



EECMD
EASTERN EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY



ANNUAL REPORT
2020

IMPRESSUM

EECMD – Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy

2020 Report

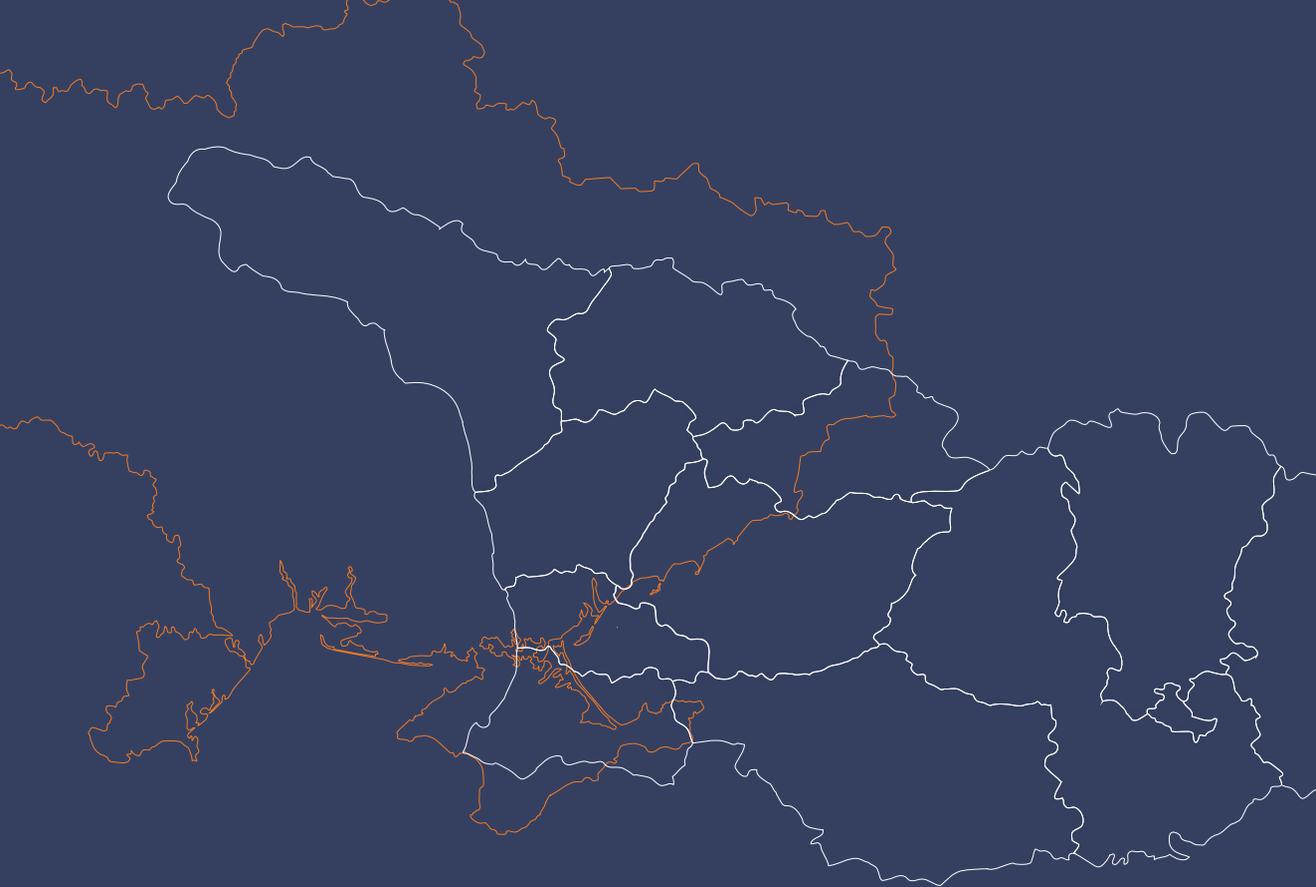
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WHO WE ARE

Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD) is an independent organization founded in 2017 and succeeding the Eastern European Neighborhood Office of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), which was established by the local parliamentary political parties in The Hague in 2000 with the aim to aid the countries that are in need of democratic reforms. Georgia was in the focus of NIMD as yet in 2009. It was then that our office was established, which some years later became an NIMD representative first in the South Caucasus and then in the Eastern European neighborhood. In 2017, having accumulated enough resources and experience, we came up with an idea to establish ourselves as

an independent organization. Similar to the previous year, the EECMD's priority this year is to improve the political environment and to foster a democratic political culture that is also envisaged within the existing projects. Currently Georgia and Ukraine are the biggest destinations for the EECMD. In addition, we run programs in Armenia, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. The organization operates 10 offices in the regions of Georgia and Ukraine, where we are elaborating on the development of democratic political parties and movements, including the strengthening of inter-party democracy, political education, modern technologies, ethnic minorities, gender equality, etc.



EECMD

EECMD'S BEARS ITS WORK UPON
FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES



WE BELIEVE THAT:

DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES NEED DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES:

Without open and transparent political parties, true democracy cannot exist; Hence, we support them to increase the involvement of different groups in political discourse. Our paramount focus lies with the employment of modern technologies in the field of political organization, gender equality and the inclusion of ethnic minorities in political processes.

DEMOCRACY NEEDS DEMOCRATS:

We work to improve the individual and collective capabilities of democratic leaders. We focus on the democratic values and knowledge and skills required for non-violent political action.

DEMOCRACY NEEDS FREE AND FAIR POLITICAL COMPETITION:

We strive to encourage political and civil groups to refine electoral legislation or regulations related to the activities of political parties so that everyone has the space and voice to express political aspirations.

DIALOGUE FOSTERS DEMOCRACY:

We believe in the power of consensus and promote multi-party dialogue to address the challenges of political transformation.

DEMOCRACY IS A NEVER-ENDING PROCESS:

We share innovative ideas and accumulated knowledge with stakeholders as to solve democratization problems and enhance their participation in political discourse.

DEAR READER,

It is my pleasure to present our annual report in which we provide comprehensive information about what we did during this difficult year.

Even though the last year was marked by the Covid-19 pandemic and post-electoral challenges, we tried to put new ideas to work in politics and help democratic political forces develop their organizational capacity and acquire new skills. We also worked with civil activists to help bring the voice of people to those with decision-making and problem-solving powers. We strived to bring about an environment and the conditions necessary for moving our countries to a new level of political and economic development.

