

GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM



The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform (EaP CSF GNP) is the largest coalition in Georgia, established in November 2010. GNP unites 152 local and international nongovernmental organizations and consists of five thematic working groups: Democracy and Human Rights; Economic Integration; Environment and Energy Security; Contacts between People; Social Dialogue.

Objectives of the Georgian National Platform are:

- Raise public awareness on EU integration processes
- Support harmonization of Georgian legislation with the EU laws
- Ensure participation of the civil sector in the implementation of the Action Plan for the Association Agreement
- Strengthen energy security and cooperation with regard to long-term, stable and secure energy supply and transit
- Ensure sustainable development and environmental protection
- Support business development including small and medium-sized enterprises
- Support social dialogue and partnership
- Research, technological development and innovation
- Support awareness campaigns and trainings
- Develop agriculture
- Cooperation with regard to culture
- Regional development and cooperation at the regional level

At the beginning of the year (January-February, 2016) EaP CSF Georgian National Platform conducted 10 working group and 2 Coordination Council meetings. The Chairman of Georgian National Platform, Mr. Lasha Tughushi, attended all the meetings. He underlined that the platform should use the opportunities and instruments that emerge from the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the Government of Georgia and EaP CSF Georgian National Platform and work actively on drafting policy proposals. Based on the Memorandum, the Government of Georgia has an obligation to review the proposals prepared by the Platform. All the meetings were organized for Georgian National Platform member organisations. Some working group meetings were held with participation of representatives from the line ministries. All other events were also attended by the representatives of governmental authorities, mostly high ranking officials and policy makers.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS

In January, during the first coordination council meeting the Chairman introduced to the Coordination Council members the initiative of establishing regional representations of Georgian National Platform. Following an active discussions geographical location of the representations have been determined as follows: Samegrelo (Zugdidi), Imereti (Kutaisi), Shida Kartli (Gori) and Samtskhe-Javakheti (Akhalqalaqi).

INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF THE EU-GEORGIA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM

With the initiative of EESC an informal consultative meeting of the EU-Georgia Civil Society Platform to be established took place in Tbilisi, Georgia on January 26, 2016. The meeting aimed to discuss the composition of the Platform and the modalities for its official launching, discussion on the rules of procedure of the EU-Georgia Civil Society Platform and debate on future work of the Platform.



MOC WITH THE EU INTEGRATION COMMITTEE OF THE PARLIAMENT

On 26 February 2016 the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform signed Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in the Parliament of Georgia. The MoC was signed by Mr. Levan Berdzenishvili, Chairman of the European Integration Committee and Mr. Lasha Tughushi. The Memorandum aims to strengthen cooperation between the country's legislative authorities and civil society to support and facilitate the process of political association of Georgia with the European Union and the harmonization of the Georgian legislation with EU laws.

The parties agreed as follows:

1. The Parties shall facilitate enhancement of cooperation between the country's legislative authority and the civil society, which will accelerate the process of political association of Georgia with the European Union and legislative harmonization.
2. The Parties shall enhance their cooperation under Article 413 of the Association Agreement in the following key areas:
 - thematic meetings of the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform shall be held once per 6 months;
 - the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia shall ensure sharing of draft legislative initiatives and proposals upon registration with the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform;
 - the Georgian National Platform shall provide the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia with evaluations of the draft legislative initiatives and proposals prepared by its members;
 - the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia shall attach the aforementioned to the draft laws.

The parties agreed to develop and approve the Action Plan for implementation of the MoC. Later, the first draft of the Action Plan was elaborated.

During the conference “Elaboration of Action Plan for the Memorandum of Cooperation between the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the Georgian National Platform”, the draft of the Action Plan of MoC was discussed, further developed and approved by the Coordination Council of the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform.



The Action Plan determined the following priorities within the framework of the MoC:

1. Cooperation between the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform

Namely, to strengthen the commitment to European orientation and promote the European integration process. The EaP CSF Georgian National

Platform will participate in informational, educational and expert activities organized by the committee according to the committee's needs.

The European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform will designate contact persons to ensure cooperation between the parties.

The European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia will hold a general meeting of the committee and the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform (at the meeting annual activity

report of the committee will be presented and the Action Plan will be revised and updated) before finishing the Parliamentary autumn session;

2. Information on legislative activities

The European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia will notify the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform and send them a draft law with a complete set of attached materials no later than the second day after the Parliamentary Bureau refers the draft to the committee.

