

## ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT 2015

### GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

Effectiveness and activeness of GNP was significantly promoted by the EU supported project “Strengthening and Capacity Building of Georgian National Platform for the Eastern Partnership” (started in February, 2013 – finished in July, 2015). Through the action GNP managed to raise its voice, strengthened its participation in policy dialogue with the government and raised awareness not only on EU-Georgia relations, but also on Eastern Partnership itself.

The EU integration process is becoming more challenging in increasingly changing political ambiance globally. Such a dynamics require joint efforts from all sectors, especially an active engagement of civil Society organisations. Successful implementation of the AAs/DCFTAs in Georgia has been identified as a key success factor of the Eastern Partnership initiative. A great number of the EaP CSF activities focus on different aspects of monitoring the implementation of these agreements. Georgian National Platform members organisations are actively involved in the process and express their readiness to support effective implementation of the AA/DCFTA in the country.

### GNP NETWORKING

Georgian National Platform have organized various meetings, including those of the Coordination Council, Working groups and regional meetings. All the meetings were organised for GNP 143 members. Some working group meetings were held with participation of the representatives of the line ministries. All other events were also attended by the representatives of the Authorities, mostly by high rank officials and policy makers.

### STRUCTURAL DIALOGUE

GNP Coordination Council (CC) conducted regular meetings with high level officials of the Georgian Government and the European Union. At the same time working groups were actively engaged in the issue-based policy dialogue with the relevant line ministries.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. On April 22, 2015 Chairman of the Georgian National Platform and representatives of member organizations met with the Chair of EU Integration Committee, Tinatin Khidasheli. As it was mentioned during the meeting the long-term cooperation between the civil society and the Committee will be carried out. Main goal of this cooperation is to monitor the implementation of the Association Agreement and to engage civil society representatives in this process.

Attendees agreed to work out a plan, which will be main tool for legal amendments, as well for government monitoring. Chair of the Committee expressed her wish that the representatives of civil society were involved in the discussion of government initiatives from the beginning.

4. The Parliament of Georgia hosted the meeting "Visa Liberalization – Current Situation and Future Prospects" on July 04, 2015, organized by the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The legislative power was represented by Vakhtang Khmaladze, Levan Berdzenishvili, Nodar Ebanoidze, Eka Beselia, Tamar Kordzaia and Pridon Sakvarelidze. Representatives of the executive power participated in the discussion, namely, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Justice, also Elza Jgerenaia, head of the Labor and Employment Policy Department of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs.

The participants discussed the current situation and future plans regarding the areas envisaged in the visa liberalization action plan.

As mentioned at the meeting, an interagency working group have been created, activities of which are coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Parliament of Georgia, the judiciary, Public Defender and Personal Office of the Personal Data Protection Inspector. Key functions of the working group are to plan activities under the VLAP, monitor the performance of undertakings, and inform the EC regularly about ongoing and completed reforms.



As Gigi Gigiadze explains, now Georgia is at the second and final stage of the VLAP implementation. “After meeting with the VLAP requirements and recommendations of the European Commission, the EC will approach the EU members states and the European Parliament with the recommendation on introducing a visa-free regime with Georgia. Based on the respective political decision, the visa-free regime will be activated with Georgia through making respective amendments to the EU regulation”, - said the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

5. Member organizations of the Georgian National Platform met with the Mayor of Tbilisi Davit Narmania and Deputy Mayor Irakli Lekvinadze on July 13, 2015. LashaTughushi, Chairman of the Georgian National Platform talked about current challenges and possible solutions.

During the meeting Davit Narmania and Irakli Lekvinadze provided information to the audience about the works performed within a month since the natural disaster and about future plans as well.

Representatives of the platform’s member organizations offered the Mayor to cooperate and assist for the effective implementation of processes. From his side, Davit Narmania expressed readiness for ensuring the involvement of the civil society.

6. Tamar Beruchashvili, Minister of Foreign Affairs held a meeting with various representatives of the Georgian National Platform and the civil sector on the VLAP implementation on July 17, 2015.

The following people attended the meeting: Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Gigi Gigiadze, Deputy Minister of Justice of Georgia Alexander Baramidze, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Archil Talakvadze, Head of the Labor and Employment Policy Department of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs Elza Jgerenaia, Chairman of the Georgian National Platform and representatives of various agencies.

