



NEWSLETTER №1

*Activities of the Georgian National Platform
Of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum*

January-February, 2015



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“Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform
For the Eastern Partnership“

Joint Activities of the Georgian National Platform

The representatives of the National Platform met with EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn during his first visit (15-16 January, 2015) to Georgia and discussed monitoring of the Association Agreement implementation by civil society. The meeting was attended by the 9 representatives of civil society working on the following thematic issues: ecology, legal reform, visa liberalization, transparency and fighting against corruption, minority issues, business and social affairs, international issues including security in the scope of Association Agreement.

During the meeting attendees had an opportunity to express their opinions and ask questions. Experts made critical analysis on the most topical issues of the EU integration process, such as human rights, lack of democracy standards, Russian aggression, minorities, importance of election and self-governance reforms, as well as visa liberalization and Georgia's European perspective in the context of Eastern Partnership Riga Summit.

Commissioner Hahn stressed the importance of reforms, rule of law, development of business in the framework of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), also significance of Association Agreement, election systems and visa free regime with the EU.

During his visit to Georgia, Commissioner Hahn met Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, Foreign Minister Tamar Beruchashvili, President Giorgi Margvelashvili and Speaker of the Parliament Davit Usupashvili.

On 27 January, 2015 EU Integration Committee hearing has scheduled with the initiative of GNP. Attendees discussed visa liberalization action plan implementation, Energy Safety and membership of Georgia to European Energy Union.

The Deputy-Justice Minister, Gocha Lortkipanidze and Deputy-Foreign Minister, Giga Gigiadze spoke about visa liberalization action plan implementation. He spoke about the first phase legislative requirements and implemented institutional reforms.

Deputy-Energy Minister, Irakli Khmaladze spoke about energy safety of Georgia and membership to EEU. He stressed that it is important for Georgia to hold the talks in individual regime. Individual talks are important as Georgia is isolated from European energy market, none of the neighboring countries are the members of EEU and thus, none of them conduct the directives implementation of which is planned by Georgia.

Chairman of GNP, Lasha Tugushi supposed that membership of Georgia to EEU is protracted. The hearing was attended by executive officials, NGOs and civil society.

On 27 January, 2015 Georgian National Platform released a Statement Regarding the Terrorist Attacks in Paris. The Georgian National Platform strongly condemns the terrorist attack directed against journalists of the French weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris, France on 7th January. Member organizations called on Georgian government as well as the governments of EU and Eastern Partnership member states to consolidate their efforts in fighting against terrorism and defending democracy. The statement was signed by 72 member organizations.

See the full version of the Statement: <http://eapnationalplatform.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/eap/statement%20on%20Paris.pdf>

On 3 February, 2015 Georgian National Platform member organizations released a Regarding Pressure on the Civil Sector. On January 26, 2015, Bidzina Ivanishvili made a statement regarding the conduction of a survey to study activity of the leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Fair Elections and Transparency International Georgia, Nino Lomjaria and Eka Gigauri, as well as the former Chairman of Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Kakha Kozhoridze. Signatory organizations express solidarity with their colleagues and concern with the present situation. Statement notes that Non-Governmental organizations are open for reasoned criticism, but they cannot accept groundless and populist accusations that fuel negative attitudes and stereotypes against the civil sector among the public. The statement was signed by 39 organizations. See the full version of the Statement:

http://eapnationalplatform.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/eap/announcements/Statement%20-NGO%20Pressure.EN_1.pdf

On February 11, 2015 the 6th Annual General Meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform took place.

Welcome speeches were delivered by the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, the Minister of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and the Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Georgia. The speakers stressed the importance of EU integration process and discussed the role of the Georgian National Platform in this process.



In the second part, Coordination Council presented the reports on the activities of the National Platform for 2014, which was followed by the elections of the new Coordination Council (the Head of the Platform and the coordinators of four working groups).

The Elections were followed by the discussions of different topics including the Amendments to GNP Statute, formation of Civil Society Platform and Civil Society Dialogue Forum under the Association Agreement, creation of the Transport Subgroup and Advocacy Strategy Group.

Within the framework of the project “Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform for the Eastern Partnership” informational meetings held by the partner organizations in the regions of Georgia.

The main goal of the meetings was to raise awareness of local population on the EU integration process, significance of signing of Association Agreement, positive outcomes and commitments to be done by Georgia.

