



# EASTERN PARTNERSHIP Civil Society Forum

## **The Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum**

Annual report , 2013

The Georgian National Platform (NP) was founded in 2010. It is a union of non-profit local and international legal entities registered in Georgia whose aim is to promote and fulfill the goals of the European Union-initiated Eastern Partnership in the Eastern neighbourhood, as well as to generally support the European integration process.

Currently, the NP consists of 103 civil society organizations which believe that EU integration offers the best prospects for Georgia's economic, social and political development. By becoming a member of the NP they take on the responsibility to support this process.

With the aim of supporting the Eastern Partnership process, the Georgian National Platform was actively involved in ongoing processes in the country in 2013.

The were number of achievements of Georgian NP in numerous areas.

### **European Integration issues**

The Platform express its concerns related against dissemination of false information and manipulation with the European integration issue within the cohabitation process in spring 2013.

We have numerous meetings with Georgian and EU officials, Parliamentarians and representatives of International Organisations.

We welcome the steps taken by Georgia's executive and legislative branches of government towards European integration, chiefly: successful ongoing talks on an European Union Association Agreement, the adoption of the action plan for visa liberalization with the EU, and the unanimous passage in the Parliament of a resolution on Georgia's general foreign policy direction.

However, we also underlined that despite the progress achieved, the dissemination of false information about the challenges accompanying the cohabitation process as well as the inappropriate manner in which this information is being reported abroad is problematic and can have a negative effect on prospects for bringing Georgia closer to the EU, including on the Association Agreement process.

Later, in Autumn 2013, the National Platform also starts discussion regarding the Russian Federation pressure towards EaP countries and underlining that Eurasian Economic Union

project and DCFTA by negotiated EU with EaP countries is not compatible with each other. The conference “Threats of the Eurasian Union on the way of Georgia’s EU integration” and follow up discussion aims to assess the Georgia’s Foreign policy and discuss with stakeholders about challenges and perspectives of EU integration and how to avoid the pressure exercising to Georgia.

### **EU intergration Communication and Information Strategy of Georgia 2014-2017**

The Georgia National Platform elaborated “European Integration Communication and Information Strategy of Georgia (2014-2017) in cooperation with the State Ministry for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia.

The strategy defines the communication framework with the national and international society on Georgia’s EU integration process with its benefits and obligations. Implementation of the Strategy contributes to awareness raising of its target groups on the challenges, opportunities and commitments of the European integration process and facilitates mobilization of the international community.

The strategy was adopted by the government at 5 September, 2013 and implementation will start from 2014.

### **Illegal Survelaince issues and Strengthening Civil Society Control**

Georgian NP opens debate on Illegal Surveillance. The kick off conference, organized by Platform, hosted the chairman of the Georgian Parliament, the Prime Minister of Georgia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Deputy Minister of Justice, and other high officials from the Government, as well as representatives of international organisations and Diplomatic Missions in Georgia. Platform urged the government to ensure deletion of the footages of illegal surveillance, investigate the abuse and amend the respective legislation in order to guarantee that similar mechanisms will not be used by the current government and establish civil society control mechanisms.

As a result in June 2013, the Commission chaired by Minister of Internal Affairs was established, and its includes three representatives of Georgian National Platform.

5<sup>th</sup> of September Commission destroys first 110 disks, that includes the personal information. In addition, according to to the Commission decision the fate of 304 disks that contain the facts of illegal surveillance of different political parties, will be taken after investigation of cases with direct involvement of concrete political parties.

The National Platform and its member groups also prepare the package of legislation that would strengthen the legislation against illegal surveillance and there is ongoing hearings in Parliament.

### **Wire Fences alongside the division Line – Continued Occupation**

Georgian National Platform express its deep concerns related to the issue of wire fences alongside the division line with the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia which were installed inside Georgia controlled territory. Besides the violation of internationally recognized administrative border, occupation forces create real threat for human security of population in the villages located alongside the ABL and illegally occupy their land plots, creating problems for their

security and livelihoods. In particular, in village Dvani, this wire line affects women, children and other people coming to collect water from the water source. Such actions undermine trust and confidence, create atmosphere of fear and contributes to increasing of tension in the zone of conflict.

The Platform calls the EU and international organisations and supports the measures for effective protection of conflict affected population and peace dialogue.

National Platform also tries to engage the work on conflicts resolution, and issue of engagement of Abkhaz and South Ossetian colleagues in the Eastern Partnership format, as well as an option of their participation in the Civil Society Forum. The member groups organized the number of the meetings together with representatives of the Georgian-Abkhazian-Ossetian networks in the village Perevi of Sachkhere region, as well as in the Capital of Georgia.

### **Non -Discrimination**

On 27th of May, The Georgian National Platform has issued a statement concerning the assaults on LGBT right activists and their supporters on 17 May, the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, in Tbilisi.

We also underlined numerous times that despite the statements of Prime Minister and members of government underlining that all people are equal before the law, regardless of their religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation, the actions are not in line with statements.

Platform members and Civil Society actors express its disagreement with the assessment of 17th May day done by Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. The petition of 13,000 Georgian citizens requesting that Parliament evaluate the violent events of 17 May, was presented to the Parliament.

The members of Platform also make sharp assessment of the number of accidents regarding the discrimination of religious matters, happened during a year.

### **Capacity Building of National Platform**

The one of the major challenges for Georgian NP is a need for capacity building and increased expertise in EU law. There were on-going series of capacity building workshops and trainings for CSOs, in the framework of the project "Strengthening and capacity Building of Georgia's National Platform", supported by EU delegation in Georgia, as well as by Civil Society Facility and NSA program.