3. Involvement in the legislative process

To ensure approximation and harmonization of the Georgian legislation with EU laws, the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia will involve the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform in the preliminary preparation of legislative issues, the drafting of legislative initiatives, their improvement, and provide the GNP with information about the committee meetings and also ensure attendance of members of the GNP at the meetings.

4. Provision of expert assistance by the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform

The EaP CSF Georgian National Platform will provide reasoned opinions, observations and proposals and expert advice in relation to specific issues, which will be attached to draft laws.

5. Building capacity of the Office of the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia. Sharing expertise and experience

The EaP CSF Georgian National Platform will promote the involvement of the staff of the European Integration Committee Office in qualification upgrading activities and provide them with training in necessary areas.

ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

The 7th General Assembly of the Eastern Partnership CSF Georgian National Platform was held on February 29, 2016 and was attended by 130 representatives of 86 member organizations. The meeting was attended by Mr. Lasha Tughushi, the Chairman of the Georgian National Platform as well as Mr. Archil Karaulashvili, the First Deputy State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and Mr. Stephen Stork, the Deputy Head of Operations Section of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia. The meeting began with a presentation of the key events of 2015, including the successful completion of the visa liberalisation action plan. The meeting went on to focus on the importance of European Integration and the cooperation of the government and civil society in this process. Mr Karaulashvili showed a willingness to discuss issues with member organisations of the GNP, utilising their expertise when possible. He spoke about a Civil Society Platform (Georgian-European Platform), as stipulated in the Association Agreement and noted that this new platform would strengthen the Eastern Partnership. Mr. Stork recognised the importance of the Georgian National for engaging civil society in the monitoring of Association Agreement Action Plan, as well as in policy development processes. At the end of the meeting Kakha Gogolashvili, the director of EU Studies of Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) was elected as the

chairman of Georgian National Platform for 2016.

EVENT MARKING THE OPENING OF REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

On May 20, an opening event was held in the city of Gori, dedicated to the establishment of regional representations of the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform.

The Chairman of the Platform, Mr. Kakha Gogolashvili and the National Coordinator of the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform, Mr. Lasha Tughushi spoke about the role of civil society organizations in the democratic development of Georgia.

Civil society representatives were joined by Mr. Archil Karaulashvili, the First Deputy to the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, and Mr. Carlo Natale, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Georgia joined the meeting and gave speeches as well.

Regional representatives of the National Platform made brief presentations about their future plans and on the state of development of civil society organizations in the regions.

The meeting was attended by local civil society organizations, by local self-government representations and the media.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

In January, during the first coordination council meeting the Chairman introduced to the Coordination Council members the initiative of establishing regional representations of the Georgian National Platform. On March 21, 2016 following discussions four GNP regional representations were established in the following regions of Georgia: Samegrelo (Zugdidi), Imereti (Kutaisi), Shida Kartli (Gori) and Samtskhe-Javakheti (Akhalqalaqi).

Each representation has one responsible person, who implements activities such as: strengthening GNP activities and its popularization in the regional context through regional meetings, public lectures, presentations, leaflets and banners.

For strengthening the regional representations, Memorandums of Cooperation were signed by Georgian National Platform and local self-governments in order to advance cooperation among the local authorities and member organizations of Georgian National Platform for supporting the European Integration process.

Regional representatives organized meetings to discuss the EU integration processes in the regional scope, the challenges they face at the local level and to provide active cooperation with the local authorities and non-governmental organizations operating in the region. These meetings were attended by GNP member regional organizations, as well as non-platform regional CSOs. Regional representations produced monthly reports containing news about their activities.

This activity aimed to engage regional organizations in the activities of GNP, including the popularization and promotion of the EaP CSF National Platformsv and EU integration process in Georgia.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

The EU funded project “Supporting of Georgian National Platform for a more Equitable, Open and Democratic Society” assisted the Georgian National Platform to engage in capacity building with its regional representations. These consisted of various training sessions and information meetings.



The training sessions aimed to increase regional organizations’ involvement and to create networking opportunities. The sessions focused on the strengthening of civil society capacity in the implementation of the Association Agreement, as well as training in project writing and management, including fundraising, methodology and timing of project; to ensure their capacities to prepare the policy recommendations and policy documents, and conduct advocacy campaigns effectively. These sessions were conducted by experts from the Georgian National Platform and attended by representatives of regional NGOs and students as well as representatives of political parties and local authorities.

