the field of your planned research, indicating the novelty of your project and its anticipated contribution to the field. (400-450 words)

**Research questions**

What are your policy research questions? What puzzles you? (80-100 words)

**Policy options and argumentation**

In response to your research question, what is your preferred/suggested primary policy option/alternative? Why do you think your preferred/suggested policy option/alternative is more effective? Hypothesize on that. (350-400 words)

**Methodology**

Please describe your research methodology. Be as concise as possible. Outline potential obstacles and show how you'll overcome those (300-350 words).

**Deliverables**

Please describe your research outputs i.e. policy papers, briefs, infographics, presentations and debates, audio visual materials etc. (80-100 words)

**Advocacy Strategy**

Describe beyond the typical research presentations, how can you envisage making an impact? What resources and tools could you develop to disseminate your policy paper, and how will it be useful to the targeted communities? How would you disseminate them? What are the risk factors associated with the implementation of your advocacy strategy? Describe the list of target policy-makers and policy-implementers that you intend to contact and (500-650 words).

**Project Timetable**

Provide the timeframe for the planned project and the key activities in a table. Please note that maximum duration of projects can last from 4 to 6 months.

**Budget**

Please list all the costs in an itemized budget table which can cover such expenses as honorarium, fieldwork, advocacy costs (i.e. presentation and publication of the report), and/or other necessary expenses. Note that the budget shall not exceed 4000 USD.

1. The Government has declared that the list will be published soon. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hrant Kostanyan. The Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership four years on. Progress, challenges and prospects

CEPS Special Report No. 81/ January 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/HK-EaP-Civil-Society-Forum-%282%29%282%29.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Armenian National Statistical Service. Yearbook 2013. Section Living Conditions. http://armstat.am/file/doc/99478608.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Though poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon in the context of this call it is operationalized in terms of monetary descriptors. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Via modeling, statistical and other data analysis etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Doing Bussiness 2014. Economy Profile. Armenia. A World Bank Group Corporate Flagship. <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/~/media/giawb/doing%20business/documents/profiles/country/ARM.pdf?ver=2> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Somach, S.D. and AbouZeid, G. (2009). Egypt Violence Against Women Study: Literature Review of Violence Against Women. USAID. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Council of Europe. 2012. ‘Overview of Studies on the Costs of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence’. Gender Equality and Violence against Women Division Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law. Strasburg. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Kataoka,S; Shahverdyan, A;  Harutyunyan, H. 2013. Addressing Governance at the Center of Higher Education Reforms in Armenia. Washington DC. World Bank. Available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/01/17748657/addressing-governance-center-higher-education-reforms-armenia>;

Matei, L.,  Iwinska, J. & Geven, K. 2013. Higher Education in Armenia Today: a focused review. CEU Higher Education Observatory. Budapest. Available at <http://www.osf.am/reports/education-reports/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)