At this meeting the Government of Georgia aimed at sharing information with the NGO sector about the VLAP implementation. The minister and deputy ministers informed the meeting participants about activities, which the government carried out within the frameworks of the Action plan since the Riga summit, considering the EC recommendations.

The following individual participated in the discussion: Lasha Tugushi, Chairman of the Georgian National Platform; Ivane Chkhikvadze, Manager of EU Integration Program of the Open Society Georgia Foundation; Ana Natsvlishvili, Head of the Georgia Young Lawyers Association and Irakli Petriashvili, Head of the Georgian Trade Unions Confederation.



They expressed hope that with joint efforts of the government and the NGO sector, also based on the achieved progress, the visa liberalization process with the EU will be a success and the EC will issue the final report at the end of the year.

It was also emphasized at the meeting that cooperation with the NGO sector and its maximum involvement is very important for the implementation of the VLAP and the Association Agenda.

It is noteworthy that GNP members were regularly participated at the hearings and discussions of the relevant Parliamentary Committees.

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

## **OFFICE IN THE PARLIAMENT**

The National Platform has opened an office in the building of national Parliament of Georgia to facilitate policy and advocacy work on the country's AA and DCFTA implementation, there will be the opportunity to closely monitor and contribute to the legislation process. It should be mentioned that it was one of the main achievements of GNP during the working year.

The GNP was actively involved in the country's everyday political life, especially on the EU integration issues.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF GNP TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BY THE GOVERNMENT**

Government of Georgia took into account the following recommendations and legislative changes on the basis of Civil Society Sector's recommendations.

At the end of the 2014 Government of Georgia has launched consultations with the civil society on the Association Agreement National Action Plan. On 9th of December, 2014 Georgian National Platform member organizations received the draft document of the National Action Plan for further comments and recommendations. In total 12 member organizations provided their recommendations, which were presented to the GoG. On 19 December 2014, the 51st Session of the Governmental Commission on Georgia's EU Integration approved the 2015 National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia and



the European Union and on 15 January 2015, the Government of Georgia adopted the 2015 National Action Plan.

Number of important comments of the Georgian National Platform has been taken into consideration in the Action Plan. It is noteworthy that the Chairman of GNP received gratitude letter from the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. The minister expressed his readiness to have a successful and productive cooperation with the GNP throughout the implementation process of the Association Agreement.

## **REGIONAL VISITS/SEMINARS**

20 informative visits of the experts has been implemented to the following regions of Georgia: Kutaisi, Telavi, Batumi, Zugdidi, Akhalkalaki and IDPs collective centers in Shida Qartli region. The main goal of the regional meetings was to raise awareness on EaP, on the importance of the Association Agreement, its positive and negative impacts, existing opportunities and post signing challenges, DCFTA and EU integration issues, as well as the commitments undertaken by the Georgia. Experts from the National Platform gave qualified information to the interested audience and provide consultations on the most topical issues with respect to the Georgia's EU integration process.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM**

On June 1, 2015 meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform was held where the Civil Society Platform was established as envisaged in the Article 412 of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. 78 member organizations attended the meeting.

Mr. Archil Karaulashvili, First Deputy State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Mr. Boris Iarochevitch, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia, and Mr. Kakha Gogolashvili, Deputy Chairman of the Georgian National Platform opened the meeting with their welcoming speeches. The speakers laid emphasis on the importance of Georgia's integration in the European Union and the role of civil society in this process. "I would like to thank you for the interest that you express towards the European Integration. Your professionalism and profound knowledge of issues are very important for us. I think this is an asset that we, the government should use. As you know, the Association Agreement means implementation of fundamental reforms. The Georgian authorities do its best to build its capacity to ensure the successful implementation of this Agreement. With the purpose carrying out the process effectively, we have started to work on a long-term sectoral strategy. This is a vision that will create grounds for annual action plans. There is a framework document and you will be able to get involved in the process of drafting the document. Georgia was the first country, which involved the civil sector in drafting the National Action Plan of the Association Agreement. We received important comments, some of which were taken into account by the Government. The

Project Funded by the  
European Union



**National Endowment  
for Democracy**

*Supporting freedom around the world*

comments about reforming the Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were envisaged in the Action Plan. We would like to continue working actively in the future as well. The newly founded platform and the Georgian National Platform will be the main instrument of our cooperation“ – said Archil Karaulashvili.