In other regions, regular information meetings were held to inform guests about the Georgian National Platform of the EaP CSF, its aims and activities as well as well as informing them about EU – Georgia Association Agreement and the visa liberalisation process. Attendees were then able express their interest in joining the GNP. Other topics discussed at regional meetings included the issue of illegal migration and internally displaced persons (IDPs); the current state of trade unions in Georgia; gender inclusion in Georgian politics; local elections; the role of the local government and the importance of civic participation; export opportunities and market diversification offered by the Association Agreement; regional media activities; the frozen conflicts of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and peacebuilding mechanisms.

In line with the EU “Communication and Visibility Manual”, EU visibility was ensured at the sessions.

STATEMENTS AND OPEN LETTERS

During the reporting period Georgian National Platform released statements and one open letter on relevant issues to the country and Georgian society.

- [Open Letter to Hon. Mr. Joseph Daul, President of European People’s Party](#)
- [Statement of the Subgroup on Education and Science of the Fourth Working Group of the Georgian National Platform on the Introduction of “Me and Society” in the Schools](#)
- [Statement on Violation ethnic Georgian population’s fundamental right to study in their native language](#)

- [Statement on the impinging on the life of Giga Otkhozoria at the so called Abkhaz-Georgia proper administrative boundary line](#)
- [Statement on the Upcoming Parliamentary Elections \(developed by Working Group I\)](#)
- [Statement on the Terrorist Attacks in Brussels](#)
- [Statement regarding the Orlando, Florida Shooting](#)

MEETING WITH THE FOREIGN RELATIONS SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENT OF GEORGIA

On 13 June the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform representatives met with Foreign Affairs Secretary of President of Georgia regarding Visa Liberalisation process with the EU.

Mr. Phkhaladze informed the Platform member organizations about 5-9 June Brussels visit of the President of Georgia. The parties discussed the visa liberalization and Georgia's EU Integration processes. The representatives of the Platform, shared their initiatives and propositions on this issues with Mr. Phkhaladze.

According to Mr. Phkhaladze, this type of meetings will continue in the future. He pointed out that "Involvement of civil society is important in the process, their recommendations and coordinated actions, while actual steps are to be made with regard to Georgia's European integration".



SECTORIAL MEETINGS

Following the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the Government of Georgia and the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform on April 8 2016, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Georgian National Platform jointly organized sectoral meetings during the year. This allowed for the GNP to offer their view on sectoral

developments and to underline the importance of civil society involvement.

The first was with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia . The meeting was attended by Teimuraz Murghulia, the First Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, Gizo Chelidze, Head of the Sustainable Development and EU Integration Policy Division of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia. The meeting focused on activities related to environmental protection implemented under the Association Agreement and future plans, including the deadline for implementation of the Association Agreement, shoreline protection works, the

Forest Code, the Water Law, biogeographic zoning, environmental monitoring and air pollution, alternative energy, environmental impact assessment procedures and risk assessment.

A second sectorial meeting was organised on April 28, 2016 between the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia and Georgian National Platform. The meeting was attended by: Mr. Nodar Kereselidze, the First Deputy to the Georgia's Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Lasha Inauri, the Chair of the Department for the European Integration at the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Archil Karaulashvili and Mr. Kakha Gogolashvili Mr. Lasha Tugushi, the National Coordinator of the Georgian National Platform, and the representatives of the Platform member organizations. The discussion focused on reforms and activities planned and carried out within the frames of the Association Agreement, in the fields of Agriculture and rural development including the Agriculture Development Concept, ENPARD-II program, farm cooperatives, government-sponsored program "Plant the Future", and Georgia's national farm extension.

The third meeting, with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia took place on May 23, 2016. The meeting was attended Mrs. Lia Gigauri, the Deputy Minister of Education of Georgia, and chairs of the departments at the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Attendees discussed the following topics: advancement of the legislative basis, aspects of improving teachers' professional development system, improving school infrastructure, decentralization of school system, provision of school textbooks, and the development of inclusive education for disabled people.