Despite pandemic-imposed involuntary restrictions that required our team to work in isolation, we spared no effort in trying to overcome political challenges and preserve or develop democratic capabilities in all the regions and countries that our organization works in.

The pandemic created problems for the entire world, us included, but we still had an outstandingly active year with a

record number of meetings, seminars, conferences, and training courses.

I sincerely thank our team members for their devotion to our shared idea and mission and our local and international partners for their trust, cooperation, and support.

We hope the year of 2021 will be far better: locked-down societies will open up, economies will revitalize, and new opportunities for democratic breakthroughs will arise.

I hope that all of you have a safe, healthy, and prosperous year.

Sincerely,



Leven Tsutskiridze
EECMD Executive Director





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LEVAN TSUTSKIRIDZE

Executive Director

Levan Tsutskiridze has been leading EECMD since 2009. In his view, the work of the EECMD is one of the most important support that the international community or the civil sector can provide to the young democracies.



“Democracy is not just about individual elections or even a few successful reforms. Only in democratic institutions and the civic tradition of democratic politics are states built with the capacity to cope with the constant internal or international fluctuations in politics and maintain and protect common and individual freedoms. EECMD partakes in the construction of such states within its programs”.



SALOME MUKHURADZE

Senior Program Officer for the Political Party Assistance Program

Salome has been a member of the EECMD team since 2013. Her main duties include the management and implementation of political party assistance programs and ongoing projects; Salome takes care of establishing and developing effective contacts with EECMD’s strategic partners (political parties, civil society groups, international organizations, etc.); As part of the program, she conducts seminars, visits, and bilateral or multilateral meetings between political parties, international organizations, and other stakeholders. Salome’s work experience is enriched in parallel with the development of EECMD.

She values the tenets that our organization serves and believes that the future of the country is determined by a democratic and politically diverse environment.



“I believe the creation of an inclusive and diverse society will ensure the sustainable development of Georgia and the region in general. This is what EECMD’s activities are aimed at”.





MAIA MACHAVARIANI

Senior Programs Coordinator

It has been two years since Maia is a Senior Programs Coordinator at EECMD. Before that, she worked for various non-governmental organizations, first as a member of a public relations team in a USAID-funded project “Good Governance in Georgia” (G3) and later leading the South Caucasus Regional Program at NIMD.

She holds to democratic values as the most important principles and attaches a crucial meaning to developing and empowering young leaders.



“One of the major goals EECMD pursues is transformation of new generation actors into civic and political leaders at both central and regional levels. Leaders who, in addition to knowledge and experience, have a high sense of responsibility and are able to play an important role in political and societal processes in the country by way of political and civic activism”.



NINO KHITARISHVILI

Senior Program Officer for the Democracy Education Program

Nino has been a member of our team since 2017 and leads one of the main directions of the organization - the Democracy Education Program. Her main responsibilities embrace coordination of the daily activities of the Democracy Schools in five regions of Georgia; USAID-funded DRIVE Democracy project management; Communication with partners, donors and other stakeholders within the framework of the program, etc.

Nino believes that the projects implemented through the Democracy Education Program contribute not only to increasing the accountability of politicians to the electorate but also to the formation of a strong civil society, which is one of the prerequisites for democratic development.



“I am pleased that working at EECMD has qualified me to implement projects that provide education and support to young people, future leaders, or politically active individuals in the region”.



SHORENA JOEL

Finance and Administrative Officer

Shorena has been in our ranks since 2015. Her main activities are EECMD's financial structure maintenance and monitoring; Budget and procurement control; Drafting a strategic financial plan to ensure financial sustainability and more.

Democracy is an important value for her, especially today, as anyone can get a quality education and use this knowledge to develop the country.



"I try to make the maximum contribution to this process as a finance and administrative officer. My field of activity and skills are important for the due functioning of the organization and its sustainability".



NINO KOCHIASHVILI

Financial Assistant/Accountant

Nino has joined our team three years ago. Holding the degree in Economics, Nino has successfully applied many years of her experience in working with international donors in EECMD's financial sustainability. Everyone has a designated role to play in building democracy, and her role is to ensure the proper functioning of financial reporting at the organization. Nino's responsibilities include accounting, ensuring timely and transparent financial reporting of organizational costs in accordance with EECMD standards; Management of current administrative and logistical activities of the EECMD office.





TAMTA JOLOKHAVA

Democracy Education Program Assistant

Tamta has been with us since 2019 as a Democracy Education Program Assistant. She is responsible for coordinating Democracy Schools in five cities of Georgia, organization of ongoing matters within the DRIVE Democracy – Voter Awareness project, managing program’s administrative issues, etc.

Tamta believes citizens are not just passive receivers of socio-political agenda; instead, they are active co-architects of the development process and a democratic society. She is happy to have a role in citizens’ political education.



TEONA JAPOSHVILI

Political Party Program Assistant

She joined our team in 2019 as a Political Party Program Assistant. Tamta coordinates projects within the abovementioned Program and is responsible for the management of ongoing administrative and logistic matters of the program.

Teona believes that, by supporting political parties and especially newly-founded parties and movements, EECMD is playing an important role in facilitating Georgia’s multi-party system and democratic processes. In her role, she makes her own contribution to developing a political culture in the country.



TAMAR MAMEISHVILI

Coordinator of Batumi Democracy School

Before joining the EECMD, Tamar worked in various positions at NGOs and the media. She holds a Master Degree in Journalism and Media Management from the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA). Her professional interests lay in covering News, theories of media management and public opinion surveys. Tamar Mameishvili's job at Democracy School of Batumi is to plan the work process properly and organize meetings and discussions. She also maintains the partnership network with the local stakeholders of the Democracy School, regional offices of various political parties, and non-governmental and media organizations in the Adjara region. She believes that the involvement of the regions is important for the country's democratic development.



“The development and democratization of the country cannot be centralized. The role of people living in the regions, who are insufficiently involved in decision-making, should be taken into account. We need to use their resources for good and give them the feeling that their inclusion in the ongoing processes is paramount for the proper development of the country”.



ZAZA CHIPASHVILI

Coordinator of Gori Democracy School

Prior to joining the EECMD, Zaza worked as a coordinator of various social and humanitarian projects at the local NGO – Charity Humanitarian Centre “ABKHAZETI” (CHCA). Through his carrier, he was employed in different public institutions – held the position of the Head of Social Service Regional Agency and Head of Gori Municipality Social Department.