Deputy Head of the EU delegation to Georgia positively evaluated the outcomes of Riga Summit. According to Boris Iarochevitch, “The public had high expectations regarding the visa liberalization, but we need to point out that there is a certain Agenda and technically it was impossible to approve visa liberalization. As Donald Tusk, President of the European Council stated, Georgia will have a visa-free regime with the European Union very soon. We will continue to have active relations with you“. Kakha Gogolashvili, Deputy Chairman of the Georgian National Platform talked about the results of the Riga Summit and evaluated the current events. He pointed out that there are new approaches from the viewpoint of international security and stability, and changing security environment has resulted in some changes within the Eastern Partnership. He also talked about the revision of the EU Neighborhood Policy and current challenges in the region.

Chairman of the Georgian National Platform informed the audience about the structure of the Civil Society Platform and the election procedures. The platform member organizations had a discussion and then agreed on having an 18-member platform: chairperson of the Georgian National Platform, a representative of the Employers Association of Georgia, a representative of the Trade Unions of Georgia, I working group – 4 members, II working group – 4 members, III working group – 2 members, IV working group – 2 members. The remaining 3 representatives will be selected by a special commission from the organizations that are not members of the Platform through the selection process. The participants unanimously agreed on the following composition of the Commission: Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Open Society Georgia Foundation.

At the end of June the Commission announced a competition, discussed the received applications and finally selected three other members of Civil Society Platform from non-platform civil society organisations. It should be mentioned that the process of Establishment of Civil Society Platform has been completed successfully. Newly established Civil Society Platform will work on the issues envisaged under the Association Agenda.

## **GNP RELEASED 5 STATEMENTS ON THE MOST TOPICAL ISSUES FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE COUNTRY**

- *Statement Regarding Pressure on the Civil Sector*
- *Statement on Recognizing the European Perspective for the Eastern Partnership States*
- *Statement on Gyumri*
- *Statement on the Terrorist Attacks in Paris*
- *Georgian National Platform Appeal to the EC and EU Member States*

Project Funded by the  
European Union



**National Endowment  
for Democracy**  
*Supporting freedom around the world*



## A MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION SIGNED BETWEEN THE GNP AND THE GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA

*On November 13, 2015 a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the government of Georgia and the National Platform of Georgia of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. The Memorandum was signed by David Bakradze, on behalf of the government and Chairman of the National Platform of Georgia, Lasha Tugushi, on behalf of the organization.*

*Based on shared European values, the Memorandum aims at strengthening cooperation between the executive branch of the government and the Civil Society in advancing the process of Georgia's European integration; namely, engaging the Non-Governmental Organizations in the process of planning, implementation and monitoring of the Association Agreement Action Plans.*

*"By signing the Memorandum, we once again manifest our strong will to support and ensure maximum and effective engagement of the Civil Society", said the State Minister. Head of the European Union Delegation to Georgia, Ambassador Janos Herman and Lasha Tugushi addressed the audience together with the State Minister.*

*David Bakradze stated that bearing a burden of challenges of integration is unimaginable without the support of the Civil Society.*

*"I am proud that Georgia is a pioneer among EaP countries which has engaged the civil society in the elaboration and monitoring of the AA Action Plans; and I express my sincere gratitude for the fruitful cooperation" said the State Minister.*

Lasha Tugushi  
EaP CSF Georgian National Platform, Chairman



## **EAP CSF GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM APPEAL TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND EU MEMBER STATES**

The civil society of Georgia considers the process of visa liberalization with the European Union to be of the highest importance.

We are convinced that the country has made considerable progress in all areas of reforms envisaged by the Visa Liberalization Action Plan since its initiation in June 2012. These legal and institutional reforms have strengthened the country's ability to control migration flows, and to ensure the security of personal documents and data. Asylum and migration policy reforms provide conditions for reasonable treatment of refugees and readmitted persons of all categories. In addition, an improved integrated border management system, police and other relevant services enable effective control and considerably restricts cross-border criminal activity. Moreover Georgia has progressed in terms of human rights protection, and that needs further support and assistance.

The granting of a visa-free arrangement to Georgian citizens travelling to EU would, in our view, increase mutual understanding, create better possibilities for people-to-people contacts, and provide solid ground for cultural convergence, business links and connections.