INAUGURAL MEETING OF EU-GEORGIA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM

On June 16, 2016 the inaugural meeting of the EU-Georgia Civil Society Platform (CSP) was held at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS). The Civil Society Platform enables its 18 members, representing European civil society networks and civil society organisations from Georgia to monitor the implementation process of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and discuss issues of common interest. The meeting was attended by Andrzej Adamczyk, Member of the European Social and Economic Committee. The assessments of the state of play of the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement were made by David Bakradze, the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia and H.E Janos Herman, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia. During an active discussion the representatives of the EU and the Georgian civil society organizations shared with the attendees their views on the implementation process of the Association Agreement. The working Agenda of the CSP and a joint statement were adopted at the meeting.

CONFERENCE “ELABORATION OF ACTION PLAN FOR THE MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION COMMITTEE OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA AND THE EAP CSF GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM”

On 26-27 June the Conference “Elaboration of Action Plan for the Memorandum of Cooperation between the European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the Georgian National Platform” took place. It was organised by the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform with support of the EU funded project “Civil Society. Dialogue for Progress.” It brought together representatives of EaP CSF Georgian National Platform, EaP CSF and Parliament and Government of Georgia.

During the conference, the draft of the Action Plan of MoC was discussed, further developed and approved by the Coordination Council of the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform. A representative of the Ministry of Justice reported to civil society the results and prospects of the harmonization of Georgian legislation with EU requirements. Ms. Dovile Sukyte, Policy Analyst at Eastern Europe Studies Centre, produced a set of recommendations on how to improve CSO engagement in Georgia’s law making processes, based on EU experience. Also, Mr. Uladzislau Vialichka, co-chair of the EaP CSF Steering Committee expressed his opinion how to this experience could be applied to other EaP countries.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “SECURITY CHALLENGES OF THE EU’S EASTERN NEIGHBORHOOD”

A two-day conference conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia on 28-29 July was jointly organized by the EaP CSF, Georgian National Platform (GNP) and “European Initiative - Liberal Academy Tbilisi” (EI-LAT). Approximately sixty representatives of civil society from all EaP countries, Government of Georgia and EU institutions, as well as prominent security experts from the European Union and EaP discussed solutions to the key security threats in the Eastern Partnership countries. The event aimed to develop recommendations for the EU and NATO to stabilize the region, as well as to identify the measures that can be taken by the civil society. The attendees of the meeting discussed existing challenges, the issues of security, regional conflicts, including Georgia, the role of Russia and the development of peace-building processes.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “GEORGIA’S EUROPEAN WAY”

On 14-15 July Coordination Council members of the Georgian National Platform participated in the 13th International Conference "Georgia's European Way – Stability, Development, Diversity" at the Batumi Hilton Hotel. The conference welcomed high level officials from the Parliament and Government of Georgia, the European Union and its Member States, as well as representatives of private sector, academia and the media from Eastern Partnership countries,

The State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, David Bakradze and Chairman of GLOBSEC Policy Institute, Ambassador Rastislav Káčer introduced the event with welcoming remarks at the conference’s opening ceremony. Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations and Giorgi Kvirikashvili, the Prime Minister of Georgia have also delivered keynote speeches.

Discussion topics included: EU-Georgia relations and role of the EU assistance throughout the European integration process of Georgia; European Neighbourhood Policy and key challenges that face Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, the implementation process of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement including the DCFTA and visa liberalization; strategic communication and cooperation with civil society.

The conference included a Night Owl session on "Brexit and the future of Europe".

TRAINING FOR GNP MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

A training session “How to Develop Public Policy Paper” was held on August 9, 2016. The Training was conducted by Kakha Gogolashvili. Organisational and logistical support was provided by the Georgian National Platform Secretariat.

The main focus of the training was to train GNP members in how to prepare public policy papers. Participants got acquainted with the main elements of the process

The training took place in preparation for a joint annual high-level conference of the Government of Georgia and the EaP CSF Georgian National Platform, where the Georgian National Platform would submit important proposals and recommendations directly related to the Association Agreement, as agreed in Mo. Georgia. Following the training, each GNP Working Group developed policy papers regarding priority issues relating to the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and its implementation and submitted these to the Government of Georgia for consideration.

VISIBILITY STRATEGY OF GEORGIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

The project “Supporting Georgian National Platform for a more Equitable, Open and Democratic Society” developed a Communication and Visibility Strategy for the Georgian National Platform. The strategy will serve as a reference guide for member organisations implementing projects. The strategy contains approaches, activities and tools for consistent and systemized communications with target audiences during the implementation of a project. This will ensure the visibility of projects and raise awareness of their components, achievements, donors, partners and impact.