Coordinating the School of Democracy, as well as the membership of the EECMD team, is a great responsibility for him. “Along with high responsibility, it is a great pleasure to be a member of the team whose main motto is Democracy Needs Democrats”.

To achieve this goal, he interacts almost daily with members of various fields or societies, civil society activists, representatives of political parties, public servants and employees, journalists, students, teachers - for whom democratic values are important. Zaza coordinates and organizes the meetings and seminars that provide additional knowledge in this respect.





NIKOLUZ SHARVASHIDZE

Coordinator of Telavi Democracy School

Before joining EECMD, Nikoloz was working for Telavi Division of National Statistics Office of Georgia with Millennium Challenge Georgia Impact Evaluation Project. He used to work for Youth Affairs Department of Local Government of Telavi Municipality. Nikoloz Sharvashidze has an experience of working with government institutions, as well as at various international projects. He has been coordinating the Telavi Democracy School since 2017.

His life principle is inspired by Tocqueville's words "... I do not know if, all in all, that is not the greatest advantage of democratic government, and I praise it much more because of what it causes to be done that for what it does". It is this principle that guides the Telavi Democracy School, whose coordinator is Nikoloz. The training sessions, meetings, and discussions held here serve to empower people to believe in their own abilities and that their activism can yield positive change in the region and the country.



KETI BIBILEISHVILI

Coordinator of Kutaisi Democracy School

Before joining the Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy in 2019, Kate worked for many International Non-Governmental Organizations such as Management System International (USAID) (2011-2014); East West Management Institute (USAD) (2015-2018); Civic Engagement Centre/Kutaisi (2018), ODIHR/OSCE Election Observation Mission Georgia Presidential Election (2018) with Long Term Observers etc.

Kutaisi Democracy School coordinates people of different political beliefs and aspirations to gather in one space and talk about democracy, Western values, development of the country and future vision, mutual respect and acceptance of different opinions.



"I have learned from my many years of experience in the humanitarian field that when a person needs help, humanity helps him/ her. These basic democratic principles that we consider and share are important in any situation".



SOSO TORDIA

Logistics and Transport Assistant

Soso is accountable for the safe movement of our team members. Before joining the EECMD, during 2003-2014 years, he worked for the Welfare Foundation in the capacity of Logistics Manager. Prior to that, he worked as a Loan Officer at the NGO “Union for Trust”. Soso further worked for various national and international organizations in the capacity of an administrative assistant and driver-logistician. Soso Tordia graduated from Sokhumi Subtropical Enterprise University with the major in Mechanical Engineering.



OKSANA LESYK

Kyiv Program Coordinator

Before joining EECMD, Oksana worked as a senior manager in Public Administration Reform Project of Ukraine. She also was part of the Ukrainian Infrastructure Ministry’s reform support team. Oksana believes a job one does must match their life values and even more so when their work can affect the society.



“EECMD’s Democracy Schools are sort of a bridge between active citizens and political structures; they are a platform uniting people with shared vision and values. I believe the team that works for implanting democratic values every day will bring real changes to the country”.





OLEKSIY ROGOVYK

Coordinator of EECMD School in Lviv

Oleksiy has been supervising the Lviv Democracy School since November 2019. His expertise is rich with experience in journalism. Before he joined the EECMD Oleksiy worked as a regional analyst and journalist-investigator of the CHESNO public movement in Lviv region, Coordinator of the Lviv Anti-Corruption Forum Initiative (2016-2019), Expert in the UPLAN network of the Centre for Political and Legal Reforms, Expert of the Advocacy Working Group of Coalition to Protect Civil Society in Ukraine and the Head of the Free Voice Information Analysis Centre (2014). Global Ukraine News Project Coordinator (2015-2016) and the President of NGO “Young Diplomacy Centre” (2013-2014).

Oleksiy considers the Democracy Schools to be important centers of civic education and contemplates that they will play a serious role in the country’s future development.



“The success of the country hinges on the success of its politicians, civil society activists, journalists and the youth. That is why the role of non-formal education is crucial for Ukraine’s future. Democracy Schools are creating a new generation of leaders that will move the country towards the Western standards”.



YULIYA TIMCHUK

Coordinator of EECMD School in Odessa

Yuliia joined the EECMD team in 2018. Prior to that, she worked for various international organizations (Project assistant in UNHCR project in Odessa Oblast; project coordinator in the IOM project for building capacity and cohesion among IDP and local population in Odessa and Mykolaiv regions). Since 2015, member of the Youth Council at the Odessa City Mayor, the chairman of the commission on innovation and project activity. Her duties include organizing and coordinating study sessions, meetings, and discussions at the Odessa Democracy School; She also maintains partnerships with regional offices of Ukrainian political parties working in Odessa, non-governmental and media organizations and stakeholders.

In her view, democracy starts with the ordinary citizen and it is important that each member of the society realizes this.



“I am a young woman who can get an education, work, participate in the public life of my city and country. Thanks to Democracy and the Democrats who brought it all to us”.



ANATOLY MISHIN

Democracy School of Poltava
Coordinator

Before joining our team, Anatoly worked at the Ukrainian Public Broadcaster's Poltava Office at various positions, including as a chief editor for the channel. He had also been a reporter for BBC's Ukrainian service in Poltava region.

Anatoly has a master's degree in journalism and history from Korelenko Pedagogical University of Poltava. He believes in the importance of transposing the values our organization serves in real life.



VALERIA DIDKOVSKA

Coordinator of EECMD Democracy
School in Dnipro

Valeria has been a member of the EECMD since September 2019. The Democracy School in Dnipro is one of five schools operating in Ukraine that are one of the leading forces in democratic process in the country. Previously she worked as a press-at-ache for political parties and communication adviser at Program U-Lead with Europe, supporting administration reform in Ukraine. She actively participates in projects related to women's equality, media freedom and civil society development initiatives. She believes that the right values, critical thinking and standing next to each other are highly important for civil society. Therefore, in addition to discussions and seminars in various fields, Valeriia tries to draw the attention of her audience in the Democracy School to these key issues.



“Critical thinking is decisive in the face of global crises and challenges. This is one of the foundations of a stable democracy and the main focus of the work of the democracy schools. The use of reliable sources, situation analysis and the ability to draw correct conclusions help to quickly adapt to the new environment”.



POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Parliamentary elections were one of major focuses for the Political Party Assistance Program in 2020. EECMD has spent years trying to help political parties present their views and perspectives to the people more clearly. We have been using a variety of platforms to make it easier for voters to understand election issues and political platforms and to facilitate a dialogue between parties and voters so that politicians could see current problems and challenges more plainly. This year, the process was even more difficult because of the pandemic, which made it even more important for us to accomplish our objectives. In this new reality, we were forced to change the format, but never our priorities.

One of our first tasks was to keep voters informed so that they could make educated decisions before casting their votes in ballot boxes. Therefore, we created our information website www.partiebi.ge, which we successfully managed to keep updated in spite of numerous difficulties. The website was created in 2012 with the support of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia and since then has been regularly publishing Georgian political parties' pre-election perspectives on issues of importance to the country. The aim of the project is to help political parties present clear, concrete, and result-oriented pre-election viewpoints to citizens. All information on the website is available in Georgian, English, Armenian, and Azerbaijani. We also built ease of

SALOME MUKHURADZE

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

"2020 was a very difficult year both for our country and the entire world. We had to work in extremely difficult conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic meant that we could not do things the way we had been doing before. Events and meetings, individual and in-person, were restricted. We had to go online. Still, we managed to successfully move our activities to a digital format and ended up conducting even more events and projects than we had initially planned. From this perspective, 2020 turned out to be an impressive year for our organization".





access tools into the website. In particular, the platform offers an audio version of every single election platform available on the website. We have been actively using this resource for years, but it proved to be especially important during the pandemic. The webpage helped many people satisfy their information needs in the pre-election period.

Another innovation, which we implemented in association with our partner organizations, was the **Electoral Compass** project. This project aimed to provide voters with comprehensive information on the positions held by political parties on various issues. This tool acted as a guide for voters to find their way amid the multitude of political parties and perspectives. Using this tool, voters were able to decide which party best suited their political taste. This project was made possible through the joint efforts of the Eastern European Center for Multiparty Democracy, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, and the International Republican Institute.

Our webpage www.partiebi.ge and political parties' pre-election platforms were used as reference materials for producing a research report entitled, "**Overview of Pre-election Platforms for the 2020 Parliamentary Elections,**" which was published after the parliamentary elections. Bakur Kvashilava, author of the report, offered an analysis of platforms of political parties that agreed to publicly share their priorities with citizens.

The crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic and response became another important area we worked on with our partner parties and organizations. As part of the project – "**Enhancing Institutional and Electoral Capacities of Democratic Political Parties in Georgia**" we created **anti-Covid-19 crisis response plans** alongside five political parties: Aleko Elisashvili - Citizens, Lelo for Georgia, For Justice, Free Democrats, and the Georgian Republican Party. The participants worked out specific measures for combating the pandemic in the fields of healthcare, the economy, education, social security, agriculture, tourism, and foreign threats. As a result, five anti-crisis plans were produced in Georgian and English, and we presented these plans to residents of five cities in



Georgia: Batumi, Kutaisi, Tbilisi, Gori, and Telavi. This project was made possible with the support of the Danish Institute for Political Parties and Democracy.

EECMD has been actively engaged in empowering political parties for years – an activity it continued in 2020 as well. Last year, as part of the **“Democracy Needs Democrats – Supporting Political Parties and Movements through Strategic Planning”** project, we cooperated with five political organizations: The Development Movement, Citizens, Shame Movement, Lelo for Georgia’s Women’s Council, and for Justice. One of the project’s primary goals was to assist political parties and movements with organizational strengthening and policy development. To achieve this goal, we used a strategic planning methodology. This was our first time moving this project into the online world, and we did so quite successfully: partner parties cooperated with us and presented high-quality final products. The project was supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Women’s Political Empowerment has always been one of our organization’s top priorities, and over the years we have

worked hard to implement several important initiatives and activities in this area. Last year was no exception, and we held a multi-party meeting of women politicians and election candidates as part of our Regional Engagement to Advance the Creation of Democracy Hubs within the REACH for Democracy project. The meeting, entitled **“Pre-election Platforms and the Electoral Environment,”** was designed to facilitate dialogue among women candidates, present their 2020 pre-election platforms, and assess the existing pre-election environment. Women leaders from six political parties took part in the meeting, which discussed the importance of multi-party dialogue to country’s democratic development and the role of women in that process.

In 2020, we also completed work on a research paper entitled, **“Rational and Irrational Aspects of Women Voters’ Electoral Behavior”** and held an online presentation of the research findings in a multi-party dialogue format.

These topics informed a cycle of training courses that we organized for members of various political parties and civil society organizations. At four meetings



with participants from Batumi, Kutaisi, Gori and Tbilisi, we discussed election systems, election standards, and women's participation in politics. The workshops were aimed at raising awareness of election systems among political party representatives and civic activists and developing a common vision. In addition to the election system and related topics, we discussed issues related to women's representation in Georgia's current political agenda.

As part of this project, we published an important collection of papers on Georgian political reality entitled **The Political Landscape of Georgia, Second Edition**, which is the continuation of Gia Nodia and Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach's 2006 volume, *The Political landscape of Georgia: Political Parties' Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives*. Academic articles in the collection discuss the country's political landscape, the role of parties and their importance in forming that landscape, election systems and their impact on the development of political parties, the participation of women and minorities in political processes, and other pertinent issues. The lack of academic resources on Georgia's current political environment makes this volume both necessary and timely. We hope this important Georgian-English publication will help readers interested in contemporary political science and Georgia's recent history by providing them with valuable information for analysis and assessment.

The book served as the basis for a short documentary titled, "The Political Landscape of Georgia" which the authors of the collection prepared at our organization's request. The film explores the process of forming political parties in

Georgia's post-independence period and the presently existing status quo. We also arranged a multi-party online presentation of the book and documentary and received positive feedback from the attendees.

As part of our REACH for Democracy project, we also conducted a training course in mediation in Moldova in association with Result Mediation. The training course was designed for our alumni in Moldova's political parties, public bodies, and civil society. Led by experienced mediators, the course was made up of both theoretical and practical components. In addition to providing professional development in mediation skills, one course aim was to bring the participants together and have them share their experiences with each other. This was a second time that our organization had conducted such a training course. The first one was held in Bishkek for Kyrgyz alumni in 2019. We also held an online meeting for Moldovan and Kyrgyz alumni, which resulted in the development of action plans for both countries' multi-political party dialogue platform.

