

Open Government Partnership – Georgia

Non-paper

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Open Government Partnership - Georgia

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) was initiated in 2011 by the US President, Mr. Barack Obama and the President of Brazil, Ms. Dilma Rouseff and was established as an initiative of 8 countries. Since then, OGP has grown from 8 countries to the [75 participating countries](#). The OGP aims at increasing transparency, accountability and efficiency of national Governments.

Georgia was amongst the first countries to declare its intention to join OGP in September 2011. In April 2012, the Government developed and launched 1st [National Action Plan of 2012-2013](#). At the end of 2013, the Open Government Georgia's Secretariat (Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia) published the [Government Self-assessment Report for the Action Plan 2012-2013](#).

OGP Georgia 2014-2015

2014-2015 Action Plan Elaboration Process

In September, 2014, the Government of Georgia approved the second National [Action Plan for Open Government Georgia 2014-2015](#) (Action Plan). The latter was developed through consultative process led by the Open Government Georgia's Secretariat (Secretariat) in the framework of the Open Government Georgia's Forum (Forum)¹ - regular coordination mechanism of Open Government Georgia on the national level (comprising of responsible agencies of the Action Plan, other interested public agencies, and local non-governmental and international organizations). Georgian citizens also participated in the process of formulating the Action Plan through Public Consultations of 2014² conducted throughout the whole country jointly by representatives of government and civil society. Therefore, the Action Plan enshrined the results of public consultations. The first draft of the NAP was presented to the Anti-Corruption Council session on April 14, 2014. The final version of the Action Plan was approved at the 6th session of the Forum and submitted to the OGP Support Unit in June, 2014. The NAP was approved by the Government of Georgia with its №557 decree of September 18th.

Civil Society Organizations represented in the Forum [rendered full support](#) to the commitments included in the first draft of the AP. Moreover, most of their additional recommendations presented after submission of the first draft of the Action Plan to the OGP support unit were taken into consideration and reflected as new commitments of the Action Plan.

Open Government Georgia's Forum

The Forum is a permanent coordination mechanism for Open Government Georgia at the national level, comprised of local non-governmental organizations, international partners, public agencies, and academia. The forum's Terms of Reference (TOR), which prescribes detailed functions and procedures related to the forum's work, were prepared by the Secretariat and discussed and adopted by the government agencies and civil society responsible for the Action Plan 2014-2015. The forum ensures that government and civil society cooperation is comprehensive and not fragmented.

To resemble the OGP governance model, the forum has two chairs – one representing the government and the other representing civil society - both elected by the forum for the Action Plan implementation cycle. The forum is

¹ In total, 4 regular and 2 ad hoc sessions of the Forum, 2 roundtable discussions along with several bilateral meetings and intense consultations between the OGP Secretariat, responsible agencies and civil society were dedicated to the elaboration of the Action Plan.

² With the aim to increase public awareness about Open Government Georgia and to ensure wide public involvement in the Action Plan elaboration process, the Forum conducted 19 meetings in 15 cities throughout Georgia in the framework of the **Open Government Georgia's Public Consultations of 2014**. Representatives of local governments, media, non-governmental organizations, students, academia and other interested parties were actively involved in the consultations; up to 700 people participated in the meetings.

responsible for developing proposals on issues related to OGP, supporting the Action Plan elaboration process, planning and conducting public consultations, and monitoring and assessing the Action Plan implementation. The forum is accountable to the Anti-Corruption Council of Georgia, and prepares activity reports twice a year. Calendars, as well as agenda and detailed minutes of the meetings, are available on the Ministry of Justice web-page.

The forum became a cornerstone of trust between government and civil society as it ensures co-creation of open government policies. By using the forum platform, the Secretariat has conducted public consultations across the country and translated civil society recommendations into commitments both for the second and the third NAP. Public consultations were held in 15 cities of Georgia with the support of USAID Civic Engagement Centers and Community Centers of Public Service Development Agency. Up to 800 people participated in 19 meetings conducted across the country. Target groups for public consultations included: representatives of local government, media, NGOs, political parties, students, teachers, media, professors, and other interested citizens.

The composition of the Forum is gradually increasing to better represent the responsible agencies and local and international organizations. In fact, to develop the third Action Plan the Forum increased its membership by 17 new members.

Overview of the Action Plan 2014-2015

Georgia's Action Plan of 2014-2015 comprises **27 commitments** to be implemented by **16 responsible agencies**. Commitments fully reflect OGP values and principles as articulated in OGP: transparency, accountability, citizen participation, technology and innovation.