On January 30, 2015, in Kutaisi, Association Green Alternative organized a meeting dedicated to “European Union’s Energy Policy and Challenges Facing Georgia”. The meeting objective consisted in raising local community’s awareness of importance of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and providing information on compliance of energy projects planned in Georgia with European Union standards. The meeting gathered some 40 participants, including Kutaisi-based NGOs, representatives of local mass media, students and other interested persons.

Caucasian Institute for Economic and Social Research (CIESR) conducted informational meetings on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with Georgia and EU. The meetings took place in Khurvaleti (January 30, 2015), Karaleti (January 30, 2015), Berbuki (January 31, 2015) and Shavshvebi (January 31, 2015) IDP locations. Main aim of the events was information dissemination on EU-Georgia trade issues and on Association Agreement in general.

During the meetings, the following items were outlined:

- Importance of Association Agreement
- Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA)
- Tariff preferences, non-tariff barriers, including Customs duties, Rules of Origin, Technical barriers Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS).

Participants expressed their interest on benefits for citizens especially issues of employment, as still one of the main problem in the location still stays high level of unemployment. In total 51 participants attended the meeting; mainly ordinary citizens (IDPs).

Working Group I (WG1 -Democracy, Human Rights, Good Governance & Stability)

On February 14, Appeal Commission of Imedi TV self-regulatory body has partially satisfied the complaint regarding a report "Children Sent to Madrasa" aired in the program "From a Different Perspective". Complainant organizations - Relations of Georgian Muslims, Media Development Foundation (MDF) and Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI) point out that five Articles(14.9, 18.2, 33.1 - 2, 44.1, 47.11) of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters were breached.

In the motivation part, Commission called on the editorial team of the program to consider the disputable report in detail, in accordance with observing the rights of children, principles of accuracy, diversity, equality and tolerance and basic guidelines for avoiding any forms of discrimination in the future.

See more: http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view_news/345/

Media Development Foundation, MDF held a round table discussion on women's participation in the electoral process at the Public Defender Regional Office in Akhalkalaki on March 6.

The event was attended by the Chairman of Akhalkalaki Sakrebulo (City Assembly), members of the regional organizations of the following political parties – Georgian Dream, Free Democrats, National Forum, New Rights and Free Georgia. Discussion on women's political and civic activism was held and the findings of the survey aimed at revealing the needs of women to be incorporated in the electoral programs of the political parties were presented.

See more: http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view_news/351/

Working Group 2 (WG2 - Economic Integration and Convergence with the EU Policies)

BDIPC (International Business Development and Investment Promotion Center) for Tourism stakeholders in Ajara region organized three days trainings “PPP- Public Private Partnership in Tourism” in Batumi, during 29-31 January 2015. The training was organized under the project “Black Sea Network for Sustainable Tourism - Strategies for joint tourism marketing and development in the Black Sea region” (BS NST), supported by EU through Black Sea CBC program of ENPI. This is regional project with cooperation of five countries – Georgia, Turkey, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Moldova.



25 representatives of private and government sector (tour companies, Tourism Department of Ajara AR, city municipalities etc.) took part in trainings. The goal of training was to provide information and knowledge about key principles of PPP cooperation in tourism, European experience in this sphere and success stories. Training was done by invited German expert (Knut Gerber) who has many years of experience in Tourism (Eco, Wine, Promotion, Strategy), realization of international projects, PPP etc.

IBDIPC (International Business Development and Investment Promotion Center) organized working meeting “Perspectives of Cross-border Tourism – Ajara and Trabzon Regions” in Batumi, on 23.02.2015. The meeting was organized under the project “Black Sea Network for Sustainable Tourism - Strategies for joint tourism marketing and development in the Black Sea region” (BS NST) , supported by EU through Black Sea CBC program of ENPI.



During working meeting following stakeholders took part - tour companies from both regions (Ajara and Trabzon), Tourism Department of Ajara AR, General Consul and commercial attaché of Turkey in Batumi.

During the meeting was discussed several issues and existing situation, problems and perspectives of development of cross-border tourism. Certain areas of potential joint cooperation in the sphere of cross-border tour product creation and marketing were identified. The next meeting was decided to be held in Trabzon, where more concrete action steps will be presented from both regions' private and government sector.

On February 12, 2015 Biological Farming Association ELKANA conducted internal workshop - Eastern Partnership Civil Society Georgian National Platform (EaP CSF GNP) as a tool for enhancing the advocacy activities of the EU funded project - „Improving regional Food Security through national strategies and small holders' production in the South Caucasus”.