To include a variety of social groups and bring political parties' messages to as many people as possible, we organized several pre-election meetings between voters and politicians: Thirteen pre-election meetings were held in Tbilisi and Georgia's regions as part of the **"Supporting and Enhancing Democratic Political Culture in the Pre-Electoral Period"** project. During the meetings, political party representatives explained their pre-election platforms and party perspectives to local communities. The meetings were preceded by **the preparation of local policy interest documents**, which described local interests, problems, and potential development projects in each





specific region identified through focus groups. The project was implemented with the support of the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF).

To sum up the 2020 parliamentary election results and discuss the complex post-electoral situation in the country, we conducted an online conference entitled, **“Overcoming the crisis – Towards a 21st Century Election Administration: A Vision and Principles for a Reform Package”**. The aim of the conference was to discuss important issues such as how to defuse the polarized political environment in the face

of the country’s current crisis, how to reach a broad public consensus, and how to deliver adequate information to the public. Significant time was allotted to discuss the role of international media in these processes and how reforms and political decisions can help avoid similar crises and regulate political processes in the future. Conference participants discussed specific ways to overcome society’s polarization, critically assessed the opposition’s role in ongoing events, and attempted to present long-term views of the country’s future development.

SALOME MUKHURADZE

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

“2020 has clearly shown that we were able to use digital technologies effectively in our work: online platforms save both time and financial resources, so we should be actively working in that direction.

We’ll do more with these platforms in 2021. No matter how things develop, no matter if isolation will be required or not, there is no doubt that online platforms are the future of business relations – a future that has already set in”.



DEMOCRACY EDUCATION PROGRAM

As was the case with our Political Party Assistance Program, it was also important for the Democracy Education Program to complete planned projects effectively and in a timely manner in spite of pandemic-related difficulties. By joining efforts with our partners and using online platforms, we were able to accomplish all these goals. Over the course of the year, we held numerous meetings and discussions in digital format.

Democracy Schools were an especially important part of the project “**Improving democratic resilience in Georgia: democracy education and activism**”. Over the past ten years, they have become a sort of business card for our organization. The curriculum was initially based on face-to-face lectures, but due to the pandemic, we moved the entire process to an online format.

Democracy Schools are a key source of informal education and bring together advanced, progress-minded young people across Georgia who believe in the necessity of having a robust civil society and making democratic changes in the country. They feel strongly that the knowledge they acquire at Democracy Schools will help them achieve these goals. After completing their studies at Democracy Schools, our graduates create a kind of informal mutual-assistance network. Our organization, for its part, provides them new opportunities by involving them in various projects. Our alumni are invited to all of our important meetings and events. To date, EECMD’s network of Democracy Schools is operational in Georgia’s five regions with a total of 764 alumni.

NINO KHITARISHVILI

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, DEMOCRACY EDUCATION PROGRAM:

“Our efforts in 2020 were devoted to supporting our Democracy Schools. For the last ten years, as many as 800 students have graduated from schools within the project. Maintaining communication with our alumni, even though it requires a great deal of energy and resources, is immensely important to us: Democracy School graduates are a necessary force for improving our country’s democratic processes. Therefore, we tried to be active in that area: alongside graduates from all five of our schools, we developed action plans to reinforce





democracy in the regions and planned activities to counter anti-democratic narratives.

In 2021, the tenth anniversary of the start of our operations, we will hold a joint conference in which Democracy School alumni of all generations will participate. Together, we will discuss future plans and regional problems and devise solutions to those problems through projects and initiatives”.

In 2020, four cohorts of students graduated from a five-month training module offered by Democracy Schools. In February, we issued graduation certificates to students from Democracy Schools in Tbilisi and Telavi. In August, another cohort completed the course in the Gori and Batumi Democracy Schools. Meeting durations were shortened because of the pandemic, but the content of the courses remained unchanged. In the course, students received multi-faceted

knowledge about a variety of topics such as human rights, politics, the challenges of modern democracy, economics, urban development, religion, and gender issues. They didn't just learn about the abstract concepts of democracy – they also learned to apply analytic skills to the real issues facing democracies today.

In addition to academic work, **our students demonstrated high civic responsibility during the pandemic by actively engaging in volunteer work.** They provided help to unprotected and vulnerable groups such as elderly citizens living alone and people with disabilities. The pandemic changed our plans significantly, and we had to quickly adjust to the new reality. It was especially important to provide the population with accurate information during the early stages of the virus' spread. We believed people needed to know how the government was dealing with the newly-emerged challenges so that they could regain their feeling of safety.

During the initial stage of coronavirus outbreak, we planned online meetings

with representatives of local authorities in the regions to try to fill the information gap that existed in remote places. **Eight information meetings were conducted for residents of five cities.** In these meetings, attendees received information about the epidemiological situation in the country as well as government-imposed restrictions and measures taken to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Along with alumni of Democracy Schools and local civil society organizations, Maaïke van Koldam, Ambassador of the Netherlands, attended the meetings.

Our greatest challenge in 2020 was the parliamentary election. Consequently, as part of our Democracy Education Program, we planned **a series of meetings with political party representatives and electoral candidates from single-member constituencies at Democracy Schools** to explain their election platforms and perspectives to voters.

The meetings were held in Tbilisi, Telavi, Gori, Kutaisi and Batumi – cities where both parliamentary and local legislative elections were to be conducted. In Kutaisi, a mayoral election took place as well. To better explain their visions and capabilities, representatives of political parties and candidates from single-member constituencies presented their party platforms to the audience face-to-face. They answered voters' questions and participated in discussions about specific issues voters were interested in.

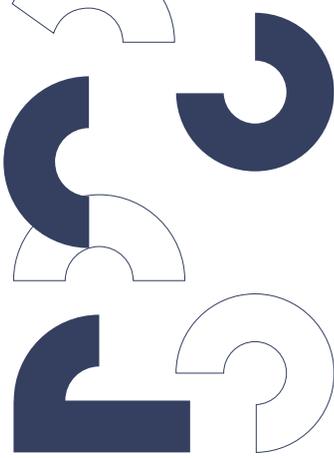
At one meeting in Tbilisi, six female electoral candidates took part. In addition to election issues, there was a special emphasis on women's active involvement in political processes, their roles, and experiences. We conducted a total of sixteen meetings

in which candidates from almost all political parties running in the election, from the ruling party to opposition ones, participated. The project was supported by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia.

