



NEWSLETTER №7

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

March-April, 2014



The Newsletter has been prepared in the framework of
a EU-funded Project
“Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform
for the Eastern Partnership“

Joint Activities of the Georgian National Platform

On March 4, 2014 members of the Georgian National Platform met with the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy **Stefan Füle**. Participants of the meeting discussed the main aspects of EU-Georgian relationship, such as prospects of the Association Agreement and its integral part, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and opportunities for developing EU-Georgia relations.

Within the framework of the visit Mr. Füle met with the president of Georgia, prime minister and chairperson of parliament, members of government, as well as oppositional party representatives and civil society.

On 24 March, 2014 the National Platform released a Statement to support the joint initiative of non-governmental and media organizations on resuming the “This Affects You” campaign. The signatory organizations think that the problem related to surveillance is still high on the agenda and creating system guarantees is necessary in order to exclude the willfulness of law-enforcement bodies on the matter. In the Statement, the signatory organizations call the Georgian Parliament to share the proposals developed by the initiators of the “This Affects You” campaign. See the full version of the Statement:

http://eapnationalplatform.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/Statement_Surveillance_Campaign-It%20Affects%20You!_with%20signatories.pdf

On 25 March, 2014 the National Platform released a Statement on recognition of “Georgia’s European Prospective”. The signatory organizations think that in the preamble of the Association Agreement it is necessary to define clearly the European Union’s vision of Georgia by recognizing “Georgia’s European Prospect” and acknowledging Georgia as a “European state”. In the Statement, the signatory organizations call the Georgian Government to raise the issue when negotiating with the EU on making the said amendment to the text of the Agreement and European Council, European Commission and the EU Member States, to provide support for making the said amendment to the text of the Association Agreement. See the full version of the Statement:

http://eapnationalplatform.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/Statement_European%20Perspective%20to%20Georgia_with%20signatories_25.03.2014.pdf

On March 24-25, 2014 Training on “Coalition building and internal communication, networking, E-communication skills” was held for the members of the Georgian National Platform.

The following topics were covered during the 2-day training: Importance/Privileges of coalition building, analysis of tools for efficient coalitions, definition of coalition types, ethics of coalitions’ work, internal communication within coalitions and modern tools in Electronic Communication, norms of online communication. The participants were awarded certificates.



Training was provided by the member of the National Platform “Centre of Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG) with the organizational support of the Secretariat of the National Platform.

The training was held within the EU funded project “Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform for the Eastern Partnership”.

On March 26, 2014, the Embassy of Latvia, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Embassy of Sweden in partnership with Europe House Georgia organized a public meeting with the Eastern Partnership Special Representatives (Ambassadors) from Latvia, the Netherlands and Sweden, Mr. Juris Poikans, Mr. Dirk Jan Kop and Mr. Martin Hagström. The meeting with the special envoys gathered the representatives, of Georgian National Platform, Media, diplomatic corps and international organizations.



The participants of the meeting were given the opportunity to discuss with the distinguished guests the different topics including EU relations and future plans in regard to Georgia, Ukraine and Russia. The meeting was moderated by Kakha Gogolashvili, Director of EU Studies at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS).

The meeting was organized on the occasion of the conference “Economic Integration with the EU – Prospects and Opportunities”.

On April 13, 2014 the Georgian National Platform held the open air concert on Europe Square in support of Georgia's European ambition under the motto "We Choose Europe". The rally was attended by the Head of European Union Delegation to Georgia, Ambassador Philip Dimitrov. George Margvelashvili, President of Georgia, addressed the public. Georgian musicians, artists, journalists, athletes and representatives of other professions have joined the open-air concert initiated by non-governmental organizations.



The EU has launched the consultations on the Roadmap for EU engagement with Civil Society for 2014-2017. The purpose of the Roadmaps is to develop a common strategic framework for the engagement of EU Delegations and Member States with civil society at country level, with a view to improving the impact, predictability and visibility of EU actions. It shall be developed taking into account the views of local civil society. Members of the Georgian National Platform submitted their comments/suggestions to the representative of EU delegation to Georgia.

See the Roadmap for EU engagement with Civil Society for 2014-2017:

http://eapnationalplatform.ge/admin/editor/uploads/files/eap/EU%20COUNTRY%20ROADMAP_GUIDANCE.pdf

The First Deputy State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality met with the members of Conflict Subgroup of the Georgian National Platform.