The purpose of the meeting was to conduct discussion how to effectively use Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform, as a tool under the auspices and support of the European Commission uniting more than 140 organizations, for the mainstreaming of food security problems of Georgia addressed by the EU funded project - „Improving regional Food Security through national strategies and small holders' production in the South Caucasus” and render the GAARD (Georgian Alliance for Agricultural and Rural Development) decisions on the international level.

Discussion touched the following opportunities provided by the Platform:

- Recommendations / initiatives developed in the frame of the project can be discussed and mainstreamed through Working Group 2: Economic integration and convergence with EU policies, as well as its Sub-Group on Agriculture. It is possible to integrate food security related problematic in the action plan/agenda of the groups. Besides this, some of documents based on their importance, may be of interest not only for one particular group, but also for whole Platform. Therefore, consideration of such type of documents at the Platform level is very important. According to Mariam Jorjadze, it would be important to organize a joint working meeting with participation of the EaP CSF NP WG2 and GAARD members on food security problems. The working meeting could issue an appeal to the relevant authorities and general public in the name of the Platform (the theme of the working meeting could be for e.g. emerging agricultural action plan document). It is also possible to prepare/disseminate the policy papers - the opportunity offered by the Platform.
- There are questions to which the Platform draws attention of the European institutions. That should be an important public policy issues, for example food security 80 -20% indicators is a public policy matter.

The meeting agreed to continue discussions on how to build the FS project and the EaP NP Platform relations on a nearest WG2 meeting, at where drawing up of the working group Action Plan for this year is envisaged.

See more: http://www.elkana.org.ge/index.php?action=news&news_id=63&lang=eng

With the initiative of Kutaisi Education Development and Employment Center the final stage of essay competition on human rights issue was held in the Public Defender's office on 26 February, 2015.

The members of the civic clubs, established within the civic education program "Future Leaders", took the part in the competition. The authors of the essay had a chance to present their work to the jury. The members of the jury: Public Defenders representative in Imereti –Madona Basiladze, Kutaisi municipality Youth Department Specialist –Tamar Nikoleishvili, TV "Rioni" anchorwoman –Nino Nebieridze and Youth Parliament member Shako Chonishvili have chosen three winners of the competition.

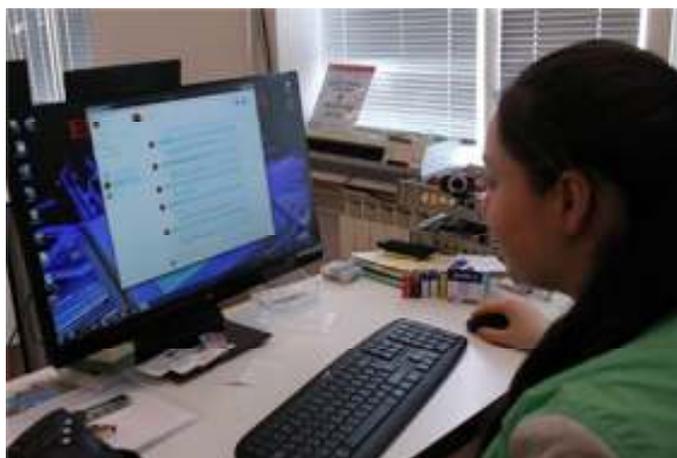


The winners were awarded with the Diplomas and books. Also, Public Defenders Representative Madona Basiladze has gifted additional books to her favorite participant. The competition was held within the framework of USAID's "Momavlis Taoba" Program (MT), which is implemented by PH International.

See more: http://psnews.ge/index.php?m=68&news_id=57586

On 1st of February, 2015, with the initiative of Kutaisi Education Development and Employment Center, within the "Promoting the trust and mutual understanding within the youth by using the online games" program, the online gaming were organized for the Kutaisi Youth Center members. The goal of the event was to promote peace, trust and mutual understanding, as well as developing negotiation skills in case of conflict.

With the Game Lab youth living in Kutaisi have contacted their peers living in Abkhazeti (Ochamchiri). The participants were divided in two mixed groups of Red and Blue team, with the special task to accomplish. Meanwhile the communication was supported by skype.