As part of the same project, we also conducted a joint workshop for Democracy School graduates aimed at strengthening the Democracy School alumni network, increasing their engagement in political life, and galvanizing the fight against anti-democratic narratives. Twenty graduates from all five cities took part. Having discussed a common strategy and future activities, they worked out five independent action plans – one for each city – which will serve as roadmaps for alumni and guide their activities in the coming years.

Another important goal in 2020 was to improve the connection between political groups and citizens through mutual discussion and dialogue and to empower voters. As part of **the DRIVE Democracy: Developing Regional Information and Voter Empowerment for Democracy project**, which operates with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and aims to raise citizens' awareness engagement in the election process, our beneficiaries produced **Regional Development Roadmaps, or Citizens' Vision Documents.** This was a first attempt at giving citizens a direct say, and we embraced this important opportunity. While politicians dominated their meetings with alumni of Democracy Schools, it was the other way around this time: political party representatives were there to listen to citizens from different regions and hear their concerns.





NINO KHITARISHVILI

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, DEMOCRACY EDUCATION PROGRAM:

“Project participants drafted important documents on various issues based on local needs. The process was preceded by a series of research and working meetings. Finally, they presented citizens’ views on individual topics such as the accessibility of vocational education for people with disabilities, improving the investment environment, and facilitating local enterprises in Telavi in Kakheti, and urban issues and the preservation of cultural heritage in Batumi, where this a matter of special concern”.



The meetings were held in political dialogue format. Meeting participants offered representatives of local governments and political parties their own position papers and recommendations. Members of local authorities and political parties promised to incorporate citizens’ issues and proposals in their action plans. Nine such meetings were held in five of Georgia’s main cities: Tbilisi, Gori, Telavi, Kutaisi, and Batumi.

The meetings were preceded by a several months-long intensive teaching course

where course participants studied issues that interested them. They used the knowledge that they gained during the course to organize workshops, conduct small-scale research, and identify regional problems. As a result, **they produced eight regional development roadmap documents**. They also proposed solutions to the problems they identified.

Another important resource we prepared with USAID’s financial assistance is **Consul, an innovative citizen engagement software**. Consul is a digital platform that





helps citizens get involved in democratic processes and take part in active dialogue with society and politicians. The platform allows voters to become part of active social, economic, and political efforts and express their views on issues they think matter.

During the pandemic when people were not able to interact with the outside world and each other normally, this proved to be of special value. Consul allows citizens registered on the platform to hold open debates, raise initiatives, vote for projects, devise petitions on issues they are concerned with, and submit them to local government representatives. The openness of the platform also allows members of local government bodies to get acquainted with citizens' concerns, hear their views, and provide assistance as required. As part of the DRIVE Democracy project, the Consul platform was translated into the Georgian language and launched in five Georgian cities. We plan to expand the features of this platform and make them even more versatile in the future.

As part of our Democracy Education Program, we work closely with experts in

various areas and bring their views and perspectives to the public. We prepared **a series of publications on social, economic, healthcare, urban, and self-government issues** in 2020 together with a group of experts. In total, we published five policy documents which discuss baseline situations in various sectors and the authors' perspectives on possible solutions.

One of the activities EECMD focuses on is facilitating and reinforcing civic activism in Georgia's regions. Beneficiaries should be able to independently raise issues they regard as a matter of concern and to devise solutions. **To this end, we held two small grant competitions. The idea was to support innovative ideas on strengthening local democracy through civic engagement.**

The competitions resulted in five winning projects last year:

- 1) An Informed Citizen = An Informed Choice!** – a project authored by a group from Kutaisi aimed at developing electoral culture among the local population
- 2) Love to Ride – Batumi** – a project produced by a group from Batumi to promote ecological transport and promote cycling and safety
- 3) A Letter to Consul** – a project from the Telavi group that serves to increase citizen engagement in local self-government issues through the use of the Consul electronic platform
- 4) Exploring Budget Priorities in the Municipality of Gori** – a project designed by a group from Gori to support the improvement of the democratic process in the region and citizen participation in the governance of their municipality





5) Youth Involvement in Local Government Elections – a project devised by a group from Tbilisi that serves to increase young people’s participation in elections by raising their election awareness

As part of the DRIVE Democracy project, we announced admissions to all five Democracy Schools in 2020. In addition to the standard training course, the new cohort of students will focus on 2021 local

government elections. Students will prepare roadmaps, make recommendations, and meet with mayoral candidates and parties taking part in local elections to discuss and resolve specific concerns that they identified in documents and meeting agendas.

The current situation indicates that 2021 will be full of challenges, but we hope the experience we gained in 2020 will help us overcome those challenges.

NINO KHITARISHVILI

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER, DEMOCRACY EDUCATION PROGRAM:

We’ve acquired enough experience over the last year to work effectively in any situation. If restrictions are lifted, subject to any applicable healthcare regulations, we will conduct a joint conference with our alumni in the summer. We will also organize a citizens’ congress as part of the DRIVE Democracy project and other events. If Covid-19 does not go away, we will search for alternative means to hold these events. The pandemic cannot stop our project, although face-to-face communication and on-site events do have a special allure. We hope to work in a physical environment in 2021”.





EECMD IN UKRAINE

As was the case in Georgia, the pandemic seriously affected EECMD's activities in Ukraine. As the country was awaiting local elections, we had to quickly rearrange our plans and adjust our projects to suit the new reality on the ground. It was important to make sure that the Democracy Schools did not stop functioning. Despite challenges, we successfully met our objectives and were able to complete several important initiatives.

First, EECMD completed its five-year Dialogue for Stability program. Through this program, our organization created a stronghold in the country in the form of political parties and civil society, gained a reputation as a credible supporter of democracy, and emerged as a leading player in this area in Ukraine. The five-year

program was supported by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD).

One of the greatest successes of EECMD's Ukrainian program has been the founding and operation of Democracy Schools in Kyiv, Odessa, Lviv, Poltava and Dnipro. The aim of the schools is to establish a strong network of local civil activists and young leaders in the region and to improve their democracy competencies and skills.

For the five years of their existence, the five Democracy Schools have trained 350 students.

With the help of a group of distinguished experts and a carefully-prepared training module, we helped shape young and promising leaders who will have their say in Ukraine's political life in the future. **The**



five-month training program focuses on democratic policy and governance, political culture, election systems, political activism, and anti-corruption policies. Special attention is paid to corruption, which is an acute problem in the country.