Commitments under the Action Plan respond to the following Grand Challenges of OGP: Improving Public Services, Increasing Public Integrity, More Effectively Managing Public Resources and Creating Safer Communities.

The Grand Challenge of **Improving Public Services** comprises 9 commitments, aimed at simplified and consumer-oriented public service delivery, through direct communication with customers and feedback received from citizens, and development of e-governance system at the local level ensuring accessibility of open data.

The next 9 commitments addressing the Grand Challenge of **Increasing Public Integrity** focus on Freedom of Information reform, creation of the portal for electronic petitions, ensuring transparency of the public sector through publicizing financial reports of political parties in open formats, improving recruitment regulations in the civil service and setting up public officials' assets declaration monitoring system. Commitments related to increasing public awareness about electoral process and ensuring active involvement of civil society in the Open Government Georgia's processes through supporting the national coordination mechanism is also included. Additionally, in response to the recommendations of civil society, the Supreme Court of Georgia took the commitment to collect and proactively disclose surveillance data.

Seven commitments are included under the grand challenge of **More Effectively Managing Public Resources**. These aim to create an effective mechanism for informing society about budgetary processes in order to receive their input in preparing the budget and increasing transparency and efficiency of Public Finance Management System. Commitments are also oriented at increasing openness and accessibility of National Archives through creating and publishing catalogues of preserved documents. Under the third grand challenge, expansion of public e-procurement system and the creation of an electronic human resources management system are also included.

Implementing alternative channels to connect to an emergency situations center and opening up crime statistics through innovative tools, such as detailed crime mapping, address the fourth grand challenge of OGP – **Creating Safer Communities**.

Implementation of the Open Government Georgia's Action Plan of 2014-2015

Following adoption of the Action Plan Secretariat elaborated the **Action Plan Monitoring and Self-Assessment Methodology** in line with the OGP regulations and guidelines. According to the methodology, the Action Plan implementation monitoring is conducted **twice a year through an equal input from the Action Plan responsible agencies and the Forum member CSOs and international organizations**.³ The Secretariat has prepared the [mid-term self-assessment report](#) for the Action Plan implementation in October, 2015. On January 31, 2017, Secretariat published the [final self-assessment report on the Action Plan of 2014-2015](#).

OGP Steering Committee Elections 2014

In August 2014 through voting among the OGP member states Georgia was elected by partner countries as one of the members of OGP Steering Committee comprised of government and civil society the representatives that together guide the ongoing development and direction of OGP, maintaining the highest standards for the initiative and ensuring its long-term sustainability. The Minister of Justice represents the government of Georgia in the Committee.

European Region Government Point of Contact Conference

In June 2015 Government of Georgia, in its capacity of the OGP Steering Committee member hosted the first ever OGP European Region Government Point of Contact conference in Tbilisi. This conference brought together public servants from more than 20 countries, civil society leaders, OGP Working Groups and multilateral partners in order to share experiences, learn from each other and build stronger networks of government reformers. Georgia, as a host of this event shared its successful experience of establishing a permanent dialogue mechanism of the government and civil society to plan together for the benefit of our citizens.

OGP Georgia 2016

The third, 2016-2017 Action Plan Elaboration Process

[Open Government Georgia's Action Plan 2016-2017](#) was elaborated by the Secretariat in close collaboration with civil society, business sector and international organizations in the framework of the Forum. The Secretariat launched its working process in collaboration with the Forum member public agencies, nongovernmental and international organizations. The latter submitted the proposals and ideas on the future commitments to the Secretariat that, in their opinion, should have become part of the new Action Plan. Additionally, the Secretariat held individual meetings with the agencies not previously engaged in the activities of the Open Government Georgia.

As a result, the Secretariat obtained a long list of suggested commitments submitted by the current and potential Forum members.

Nongovernmental and international organizations have also submitted their recommendations to the Secretariat. Their ideas have been reflected in the Action Plan in the form of commitments. The USAID project Good Governance Initiative Georgia (GGI) took an active part and supported the Secretariat in the consultation process. After the consultation meetings, the GGI project submitted recommendations to the Secretariat which were later reflected in the Action Part.