Kutaisi Youth Center is established within the "Advancing National Integration" (ANI) in Georgia program, under the United Nations Association of Georgia, with the USAID financial support. Kutaisi Education Development and Employment Center is partnering the above mentioned program.

See more: <https://www.facebook.com/kedec.ge/posts/948830128463231>

Kutaisi Education Development and Employment Center has organized educational –informative meetings at Imereti 's 11 municipalities, with the mobile training center. The meeting was attended by the public school students, their parents and teachers, as well as other youth and ordinary community members. The information about Healthy Life style was delivered to the participants with the interactive methods. Peer educators have distributed the flyers in the public places on issues like: tobacco, alcohol, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, drug addiction, healthy nutrition, and tuberculosis, hepatitis.

The public schools were equipped with the posters, indicating the online resources on healthy lifestyle issues. Educational –informative meetings were organized within the "AIDS, alcohol, drug and tobacco free and secure healthy future generation" program, administrated by Kutaisi Education Development and Employment Center, with the US Embassy Tbilisi financial support.



See more: http://psnews.ge/index.php?m=68&news_id=57370
<https://www.facebook.com/kedec.ge/posts/970965162916394>

Working Group 3 (WG3 - Environment, Climate Change and Energy Security)

On January 16, 2015, next seminar from energy policy and sustainability seminar series – Energy Sector Regulation- organized by WEG and IESD was held at Ilia State University.

On the seminar, representatives of Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission (GNERC) Nugzar Beridze, Ivane Pirveli, Giorgi Pangani and Givi Saanikidze accordingly made presentation on the following topics: Licensing in Energy Sector, Gas Sector Regulation, Terms of Energy Service and Quality Indicators and Basic Principles of Tariff Regulation.



At the beginning of the seminar, WEG director, Murman Margvelashvili reviewed the main principals of energy sector regulation and the functions of regulatory body – GNERC, more specifically he spoke about:

- Objectives of the regulator – ensuring the effective operation of the sector.
- Balancing the interests of consumers and energy enterprises.
- Providing long term development.
- Functions of the regulator – regulation of natural monopolies, energy market regulation, licensing and quality assurance, monitoring of the sector activities.
- Market regulation.

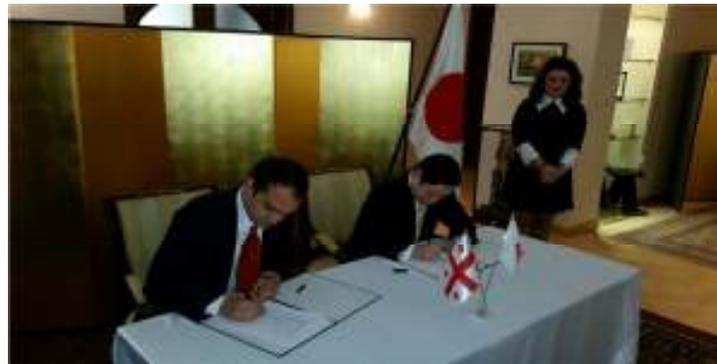
In his presentation, Nugzar Berize spoke about electricity sector Legislative basis, energy markets, licensing and control of the licensing process. Ivane Pirveli described Gas Sector regulation in Georgia, specifics of natural gas consumption and licensing. Givi Sanikidze summed up the basic principles of tariff and tariff calculation methodology and Giorgi Pangani focused on service quality and consumers rights. He also spoke about reforms made in this field from GNERC and future steps. The seminar was highly interactive. Representatives from SCO organizations, parliament, students and commercial sector had an opportunity to ask questions and get qualified answers.

Working Group 4 (Contacts between People)

On January 22, 2015 Alexandra Kalatozishvili, Coordinator of the WG4, participated in a strategic planning meeting organized by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and the LEPL “Children and Youth Development Fund”. The meeting aimed to elaborate priority directions of activity for the abovementioned structures for 2015.

On January 26, 2015 WG4 meeting took place which was dedicated to the following issues: amendments to the Statute of the National Platform; practical matters related to the conduction of the Annual Meeting scheduled to take place on February 11, 2015; possible candidacies for the position of WG4 Coordinators. The meeting was attended by the Chairman of the National Platform who introduced the attendees with the vision of the Coordination Council in regard to internal and regional development perspectives, also spoke about the opportunities for participation in the formats envisaged by the Association Agreement, namely Civil Society Platform (Georgian-European Platform) and the Civil Society Dialogue Forum.