Another important achievement was the launching of a voter information webpage, www.partiyi.org, before the 2019 parliamentary election. The project was implemented with the support of the Ukrainian office of NIMD and was designed to facilitate informed discussion of issues of importance to Ukrainian society. With the help of the www.partiyi.org webpage, citizens were able compare political parties' perspectives on individual issues and to view their full platforms – something they needed to make educated decisions for themselves.

Another area the program focuses on is **actively supporting women leaders and developing their capabilities** in areas such as political fundraising and effective election campaign planning. These issues

are a real concern for the local population and hamper women's involvement in the political process. Participants were able to receive information on how to plan an election campaign, raise funds for the campaign, manage a campaign office, and other matters of interest. EECMD attaches special importance to women's empowerment and plans to continue supporting the process in Ukraine in the future.

OKSANA LESYK,
PROGRAM COORDINATOR IN
UKRAINE



*“Like the rest of the world, Ukraine faced many difficulties in 2021. The pandemic crisis made a major impact on our activities. Against the backdrop of restrictions and quarantine regulations imposed by the Ukrainian government, **we moved our***



training courses at all five Democracy Schools to an online format. We developed a special plan to create digital versions of existing programs, current activities, and scheduled events. Because of the situation in the country, these activities will continue online next year as well, and so we will try to further develop our digital platforms”.

2020 started with the **first online graduation ceremony** for students of EECMD’s four Democracy Schools in Ukraine for the academic year 2019-2020. Seventy-five students from Ukraine’s four regions (Odessa, Dnipro, Lviv and Poltava) participated in the ceremony.

To make sure that activities were conducted on time, **we developed an online training courses.** This involved updating the training programs, making changes in the course duration, using the Moodle digital platform in Ukrainian, training the trainers and facilitators in the peculiarities of online instruction, and other arrangements.

To help Democracy School participants feel more involved and motivated, **we created an additional online platform for weekly online discussions** that focused on important issues happening in Ukraine such as the Covid-19 crisis, the impact of the pandemic on human rights, violence against women, existing economic conditions in the country, and

the 2020 local elections. Democracy School alumni, political parties, civil society representatives and activists (more than 400 participants in total) actively took part in these discussions.

In 2020, 130 young leaders completed a training course offered by the Democracy Schools in Ukraine. In addition, a majority of our students enrolled in various democracy development projects in areas ranging from women’s empowerment in politics to training courses on democracy for school-age students in order for them to participate in the 2020 local elections.

2020 was an election year in both Ukraine and Georgia and a benchmark in terms of democracy and the formation of a new political landscape. We linked program activities in Georgia and Ukraine through online panel discussions in the pre-election period. One such event was an online conference called, “Assessing the Pre-Election Political Environment in Georgia and Ukraine”. At the online conference, leading experts from both countries discussed the pre-election environment in Ukraine and Georgia, the main challenges, general political background, and potential solutions to the concerns that they identified.

To reduce Covid-19 risks and improve EECMD’s digital capabilities, **we translated the Consul digital platform, into Ukrainian.** This will increase citizens’ involvement in political dialogue to an even greater extent and simplify the submission of citizen proposals to authorities. We plan to further improve platform features in the future and tailor it to local needs.





We eventually managed to overcome all the difficulties brought about by the 2020 pandemic to our activities in Ukraine. In the process, we devised flexible platforms tailored to modern challenges that will make our organization's work in the region even more effective.

With our partners' support, we will implement a number of new projects in the future to enhance democratic processes in the country and engage with local civil society.

MAIA MACHAVARIANI
EECMD SENIOR PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

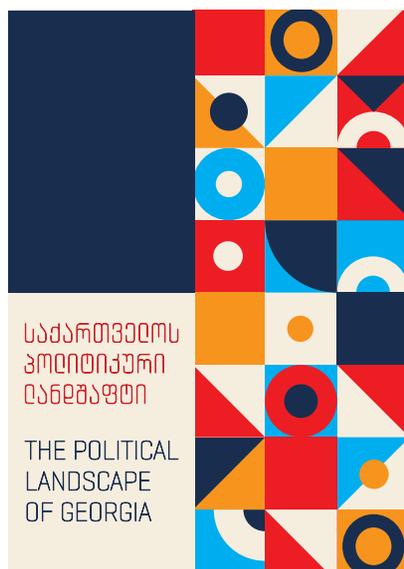
"In the immediate future, we will start our new Strengthening Democratic Political Culture in Ukraine project, which is supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Ukraine. The primary goal of the project will be to reinforce democratic political culture in the country's five regions (Kyiv, Odessa, Lviv, Poltava, Dnipro) by enhancing the young leaders network of Democracy School graduates. This will facilitate democratic reforms in the fields of local governance and combating corruption and increase local authorities' accountability and transparency at the regional level. In addition, our Democracy Schools in Kyiv, Lviv and Odessa will continue their activities, whether online or in a physical environment, to further contribute to the development of democratic processes in the country".



EECMD PUBLICATIONS

Despite pandemic-engendered difficulties, 2020 was a fruitful year in terms of publications. We prepared and published important research projects that not only offered interesting insights into various issues but allowed readers to form new conclusions on their own. These may also serve as auxiliary references for individuals with professional interests in politics, economics, and gender issues.





THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF GEORGIA; SECOND EDITION

By Bakur Kvashilava, Zviad Barkaia,
Nino Gogoladze, Irakli Kobalia, and Ivane
Chkhikvadze

Georgia's Political Landscape, Second Edition is the continuation of a 2006 book by Gia Nodia and Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach entitled, *The Political Landscape of Georgia: Political Parties' Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives*. The compilation includes contributions on a variety of topics. Authors discuss the political climate in Georgia over last 15 years, election systems and their impact on the development of political parties, political parties' platforms, women's and minorities' participation in political parties, and other pertinent issues.



“RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL ASPECTS OF WOMEN VOTERS' ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR”

By Tamar Bagratia

Citizens' electoral behavior from a gender perspective has never been comprehensively explored in Georgia. Only a few individual sociological surveys have ever been undertaken. This research is designed to fill that gap and help address these issues in a better way by providing political parties and other stakeholders insight into other countries' experiences with the peculiarities of women's electoral behavior.