The need for increased capacity is especially important as the new government and closely consulted with Georgian CSOs and the need for evidence based dialogue is even more important than it was before.

The Georgia's national platform member groups jointly are developing numerous policy papers in various sectors, including Human Rights, economic development, Energy and Environment, and people to people. The policy papers together with precise recommendations would be presented to the Government of Georgia and EC in October 2013.

The work has been also done in order to institutionalize the relations between CSOs and government and parliament. The Memorandum of Understanding between Parliament and CSOs on cooperation principles is already drafted and will be signed soon.

The National Platform on a by-monthly basis is preparing and distributing the newsletter among the platform members, as well as governmental officials and diplomatic circles regarding the National Platform activities.

### **Sectoral work in working groups**

National Platform intensively works on Food Safety and agricultural issues. It involves the work on multiple reviews of the versions of the code offered by the Food Safety Agency by each participating organization, as well as meetings with the leadership of the Sector Economy and Economic Policy Committee of the Parliament. The participating NGOs aim at ensuring that the measures envisaged by the EU legislation are reflected in the Code. The group actively works on Agrarian Cooperative law in close cooperation with Parliament, as well as EU delegation in Georgia.

Platform also closely monitors ongoing reforms in energy and environment sector, the work of Member groups ensured changes in number of the contracts between private HPP developers and state in order to ensure increased incomes and safeguards for people.

Platform with support of EU Delegation of Georgia, starts the series of meetings on the issues of cultural heritage protection to increase the capacity of NP over the issues, as well as to ensure the development of coherent strategy.

### **Statements by Georgian National Platform**

- On the 26th of March, 2013 the Georgian National Platform released a statement on Georgia's EU Integration Challenges and Cohabitation. Platform welcomes the Georgian government towards European Integration but at the same time warns against dissemination of false information about the cohabitation process and manipulation with the European integration issue (See the Statement: <http://eapnationalplatform.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=241&lang=eng> )
- On 27th of May, The Georgian National Platform has issued a statement concerning the assaults on LGBT right activists and their supporters on 17 May, the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, in Tbilisi. <http://www.eap-csf.eu/en/news-events/news/ge-np-homophobia-transphobia/>
- On 4th June, 2013 The Georgian National Platform expresses its concerns over the instalment of wire fences alongside the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) with the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia inside Georgian controlled territory by Russian forces. <http://www.eap-csf.eu/en/news-events/news/ge-np-wire-abl/>
- Press Release, 5th of September, 2013, on destruction of up to 110 CDs containing total of 144 files with over 181 hours of secret video recordings of private lives of citizens, obtained over the past several years through illegal surveillance.
- 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013, the Statement on European Integration non compatibility with The Eurasian Partnership project
- 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2013, The Statement on the latest developments on the de facto border of break away South Ossetia and Russia's continuous occupation of Georgia.

## Structure of the National Platform

In accordance with the National Platform's charter, a Coordination Council was elected at the 24<sup>th</sup> December 2012 General Meeting. The Coordination Council is responsible for guiding the National Platform's activities in terms of organization and content. The members of the Georgian National Platform's Coordination Council are:

1. Manana Kochladze, Chairwoman of Platform, "Association Green Alternative,"
2. Lasha Tugushi– Coordinator of the first working group – "Press Association"
3. Nazi Janezashvili– Coordinator of the first working group – "Penal Reform International Georgia,"
4. Oleg Shatberashvili– Coordinator of the second working group – Association "European Studies for the Innovative Development of Georgia"
5. Nino Elizbarashvili– Coordinator of the second working group – Association "Woman and Business"
6. Nino Chkobadze– Coordinator of the third working group –"The Greens Movement of Georgia"/FOE Georgia
7. Tamaz Vashakidze– Coordinator of the third working group –"International Business and Economic Development Centre"
8. Aleksandra Kalatozishvili – Coordinator of the fourth working group – Foundation "Multi- Ethnic Resource Centre on Civic Education Development"
9. Natia Abramia – Coordinator of the fourth working group – "Healthy World"

The staff of secretariat - Eka Mrulishvili and Salome Bulia. The secretariat hosted by "Liberal Academy Tbilisi"

Meetings of the National Platform's Coordination Council and the working groups took place regularly within the framework of the NP. Additionally, the constituent working groups of the National Forum (WG 1 – Democracy, human rights, good governance and stability, WG 2 – Economic integration and convergence with EU policies, WG3 – Environment, climate change and energy security, WG 4 – Contacts between people) and the agriculture, civil society development subgroups held regular meetings.

The Coordination Council has carried out several coalition projects with the aim of effectively implementing the Georgian National Platform's goals. They are:

- "Georgian National Platform for Eastern Partnership," which is ongoing with financial support from the Open Society Georgia Foundation until May 31 2013. The project's goal is to support the effective work of the Georgian National Platform and increase public awareness of its activities. The project provides for the functioning of the secretariat, working group meetings, and the translation of documents and other organizational expenses;
- "Strengthening Capacities of the Georgian National Platform for Eastern Partnership" whose goal is European integration, in particular support for the priorities of the Eastern Partnership by strengthening the National Platform through increased participation and involvement. The project is financed by the European Commission , it started at January 2013. The project supports and strengthens the work of the working groups and carry out activities such as monitoring of the implementation of the Europe Neighborhood

Policy/Eastern Partnership's action plan, shadow accounting and the preparation of recommendations, increasing the capacities of the NP's member organizations through organizing trainings and seminars, etc.

- “Strengthening Capacities of the National Platforms of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum” project, presented by the Steering Committee of the Civil Forum, and supported by the European Commission. The project starts in January 2013 and is managed in Georgia by the Open Society Georgia Foundation.