On January 28, 2015, the Signing Ceremony for the project within the framework of the “Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects” was held at the Official Residence of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Georgia. The Grant Contract of the project for upgrading the irrigation system for agricultural use in Akhalkalaki was concluded between the Embassy of Japan in Georgia and Public Movement “Multinational Georgia”.



The project's objective is to provide modern irrigation system in Akhalkalaki district that will increase productivity and competitiveness of about 100 local farmers and introduce a new irrigation technology to the region.

See more: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=107&lang=Eng>

In the period from 6 to 23 February, 2015 the sixth round of seminars (three 3-days events) on the topic “Revival of Trust on National and Regional Levels” was held in Tbilisi, Georgia within the framework of the “Coalition for Trust” project - a three-year regional program funded by the European Commission and co-funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and implemented in partnership with Public Movement Multinational Georgia. The events were attended by representatives of three different target groups – journalists, students and civil activists.



See more: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=108&lang=Eng>

In January-February 2015, Public Movement Multinational Georgia has implemented the project “Promotion of wider engagement of ethnic Armenian constituencies” which was supported by Canada Fund for Local Initiatives. The purpose of the action was to promote wider engagement of ethnic Armenian constituencies residing in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities in the works of the local Self-Government, and to enhance the potential of local civil societal sector in monitoring the realization of the Local Self Governance reform as well as promotion of wider engagement of constituencies in the locally available decision making framework.



See more: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=109&lang=Eng>

In early 2015, the Public Movement Multinational Georgia in cooperation with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has started implementation of the project “Multi-stakeholder consultations in Georgia” supported by the European Commission. The project aims to deliver assistance in raising the awareness of the main stakeholders about the essence as well as implications of the draft Law of Georgia on State Language, as well as to support the development of the language policy in Georgia taken into account the specific linguistic needs, constraints and interests of ethnic minority constituencies.



In February, PMMG has organized two seminars on linguistic rights for the representatives of civil societal organizations from project targeted two regions - Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti which are densely populated by representative of ethnic minorities. In line with this, consultative meetings with various stakeholders regarding the Draft Law, including MPs, human rights NGOs, Experts Club, etc. have been conducted.

See more: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=110&lang=Eng>

On 9-13 February, 2015 PMMG has organized number of meetings of civil societal actors from Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda (Samtskhe-Javakheti region) as well as Tsalka (Kvemo Kartli region) municipalities with capital-based stakeholders within PMMG operated project “Development of civil society in ethnic minority populated regions of Georgia” supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The meetings aimed to improve their understanding about the civil society works, as well as to make contacts with capital based stakeholders and therefore bring local needs, constraints, problems and challenges to the capital based interested parties. The agenda of the meetings was jointly developed by the project team in conjunction with target groups.



See more: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=111&lang=Eng>

Association "Peaceful and Business Caucasus" (APBC), with a financial support of a joint EU/UNDP initiative COBERM, in August 2014 started the project: "We support conflict affected communities to keep them in better health".



Project beneficiaries are socially and economically vulnerable people who are permanently living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, mostly ethnic Abkhazians and Ossetians, for whom qualified medical services are less available.

In January-February 2014, within the project qualified medical services have been provided to 41 patients living in conflict zones (28 Abkhazian, 13 Ossetians).

3 and 24 February 2015 "Fund of Women Entrepreneurs met women of Ambrolauri and Tsageri. The meeting was held to the related Issues with local Women non-governmental organizations coordination.



On February 2015, Fund of Women Entrepreneurs Volunteers Center organized the meeting at Mountainous Tsageri and Ambrolauri region's villages. The women of region expressed their readiness and became "volunteer Center Members.



On February 4, 2015 in Fund of Women Entrepreneurs was held a round table, which was attended by 29 people, including the local government of Kutaisi, Imereti Department of refugees, representatives of Aphazeti government refugees from three different collective centers. As a result of the meeting recommendations have been suggested to eliminate the problems.



On January 6, 2015 and February 27 Fund of Women Entrepreneurs participated in the Old City live on the radio. The theme of the program was to enable Kutaisi IDP in the discussion of 2015 budget to their specific requirements taking into account the discussion and advocacy. "



January 27, 2015 "Synergy" project within the framework of Fund of Women Entrepreneurs" Organized Conducted Focus – group. The purpose of the group was to study the participation of refugees in politics and public. 8 Women took part in the event