



**EURASIA  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOUNDATION**

# Newsletter

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Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) is undertaking a project to promote the newly launched Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. The project is titled “EU-Georgia Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement: Preparing for Negotiations through Stakeholder Collaboration”. In November 2009, EPF organized the second roundtable of the new cycle, which brought together representatives of the European Commission’s Delegation to Georgia, participants from EaP countries, members of diplomatic missions, the Georgian government, and Parliament, as well as actors from civil society, trade unions, and business associations. The aim of the roundtable was to discuss the issue of technical barriers to trade in the context of deep and comprehensive free trade agreement negotiations to be launched with the EU. Government representatives reported on progress in the field and responded to numerous questions from CSOs on the subject. The current roundtable also became a venue for delegates from Georgian CSOs to the Civil Society Forum (CSF) held in Brussels on 16-17 November to present summaries of results of the latter forum.

## *Key presenters at the forum*

François Massoulié, acting head of the EC Delegation to Georgia, highlighted the importance of DCFTA negotiations and, in particular, the necessary measures for Georgia to have the opportunity to trade with the EU on a level playing field. These would be the “first generation” measures for streamlining technical regulations to the international legal instruments and that of the EU. Free trade is not just about tariffs, but also involves standards, certifications, accreditations, metrology, and conformity assessment. If these issues remain unaddressed, Georgian goods will face technical barriers at the European market. The main challenge is the absence of appropriate laboratories and metrology standards, which prevents Georgian products from obtaining certificates guaranteeing they are of the quality accepted in the EU.

Ms. Tamar Khidasheli, director of GYLA, and Mr. Kakha Gogolashvili, director of GEPLAC, presented a summary of the CSF held in Brussels on 16-17 November. CSF is an institutionalized mechanism for involving civil society from of EaP Six and that of EU member countries in the process of aligning national development strategies to European integration goals. The over 220 participants of the CSF were divided into four working groups: i) democracy, good governance and stability; ii) economic integrations and convergence with EU policies; iii) environment, climate change and energy security, and iv) contacts between people. Mr. Gogolashvili participated in the economic integration group, while Ms. Khidasheli was in the democracy group. Ms. Khidasheli was elected as a country facilitator for Georgia. Both speakers became members of the steering committee of the CSF. The presenters highlighted the recommendations adopted by the respective WGs.

The recommendations adopted at the CSF are available at [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/eastern/civil\\_society/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/civil_society/index_en.htm).

Mr. David Darchiashvili, head of the parliamentary committee for European Integration, argued that more parliamentary resources should be allocated for streamlining the strategies and legislative framework to successfully implement the EaP. He also outlined the need for the parliamentary assembly of EaP 6 and EU member countries to meet on a regular basis.

Mr. Vakhtang Lejava, chief adviser to the Prime Minister of Georgia, informed the forum about the strategic policy developments for streamlining Georgia's regulatory framework for DCFTA negotiations and, in particular, eliminating TBT. The technical meeting on TBT is to be held on 26 November with the EC and corresponding materials will be provided to the public. Meanwhile, the working documents are not publicly available. Further, Mr. Lejava explained that the newly announced liberal economic policy is not in contradiction with Georgia's European integration goals. The ban on regulatory agencies includes only those which might set tariffs: regulatory bodies related to food safety and competition is not covered by the ban. According to Lejava, adopting European *acquis* for Georgia will take around 6-7 years.

Mr. Klaudijus Maniokas, GEPLAC team leader, presented an overview of European technical regulations, the concept of technical barriers to trade, and the impact and purpose for introducing some EU regulations in Georgia. Priority sectors for setting equivalent technical regulations could be agriculture, construction, and mining. Furthermore, the priority sectors should be derived from the current structure of GDP and export potentials as well as from consultations with market players and consumer organizations.

Ms. Nino Mikanadze, head of staff of the National Service for Standardization, Certification and Metrology of Georgia, outlined what quality infrastructure is necessary for concluding the DCFTA with the EU. In particular, Agreements for Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products require that equivalent quality infrastructure should be in place in the country concerned in the field of standardization, accreditation, metrology and

conformity assessments. Furthermore, the legislation should be aligned with EU *acquis* and tools for regional cooperation and technical assistance provided.

Mr. Elguja Meladze, President of Georgian Employers Association, highlighted the importance of technical regulations for Georgian SME development. He further noted the need for social dialogue and creation of business incubators.

Mr. Mikheil Khomeriki, Executive Director of Georgian Nut Exporters Union, stressed that because Georgia has no modern laboratory facilities, exporters have to test the quality of nuts in Turkey, which increases the expenses of the product. Previously, because of the requirement of a conformity certificate, low quality nuts were not exported out of Georgia. Now, after this certificate requirement was abolished at customs, the export of low quality nuts has diminished the reputation of Georgia's products.

Key representatives of the Government of Georgia (Chief adviser to the PM and senior staff of the Ministry of Economic Development) left the event before the discussion session, missing the opportunity to have a constructive dialogue with civil society.

#### *Recommendations adopted at the forum*

Civil society must mobilize to pursue the reforms and participate in adequate formulations, implementation and monitoring of policies necessary for DCFTA negotiations and in particular in the fields of technical regulations;

GoG has to make the strategic documents that outline reforms related to technical regulations available for public discussions;

EC should assist in improving the capacity of both state agencies and CSOs to formulate, implement and monitor policies aimed at concluding the DCFTA, and especially in the field of technical regulations.

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