For a considerable number of Georgian citizens it would provide the opportunity and encouragement to embrace Europe.

A visa-free regime, if granted, would have a deep impact on the promotion of European ideals among Georgian citizens who, through visits of varying lengths, could gain a better understanding of and connection with, the European continent. It would also represent tangible progress in our relations with the EU, a real achievement that would have a direct influence on the perception of Georgian citizens toward the EU. They would feel themselves real Europeans, accepted and received by the European family, and take on a responsibility to enhance and protect Georgia's relations with Europe. In the longer term it would influence attitudes of Georgian citizens towards European values, evolve political culture and contribute to a mental transformation of the society towards a highly developed democratic unity of citizens.

Visa liberalization would also be the best response to external challenges which have the potential to drive Georgia away from the Europeanization process. In this regard, the use of anti-European propaganda can be influential and requires a well-evidenced counter argument.

Finally, we consider a visa-free regime, securing free movement of people between Georgia and EU, to be a key factor in the successful implementation of the Association Agreement and DCFTA, which has become operational since September 2014.

We kindly request the European Commission to take all of the above mentioned arguments into account and call on EU Member States to support the granting of a visa-free regime to Georgia.

Project Funded by the  
European Union



**National Endowment  
for Democracy**  
*Supporting freedom around the world*

## Signatory Organizations:

1. European Initiative - Liberal Academy Tbilisi
2. Eurasia Partnership Foundation
3. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
4. Foundation "Caucasus Environment"
5. Youth Alternative
6. Human Rights Centre
7. Union "Healthy Children"
8. Association for the efficient use of the Georgian energy resources
9. Biological Farming Association "Elkana"
10. Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters
11. International Press Institute - Georgian national committee
12. Georgian Institute of Politics
13. "Women Enterprise" Fund Georgia
14. International Center for Advancement of Research, Technology & Innovation
15. Association DEA for Disabled Women and Mothers of Disabled Children
16. Partnership For Road Safety
17. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)
18. Institute for Development of Freedom of Information; (IDFI)
19. Human Rights Priority
20. Save The Future Generation
21. International Business Development and Investment Promotion Centre
22. Association of Tea Producers Georgia "Georgian Tea"
23. Georgian Association "Woman in Business"
24. Association European Studies for Innovative Development in Georgia
25. Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Association "Toleranti"
26. The Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia
27. Civil Society Institute
28. "Agroservice"
29. World Experience for Georgia
30. Center of Development and Democracy
31. OXFAM Georgia
32. Research-Intellectual Club "Dialogue of Generations"
33. International Center of Geopolitical Research
34. Local Democracy Agency
35. Foundation "Multi- Ethnic Resource Centre on Civic Education Development"
36. Union "Article 42 of the Constitution"
37. Women's Initiatives supporting Group
38. United Public Movement "Multinational Georgia"
39. IDP Association "Consent"
40. Student Youth Council
41. Public Advocacy
42. Healthy World
43. Youth for Justice – Georgia
44. Institute for Policy Studies
45. Human Rights House Tbilisi
46. Innovations and Reforms Center
47. Union "Anti-Violence Network of Georgia"
48. International Organization of Human Rights protection and Prisoners social welfare



49. International Center for Civic Culture
50. International Center on Conflict and Negotiation
51. People's Harmonious Development Society
52. International Foundation "LEA"
53. Union "Ecotech"
54. Civil Society and Democracy Development Center
55. Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)
56. Association "MERKURI"
57. Georgian Trade Union Confederation
58. Teachers' Union "Education and Universe"
59. Junior achievement of Georgia
60. Peaceful and Business Caucasus
61. Community Foundation GENIUS LOCI
62. International Center for Environmental Research
63. Centre of Innovative Development of Enterprises
64. Analytical Center for Interethnic Cooperation and Consultations
65. Union of Azerbaijani Women in Georgia
66. Association of Youth Journalists "New Vision"
67. Caucasus Institute for Economic and Social Research
68. International Society "Caucasian Mosaic"
69. Georgia Press Association
70. Association "Atinati"
71. Georgian Red Cross Society
72. European Centre for Minority Issues
73. Caucasian House Georgia
74. Coalition Homecare Georgia