“OVERVIEW OF PRE-ELECTION PLATFORMS FOR THE 2020 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS”

By Bakur Kvashilava

This document aims at providing the reader with a comparative analysis of the platforms and outlooks of political parties that agreed to take part in EECMD’s now traditional *partiebi*.ge project. It discusses the election platforms of twelve political parties and focuses on their perspectives and approaches to major challenges that exist in the country. The parties themselves provided this information to us by completing a special questionnaire. The research paper allows the reader to compare the positions of different parties and politicians on individual issues, offers the author’s perspectives, and allows readers to come to their own conclusions.



“ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL POLITICAL INTERESTS”

By Sophio Chachanidze and Mariam Sakevarishvili

This document tackles topics and needs identified during group discussions in Tbilisi and the regions and reflecting matters that are the most important to these citizens. The research provides interesting material for analyzing the situation in the country in different areas such as politics, the economy, education, healthcare, human rights, and the judiciary. The document also provides a list of issues and problems considered priorities by the population and non-governmental sector.





“OVERCOMING THE CRISIS: TOWARDS A 21ST CENTURY ELECTION ADMINISTRATION VISION AND PRINCIPLES FOR A REFORM PACKAGE”

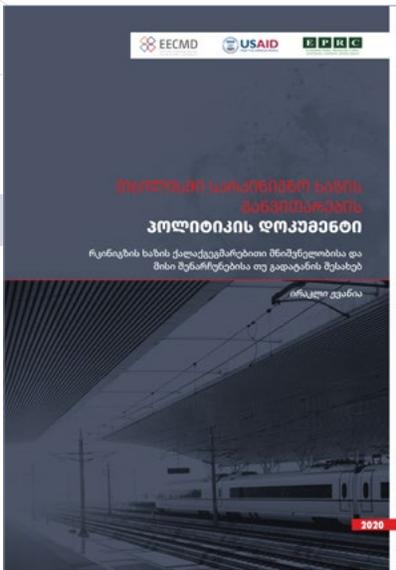
This document proposes to the public a fundamental and ambitious reform of election administration, which, if implemented, would help resolve the conflict between the opposition and the ruling party and other essential election-related issues. This would increase trust and improve the quality of administration and democracy in Georgia.



“CHALLENGES TO THE GEORGIA’S HEALTH SYSTEM ON THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL”

By Nino Mirzikashvili

The document discusses how the Covid-19 pandemic progressed through 2020, from the beginning to the present day. It covers its history, the phases of the virus’s spread, individual properties of the virus in specific environments, the methods applied by both Georgia and other countries to contain the virus, the progress of virus management and outcomes in Tbilisi and the regions, and the importance of raising public awareness and informing citizens about containing the virus. It also discusses the role and functions of the state, healthcare structures, and citizens in managing the virus.



“DEVELOPMENT OF THE TBILISI RAILWAY LINE; THE IMPORTANCE OF RAIL LINE FOR URBAN PLANNING: PRESERVE OR RELOCATE”

By Irakli Zhvania

The goal of the research is to assess approaches to the railway line of Tbilisi from the perspective of complex urban development. It discusses major reasons and considerations that years ago served as a basis for the idea of relocating the railway line away from the developed part of the city and constructing a Tbilisi bypass railway. The document analyzes errors that brought about the failure of the project later on.

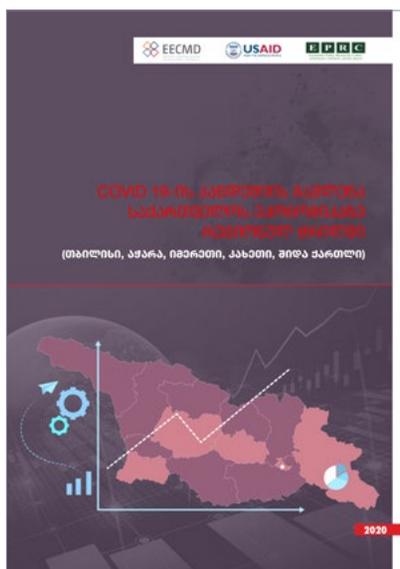


“CHALLENGES TO THE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT”

By Koka Kiguradze

What are the challenges of citizen engagement faced by local governments today? This is the question this research attempts to answer. The paper aims at getting politicians, administrators, citizens and generally everyone who may potentially become part of local governance to think about the challenges of public administration that the pandemic brought about or exacerbated. It discusses difficulties that get in the way of citizens' engagement in public governance. The paper also tries to facilitate and develop a vision for increasing citizens' roles and responsibilities in public politics and public administration. The author not only assesses events but also offers electronic-mechanism-based solutions.





“THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON GEORGIA’S ECONOMY – REGIONAL ANALYSIS”

By Tamar Khorbaladze

This document discusses the economic impact the pandemic has had throughout the world and in Georgia. It focuses primarily on the reality in Georgia and discusses important topics such as gross domestic product, employment and unemployment, the business sector, and tourism as an important source of revenue. Readers will benefit from this analysis by being better able to see the existing picture and learn about recommendations made to the government. The document includes a list of measures calculated for short and long-term benefits that will help return the country to normal functioning once the pandemic is over.



“CHALLENGES TO GENDER BUDGETING IN GEORGIA AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL”

By Shorena Kakhidze

The publication attempts to understand the essence of gender-sensitive budgeting, the structure of the process, and how modern approaches to gender-sensitive budgeting fit into the realities existing in Georgia. The author offers profound insights into these topics in the context of municipal self-governments. In addition to world experience in gender-sensitive budgeting, the paper explains how this form of budgeting was introduced in Georgia and what mechanisms were employed. The paper also describes the experience of Georgian municipalities in this regard and provides recommendations to help improve the status quo.

EECMD'S PARTNERS IN BUILDING DEMOCRACY

The East European Center for Multiparty Democracy (EECMD) actively works with various organizations that are EECMD partners in implementing various programs.

Our partners in building democracy:

- The Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia
- The European Commission
- National Endowment for Democracy (NED)
- The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- The Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD)



Netherlands Institute for
Multiparty Democracy



EECMD'S ONLINE PARTNERS IN BUILDING DEMOCRACY

Voter information webpages:

www.Partiebi.ge

www.Presidenti.ge

Information on EECMD's Democracy Schools:

www.eecmd.org

Electronic library of publications:

www.eecmd.org

EECMD on Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0dFTxwSSqZiV_qqq-RQAMQ

EECMD on Twitter:

https://twitter.com/eecmd_org?lang=en