Three Forum meetings were dedicated to the development of the third Action Plan, of which one was a Roundtable. Individual meetings and intensive consultations were also arranged between the Secretariat, responsible agencies and

³ The monitoring tool is to be filled out and submitted to the OGG Secretariat by the responsible agencies; as the next step, monitoring tool filled out by all responsible agencies is submitted to the Forum member CSOs and international organizations for their comments and input. Monitoring results are to be finalized by the OGG Secretariat and presented to the Forum for discussion.

civil society. The final draft of the Action Plan was discussed on June 24, 2014 at the extended meeting of the Forum and later adopted by the **government Decree N539 of December 9, 2016**.

The Forum continued its tradition to consult with wide public before adopting the Open Government Action Plan. To elaborate the third one, public consultations were held in 15 cities of Georgia with the support of USAID Civic Engagement Centers and Community Centers of Public Service Development Agency. Up to 800 people participated in 19 meetings conducted across the country. Target groups for public consultations included: representatives of local government, media, NGOs, political parties, students, teachers, professors, and other interested citizens. Local media contributed to the processes as well. Not only were they involved in consultations as participants, but they also ensured coverage of the process and disseminating the information about the possibility for citizens' engagement in the Action Plan elaboration process.

Several commitments included in the Action Plan were selected as a result of public consultations. Among them are the commitments of local self-governments regarding the participatory process for budget development, transparency of local self-governing processes and adopting the Public Service Halls to the needs of disabled people.

Overview of the Action Plan

The Action Plan consists of 24 commitments of 24 responsible agencies which are in compliance with OGP principles – **transparency, accountability, public participation, technologies and innovations for transparency and accountability**.

The commitments envisaged by the Action Plan meet all five Grand Challenges of OGP: **Improving Public Services, Increasing Public Integrity, More Effectively Managing Public Resources, Creating Safer Communities, and Increasing Corporate Accountability**.

The 3rd Action Plan distinct itself with several innovations. The number of **responsible agencies increases from 17 to 24** for the new Action Plan. Among them are agencies which had no commitments in the previous plans. The Secretariat met with each of the new agencies separately and provided them with information about the Open Government Georgia, after which they decided to join the Forum.

The themes of the Action Plan have been expanded. Since the existence of the Open Government Georgia, for the first time the Action Plan includes commitments concerning environmental protection, healthcare, competition, energy sector and consumers' rights, as well as topics connected to the penitentiary system and attorney's office. Furthermore, the new Action Plan, for the first time, reflects one of the key Challenges of the Open Government Partnership - Increasing Corporate Accountability – with its three commitments.

One more innovation of the Action Plan is **engagement of self-governments**. For the first time, the Action Plan sees the commitments of the local self-governments as a separate, independent component. As a result of the consultations, the Secretariat received an initiative from five Municipality Assemblies regarding their commitments to be included in the Action Plan.

While developing the Action Plan, the Secretariat arranged two meetings with business representatives: the American Chamber of Commerce and the International Chamber of Commerce. The meetings focused on discussing the agencies' ideas and recommendations. The next meeting, in the framework of public consultations, was arranged by the American Chamber of Commerce and the USAID program GGI, which was attended by international audit and business representatives along with the representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce.

Georgia – Co-Chair of the Open Government Partnership in 2016-2018

The activities and directions of OGP are defined by the Steering Committee, which is staffed by an equal number of elected representatives from member-states and nongovernmental organizations. In 2014, Georgia was elected as a **member of the Steering Committee** of OGP. On May 4, 2016 the Steering Committee, by the majority of votes, elected **Georgia** as a **co-chair of OGP** for a two-year term (from October 2016 to October 2018).

The status of a co-chair bears significant opportunities and responsibilities. To develop the Partnership, the government of Georgia has a number of obvious goals, including raising awareness of governments worldwide **about the activities and goals of OGP**. This will give Georgia the opportunity to share accumulated knowledge with the OGP member and non-member countries as well as facilitate the formation of collective actions among the governments in various fields. The Georgian government will especially focus on countries which, according to the Steering Committee, **need support in a particular direction**. The government will also work together with partner countries to encourage the commitments that **improve everyday life for citizens** (for example, accessibility to public services, freedom of information, etc.). Georgia will also work to **enlarge the membership of OGP**.

Georgia will become the lead chair of the Partnership once the one-year term of co-chairmanship expires.⁴

⁴ OGP was led by the Republic of South Africa till October, 2016. After a year of co-chairmanship the French Republic took the leading role, while Georgia has been elected as a new co-chair of the Partnership. Georgia will start its role as a chair of OGP after a year of co-chairmanship.