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The European Union for Georgia

Press Release

February 24, 2017

Partnership for Budget Transparency: Civil Society Oversight of Public Spending in Georgia

Public Forum & Project Closing Conference

Tbilisi – on February 27, 2017 Europe Foundation (EPF) held a public forum and a closing conference of the EU-funded project *Partnership for Budget Transparency: Civil Society Oversight of Public Spending in Georgia*. The event took place at Rooms Hotel Tbilisi (14 M. Kostava Street).

The event aimed at bringing together different stakeholders to discuss ways in which the project has contributed to improved budget transparency and accountability in Georgia and how the different sectors should proceed toward better oversight of budget spending on both national and local levels. Apart from showcasing the project results and identifying future needs, the event also fostered international learning, with experts from Ukraine and Moldova providing information about CSO participation in PFM reforms in their respective countries.

After the welcoming addresses from Europe Foundation and the European Union Delegation in Georgia, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) representative talked about the modified format of the Public Finance Management (PFM) Reform Strategy Implementation Coordination Council, which will soon allow for broader participation of civil society organizations and, thus, contributing to improved cooperation between civil society and the Government. Georgian participants were joined by international experts – **Dmytro Boyarchuk** from Ukraine and **Tatiana Savva** from Moldova – who talked about the different ways of engaging civil society in monitoring of public spending and successful examples from Ukraine and Moldova. Based on these presentations, the participants were able to engage in informed discussion about what Georgian public and non-governmental sectors can do to better address the issue of civic participation in PFM reforms in Georgia.

As part of showcasing the achieved results, CSOs that received grants from EPF to undertake monitoring of public spending in Georgia also provided updates to the audience about their advocacy efforts within the EU-funded project. These projects were implemented by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, Association of Young Economists Georgia, Democratic Development Union of Georgia, and Welfare Foundation and covered several municipalities and issue areas.

Quote by Ketevan Vashakidze, President of Europe Foundation: "Public finance management has historically been viewed as the Government domain, which has curtailed opportunities for CSOs to make contributions to the policy-making process. At the same time, very few Georgian CSOs have

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focused on PFM-reforms, which has left the sector in need of extensive capacity-building in this field. The project implemented by Europe Foundation has supported improved budget transparency and accountability in Georgia, through targeted capacity-building of CSOs, creating opportunities for experience sharing, and advocacy for improved dialogue between public authorities and civil society. While the project has ended, Europe Foundation plans to continue its efforts in the future, as enhanced public participation in and oversight of public finance management will directly benefit Georgian citizens and taxpayers.”

The project *Partnership for Budget Transparency: Civil Society Oversight of Public Spending in Georgia* aimed at contributing to improved budget transparency and accountability in Georgia by achieving the following results: (1) strengthened CSO capacity to promote reform and improve transparency of budget spending, and (2) increased interaction between civil society and Georgian public authorities on improving public finance expenditure oversight mechanisms.

The key deliverables of the project are as follows: (i) CSO Platform *Partnership for Budget Transparency*, uniting 13 CSOs based in Tbilisi and regions, was created to enhance coordination among civil society actors and increase their participation in a dialogue on improving public finance management and budget transparency; (ii) it has been agreed with the MoF that the format of the existing PFM Reform Strategy Implementation Coordination Council will be modified, expanding CSO participation in the meetings and to table issues of concerns for discussion and follow up; (iii) the project supported capacity building of CSOs by providing series of trainings for 37 Tbilisi-based and regional CSOs on PFM oversight mechanisms, so as to encourage improved citizen engagement in the PFM reforms implementation; (iv) four monitoring grants were awarded (total amount of GEL 135,519.5) to Democratic Development Union of Georgia, Young Economists Association of Georgia, Georgian Young Lawyers Association, and Welfare Foundation; (v) four public forums were organized on budget transparency and civil society oversight of public spending, with wide participation from public sector, civil society, and international community; (vi) an assessment report on the PFM Oversight Mechanisms in Georgia was issued and provided to all stakeholders to frame discussions on this topic; (vii) a guide on PFM oversight mechanisms was developed and PSAs and radio shows were produced and aired to encourage greater awareness and CSO-GoG interaction.

The project was implemented during November 2014 - March 2017 with the total budget of EUR 277,625, with co-funding provided by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The events took place on **February 27, 09:30-14:00**, at **Rooms Hotel Tbilisi** (14, M. Kostava).

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About Europe Foundation: Europe Foundation's mission is to empower people to effect change for social justice and economic prosperity through hands-on programs, helping them to improve their communities and their own lives. To achieve its mission, EPF strives (1) to strengthen the capacity of individuals and institutions, empowering them to address pressing issues and (2) to mobilize relevant stakeholders in issue-based dialogue, through raising public awareness and creating various coalitions, platforms or working groups, so as to effect positive change. Some of EPF's flagship programs include: (1) Engage and Monitor for Change, (2) European Integration, (3) Youth Integration, (4) Social Enterprise, and (5) Open Door Grantmaking. Together, they feed into achieving the Foundation's mission and provide opportunities for Georgians to engage in social, economic, and political developments, in order to effect substantive and sustainable positive change at the local and national level. For more information about Europe Foundation please visit: www.epfound.ge

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