

Georgia on European Way: Creation of Effective Model for DCFTA and SME Strategy Implementation

Project Outline

Georgia on European Way is the project implemented by the consortium of NGOs and think-tanks under the leadership of the **Eastern Europe Studies Center** (EESC, Lithuania) in cooperation with the **Association of Business Consulting Organizations** (ABCO Georgia), **Georgian Institute of Politics** (GIP, Georgia), **GLOBSEC** (Slovakia), **Association Caucasus Genetics** (Georgia), **ATINATI** (Georgia) and **Young Scientists Union “Intellect”** (Georgia). The project is being implemented from April 12, 2017. Project’s duration is 24 months. The project is funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument of the European Union.

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the capacities of Georgian CSOs and BSOs along the DCFTA implementation process and along the implementation of the SME strategy for Georgia. The project will begin with thorough status-quo analysis focused on detecting shortcomings of DCFTA/SME strategy implementation in Georgia. This first phase of project implementation will lay grounds and provide tools for continuous project activities: capacity building trainings for Georgian CSOs, which will enable and gradually turn them into equal partners during following project implementation phases: a) executing a nationwide DCFTA/SME communication campaign, b) providing trainings and seminars for Georgian SMEs and public officials, and c) forming and organizing the work of Local and Central Advisory Councils, a first format of its kind to bring together representatives of local and central government officials, SMEs, CSOs, BSOs and international experts. The status quo analysis on DCFTA implementation in Georgia will also be used when evaluating project results upon its completion and advising continuous actions.

The project activities are based on following three specific objectives, which determine the role of Georgian CSOs, primary participants and later partners during implementation of the project:

- Increasing CSOs role when raising public awareness, understanding and support for DCFTA implementation in Georgia;
- Building capacities of Georgian CSOs to assist and consult local SMEs on accessing and benefiting from the EU internal market;
- Establishing comprehensive monitoring and advise-based cooperation between Georgian authorities, CSOs, BSOs and SMEs.

Activities:

Activity 1: Preparation of methodology, opinion polls and information materials (5 - 10/2017)

Devising the methodology for mapping Georgian economy oriented non-governmental organizations (CSOs) and analysing SMEs in all regions of Georgia (their fields of interests, possibilities, awareness about the DCFTA). Based on that, opinion poll will be done in regions of Georgia among SMEs. Based on results of the poll information materials will be suggested and prepared - so-called DCFTA/SME communication toolkit that will be used during the whole project/campaign. At this stage also methodology for training of Georgian CSOs in regions will be devised.

Activity 2: Capacity Building Trainings for CSOs in Georgia (9 - 10/2017)

Capacity building trainings for Georgian CSOs in all regions - training on how to effectively lead a community level public campaigns about DCFTA/SME related affairs.

Activity 3: Nation-wide DCFTA/SME communication campaign (1 - 12/2018)

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The nation-wide DCFTA/SME awareness campaign for a) Georgian SMEs and b) general public will be led by trained representatives of Georgian CSOs under the coordination and supervision of the implementation consortium.

Activity 4: Study trips to Lithuania and Slovakia (10 - 11/2017)

One week-long study visit for 10 -15 Georgian representatives of target groups (CSOs, GOV and SMEs representatives) to Slovakia and Lithuania focused on their experiences and best practices when accessing the European market.

Activity 5: Establishing Monitoring and Advisory Cooperation Councils - MACCs

(1/2018 - 4/2019)

The aim of these councils is to set-up a structuralized communication between SMEs, CSOs and Georgian Government (relevant department) in order requests and problems of SMEs are transferred directly to the level, where they can be solved - i.e. decision making. The Council will also continue to monitor the implementation of AA and DCFTA in Georgia, lobby with Georgian state institutions in order needed legislation is really put into practice and last but not least to “control the controlling institutions”. The role of the implementing consortium will be to prepare strategy for creation of MACCs and will oversight their performance. There will be 2 levels of MACCs:1) local councils - one per each region of Georgia and Autonomous Republic of Adjara and 2) central council in Tbilisi, which will consist of representatives of the local councils and relevant state institutions. The councils will meet 3 times during the project implementation period. Councils are expected to continue even after completion of the project.

Activity 6: Advocacy events in Lithuania, Slovakia, Brussels and EaP countries (throughout 2018)

Organization of briefings for media, NGOs and government officials in order to brief them about the development of the project, partial outcomes and lessons learned about Georgia’s process of implementation of DCFTA will take place in Lithuania and Slovakia. Similarly, the consortium will organize advocacy events in Brussels, as well as raise awareness about the project at international EaP related events.

Activity 7: The project closing conference in Tbilisi (4/2019)

The project closing 2-day conference in Tbilisi is expected to host up to 80 experts and representatives of the target groups, including highest Georgian officials. The goal of the conference is to summarize the findings and outputs of the whole project and to provide recommendations for continued actions when deepening Georgia’s integration within the European market.