Ketevan Tsikhelashvili shared with the organizations working on conflict issues the information about the activities of the State Minister's Office. In particular, she reviewed the work of the Office in four basic directions: activities in frames of the State Strategy on Occupied Territories "Engagement through Cooperation", the development works carried out in the villages in the vicinity of the Dividing Line, the Geneva International Discussions process and civil integration.

See more: <http://www.smr.gov.ge/index.php?opt=2&no=1012>

A large Scale Discussion on Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU has started. On 14 of April, the members of Georgian National Platform attended the first meeting where the representatives of Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, business and private sectors and scientific circles discussed the certain issues regarding the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, namely, what does the agreement imply, the obligation and the benefits for Georgian entrepreneurs.

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia will continue the thematic meetings in the regions and provide the representatives of local government, business and private circles with further detailed information regarding the planned and conducted reforms within the framework of the Free Trade Agreement.

See more:

<http://www.economy.ge/en/media/news/a-large-scale-discussion-on-deep-and-comprehensive-free-trade-agreement-with-the-eu-has-started>

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

In the framework of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Working Group I, Media subgroup, the project “EaP East Media Freedom Watch” was planned and prepared. The project has been funded by the European Union and implemented under the initiative of Internews and through the participation of Yerevan Press Club (Armenia), Union of Journalists Yeni Nesil (Azerbaijan), Independent Journalism Centre (Moldova), Belarusian Association of Journalists (Belarus) and Georgia. The Association Green Wave is a project partner from Georgian side.

The overall objective of the project is to measure the freedom of media and expression in the ENP East region through researching the situation with media freedom in six states of the region, namely in Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, Azerbaijan and Belarus during two years-starting from March 2013 until March 2015.

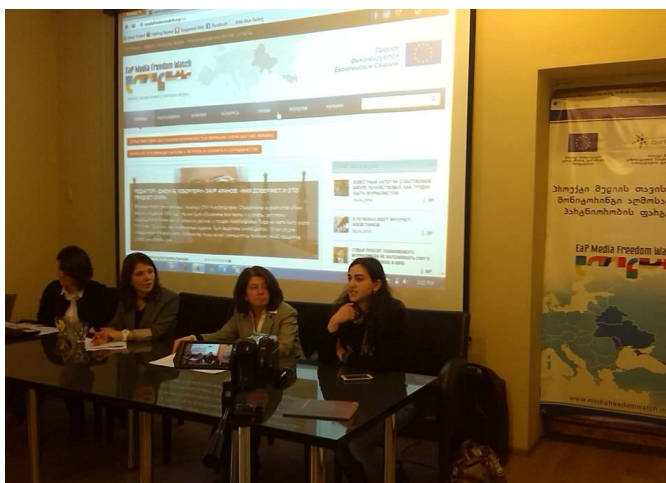
In the framework of the project using the same methodology of completing questionnaires reports are prepared by 10 media experts, journalists and media managers, representatives of NGOs and individual researchers from each country who are calculating the Media Freedom Index and giving their recommendations to improve the media landscape in the region. Media Freedom Index is calculated quarterly during 2 years. However, the results presented on the press conference have been deducted on the basis of media situation during the final 1 year (from June 2012 to June 2013).

Association Green Wave regularly presents the results of the research at the press conferences on a quarterly basis.

For more information please visit the web-site <http://mediafreedomwatch.org> created in the framework of the project as an additional information resource.

On 10 April, 2014, at 13:30 in Press –café of “Frontline Georgia” the third working-meeting-press-conference was held by the Association Green Wave presenting the results of the III Media Freedom Index held in the quarter of October-December 2013.

The results of the research conducted in October-December 2013 were presented on the press conference, according to which Georgia scored 1362 points, 91 points more than Moldova, which occupies the second place by this estimate. On the second stage of the research, conducted in the quarter of April-June 2013, Georgia was the leader, however, according to the July-September quarterly research Georgia was on the second place after Moldova, which left it behind by 6 points.



Among the attendants of the press conference there were representatives of EU delegation in Georgia, journalists and media managers, representatives of NGOs and other organizations working in the field of Media Freedom monitoring.

For more information about the Index, please visit the web-site <http://mediafreedomwatch.org> created in the framework of the project as an additional information resource.

On 16 April, 2014 “European Initiative – Liberal Academy Tbilisi” presented the final report “Visa Liberalization Perspectives: Civic Engagement and Advocacy”. The purpose of the study is to monitor the implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreement and the EU Visa Code and raise public awareness about respective results. The study also aims to ensure transparency of the processes associated with above-mentioned tasks, involving civil society, networking and advocacy.

The Final Report presents some findings, analysis and practical information related to the implementation of the Visa Facilitation Agreement and the EU Visa Code. The report suggests visa statistics for Georgia and the EaP region, overview of the current situation in EU consulates in Georgia, highlighting both progress and challenges in the implementation process.



The report findings were presented to the audience of Georgian civil society organizations, the government, EU member states' diplomatic missions and media. Presentation was followed by award ceremony of winners of the photo contest “Europe without Borders” and photo exhibition.

The project was implemented with the support of Open Society Georgia Foundation.

See more at: <http://info-visa.ge/?p=823>

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

Through government mediation the strike in Kazreti officially ended on 25th of March 2014. The RMG gold and RMG Copper employees have reached a compromise with the company. Today, a press conference was held to notify the public of the success. Press conference participants included the government mediator, Irakli Khandashvili, GTUC President Irakli Petriashvili, government administration's advisor in social affairs, Beka Natsvlshvili and the company's commercial director Soso Tsabadze.

administration agreed to fulfill the demands of the strikers in the area of work conditions. The employees are satisfied with the new insurance package offered by the company as well as the first steps taken in improvement of hygienic conditions at the workplace. Within a week of the end of the strike, the director of the company shall sign an order on creation of collective bargaining commission.

On 15 April 2014, Georgian Evaluation Association conducted an economics working group meeting. Members of different non-governmental organizations, universities, government institutions, and independent experts attended the meeting. Mr. Kakha Nadiradze, the coordinator of the thematic working group, presented on the project, “Social and economical development strategy of Georgia – Georgia 2020.” He broadly reviewed the project, talked about important issues included in the strategy, and focused on its weaknesses and deficiencies. Other working group members also expressed their opinions about the strategy.



With the initiative of Ms. Nino Saakashvili, Georgian Evaluation Association president, and Mr. Kakha Nadiradze, and with the support of the meeting participants, the working group decided to continue working on the social and economical development strategy project, and to engage other association members and interested persons in the process. At the next meeting, which is scheduled for 2 May 2014, the working group will summarize the final results of the project including its weaknesses and strengths, and its recommendations to the government.

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

The 13th Georgian International Oil, Gas, Infrastructure and Energy Conference (GIOGIE) took place on 26 – 27 March 2014 at the Radisson Blue Iveria Hotel in Tbilisi, Georgia. Supported by the Ministry of Energy of Georgia, BP and other sponsors, this event provides a central meeting place for the local and regional oil and gas community to discuss the latest developments on projects, policies and inward investments in Georgia’s oil, gas and energy industry..



Murman Margvelashvili, Director in Energy Studies led the panel – Toward a Regional Market—Challenges for Georgia’s Energy Policy. Mr. Margvelashvili made a presentation on Trends in Georgia’s Energy Policy with Implications for Sustainable Development where he talked about current trend in Georgian energy sector, problematic energy issues and recommendations for necessary improvements in the light of Georgia’s forthcoming Energy Community membership.

On 27 march, 2014 the Greens Movement of Georgia held the meeting with stakeholders in Sagarejo and Khoni Municipalities, in villages Manavi and Ivandidi in the frame of the project “Building local capacity for domestic solar heating, hot water and insulation for rural and remote areas in the EEC region” where in total 95 solar warm-water collectors were constructed in previous years.

Main goal of the meeting was to assess the efficiency of project results and involve local population in monitoring processes. Participants of the meeting discussed about benefits and values of proposed technologies, as well as the level and the quality of peoples involvement in project activities. There have been discussed also some technical difficulties during exploitation of installed technologies. Projects technical assistance staff took responsibility to resolve all problems.

The above mentioned project is been implemented by the following organizations: the Greens Movement of Georgia/Friends of the Earth-Georgia, Ecological Farming Association “SEMA”, Rural Community Development Agency RCDA and Akhaltsikhe Development Centre, in cooperation with the International Organization Women in Europe for a Common Future – WECF and financial assistance of EU commission.

Working Group 4 (WG4- Contacts between People)

On March 7, coordinator of the Working Group IV, Alexandra Kalatozishvili, participated in the meeting with the Eastern Partnership Ambassadors. The meeting was devoted to the challenges of Georgia’s EU integration process. It was attended by the chairman of the National Platform and other member organizations.

In March, coordinators of the Working Group IV and the Youth Subgroup drafted the concept of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Youth Side Event to be held in Georgia this year and other related documents, which were later presented to the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. During the reporting period, coordinator of the EaP CSF Working Group IV, Nikolai Kvantaliani, and organizers of the last year youth side event in Moldova participated in a number of online-meetings, where they discussed the technical issues and agreed on the format of the event.

On 2-4 April, members of the working Group IV participated in the training-seminar on the topic “Transitional Justice” in the framework of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee project “Coalition for Rebuilding of Trust” funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the EU. The event was held in Bakuriani and was organized by the coordinators of the Working Group IV of the Georgian National Platform being local partners to the project. The separate sessions of the seminar were conducted by Medea Turashvili, the adviser of Public Defender on human rights in conflict zones.



Upon the recommendation of the EU Delegation to Georgia, coordinator of the Working Group IV, Alexandra Kalatozishvili, participated in EC-UNDP joint thematic workshop on reinforcing credibility and acceptance of electoral processes, which was held on 6-12 April in Amman, Jordan. The workshop was attended by the members of non-governmental organizations and election administrations from around 70 countries.



On 4 March 2014, within the framework of the project “Delivery of assistance to the Government of Georgia in the development of key national policy documents on civic integration of ethnic and religious minorities” funded by Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, “Multinational Georgia” held a concluding presentation of the recommendations developed by the organization for the promotion of civic integration of ethnic minorities.

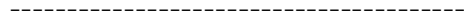


The set of recommendations was specially designed for and with the engagement of the Apparatus of the State Minister of Georgia on Reconciliation and Civil Equality, Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, and Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, and will be eventually reflected both in the ministries' program and policy documents as well as in the “National Concept as well as Action Plan for Tolerance and Civic Integration”.

For more information please see: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=59&lang=Eng>

In the period from 2 to 10 April, 2014 the third round of seminars (three 3-days events) on the topic “Transitional Justice” was held 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.

For more information please see: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=60&lang=Eng>



On 11 April, 2014 Public Movement Multinational Georgia conducted the two-day's meeting in Tbilisi for the representatives of media sources and civil society residing in Samtskhe-Javakheti region and having a persuasive and public opinion forming capacities on the ground, as well as the potential to widely disseminate information.



The event was organized in the framework of the NATO Days with financial support of the NATO Liaison Office in Georgia and Embassy of Lithuania in Tbilisi. The project has been developed with the spirit to create enhanced public awareness on NATO's policies as well as on NATO-Georgia relations in the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti with the compact settlement of ethnic Armenian community for securing greater public consensus on Georgia's NATO membership.

For more information please see: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=61&lang=Eng>

On 13-20 April, 2014 “Multinational Georgia” conducted the Training Course titled “The Path to Inner Peace and Harmony” funded by the European Union within the framework of the Youth in Action Program. The event was held in Bakuriani, Georgia and aimed to provide a chance to 36 young leaders and workers from 11 countries, working especially with vulnerable groups, namely with youngsters facing social exclusion, to increase their knowledge about the topics of discrimination and violence, raising awareness about the benefits of diversity, as well as to empower with skills in the field of intercultural learning and integration of diversity in everyday youth work. The TC connected youth leaders and youth workers from EU and Easter Europe and Caucasus region.

For more information please see: <http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=4&nid=62&lang=Eng>



Association "Peaceful and Business Caucasus" (APBC) has successfully completed humanitarian medical service project for Abkhazian and South Ossetian patients, supported by a joint EU-UNDP initiative COBERM- 2 and the Dutch government. During the project, 288 patients, living in the conflict zones, have received qualified medical service. Among them 193 was Abkhazian and 32 was Ossetian. In April of the current year the project: "Georgian and Abkhazian communities for plant protection, clean and healthy environment" was funded by COBERM 2. Duration of the project is 8 months and it includes a 5 km Black Sea coastline villages: Ganmukhuri (Zugdidi district), Fichori, Gagida, Gudava (Gali district), Ilori (Ochamchire district).

National Security and Diplomacy Course for Ministry of Defense and General Staff personnel. On 4 of April 2014 Special Course National Security and Diplomacy for the personnel of Defense Ministry and General Staff organized by International Centre for Geopolitical Studies was officially completed. Defense Minister Irakli Alasania and Chairman of ICGS Tengiz Pkhaldze congratulated the students on successful completion of the course and awarded them with certificates.



National Security and Diplomacy Course began in September 2013. Within the course 20 representatives of the MoD and General Staff learned Geopolitics, Economy security issues, Negotiation skills, Conflicts and Diplomacy, Diplomatic protocol and Etiquette, Defence and Security, Intelligence theory and Strategic Risks analysis.