



Interim Report on the Activities



2015

**Interim Report on the Activities of
The Central Election Commission of Georgia and the CEC
Training Center**

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Introduction

The Election Administration of Georgia is an independent administrative body, which, within its authority, is free of any influence from other state bodies and acts according to the Constitution and the Election Code of Georgia.

The Election Administration aims to conduct impartial, transparent and professionally administered elections, as set forth by the legislation and to create an environment, where voters and electoral stakeholders can freely exercise their electoral rights.

In order to ensure the conduct of free and democratic elections, the Election Administration shall be guided by the following principles: independence, transparency, professionalism, accountability and inclusiveness.

Exactly due to the principle of accountability, the Election Administration is responsible for its own actions and reports to voters and relevant institutions on a regular basis.¹

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia regularly evaluates its own activities and the institution is ready to accept new challenges. Therefore, new priorities have been developed at the administration. Accordingly, comprehensive, long-term strategic plan has been developed, that became the cornerstone and road map for the organization and for electoral stakeholders during the coming years.

The following new priorities are identified in the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of the Election Administration:

¹ 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of the Election Administration was approved by the CEC ordinance №332/204 dated on 26 December, 2014. The mission, vision, principles and strategic priorities, goals, objectives and activities of the Administration are reflected in the Strategic Plan.

Institutional Strengthening – includes provision of the effective management, development of human resources, improvement of infrastructure and strengthening the image of the CEC.

Civic and voter education – includes implementation of the civil and voter educational programs, increase of electoral culture and encouragement of civil society engagement.

Electoral environment – includes support of improved legal framework, ensuring inclusive electoral environment and supporting the development of gender-balanced and equal electoral environment.

Election operations – includes provision of accurate election related information to the electoral stakeholders.

Within each strategic pillar, along with its goals and objectives, the CEC determined the specific activities, which would be a step forward in terms of strengthening the independence, professionalism and credibility of election administration.

The present document is an interim report on the activities of the CEC of Georgia and LEPL Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings (the CEC Training Center). The report is developed in accordance with the strategic pillars defined by the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of the Election Administration and covers the period from January, 1 - June, 30, 2015.

Short Description

During the reporting period, the results of the research, conducted within the EU funded project – “National Integrity System Assessments in European Neighborhood East Region” has been published. The research aimed at assessing the strength of the institution, which play the significant role in establishment of “good governance”, transparency and accountability in the country.²

It should be noted that comparing with the 2011 research the CEC received the highest rate among the state institutions. The research points out that “the CEC has been developed as an independent election administration, which operates in a transparent manner and the quality of administration of elections has improved overall”.

According to the survey results, conducted in April 2015 by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a significant part of the population gives positive evaluation to the activities of election administration, regardless of the non-election period.³ It should be underlined, that according to the survey, held by the same organization in April 2014, a significant part of the respondents trust the CEC assessment of the elections after their own opinion.⁴

During the reporting period, as a result of the activities implemented by the CEC structural unites and the Training Center, election administration achieved significant results, particularly:

The CEC started an innovative project “Electoral Development Schools 2015”, aiming at increasing the civil engagement, promotion of elections among the youth, development of the trainer skills of the District Election Commission

² National Integrity System Assessments in European Neighborhood East Region Research Report
<http://www.transparency.ge/en/post/report/georgia-national-integrity-system-assessment-2015>

³ https://www.ndi.org/files/NDI%20Georgia_April%202015%20Poll_Public%20Political_ENG.pdf

⁴ <https://www.ndi.org/files/Georgia-April14-Survey-Political-English.pdf>

(DEC) members and creation additional human resources by sharing the knowledge, accumulated in the Election Administration. The Training Center has developed a new pilot module – “Gender and Elections” in order to raise awareness of the voters on civil and gender equality issues and the module is

currently integrated into the training course of the “Electoral Development Schools 2015”.

The reporting process of election administration in the direction of the institutional strengthening has been greatly improved. The training and development plan for the election administration officials has been developed, orientation training system has been introduced, staff capacity building trainings have been conducted and the representatives of the CEC and the Training Center participated in observation missions, local and international symposiums, conferences and seminars. It should be noted that business trip reporting practice has been established at the CEC, which supports sharing the obtained experience with other staff members.

Two persons with disabilities were employed at the CEC in order to ensure full participation of persons with disabilities in social life. This approach supports the development of the inclusive electoral environment.

For improving qualification of the DEC members the trainings on correspondence, HR management and media relations were conducted for the DEC members.

Representatives of the CEC and the Training Center participated in six international conferences and one electoral symposium. Their participation served to strengthen the cooperation with the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of other countries and support experience exchange on electoral issues.

Furthermore, the representatives of the CEC and the Training Center participated in five international election observation missions, which support the sharing of international experience on electoral processes.

An interactive map has been developed to ensure the data access to the polling stations' geographical locations. The coordinates of **2 245** polling stations are already placed on the map, which has been uploaded on the CEC official website.

The electronic correspondence program has been gradually launched since 2012. It was fully introduced in the first half of 2015. Including the reporting period, seven varieties of **48 621** scanned electronic documents have been created in a unified database and **19 579** documents were digitized in the digital archive program in order to archive the documents for a permanent storage.

The Training Center has technically improved the certification process of election administration officials in order to determine the knowledge and general skills in election law, which is precondition to attract qualified staff in the future. During the reporting period, **254** participants successfully passed the certification exam, including **72%** women and **28%** men participants.

The goal of the CEC is to support the increased public participation in electoral processes through the capacity building of civil society. Within the frameworks of the grant competition, announced by the CEC Training Center, competition commission decided to fund **25** proposals, submitted by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In order to ensure publicity and transparency of the grant competition results, the Training Center uploaded the schedule of the activities planned within the frameworks of the funded NGO projects on its official website.

The CEC developed a new image advertisement concept and prepared 10 outdoor banners which were placed in various regions of Georgia.

On May 31, 2015 the CEC conducted June 15, 2014 Municipal By-elections, in N64.13 Potskho local single mandate election district of N64 Senaki DEC and 67.11 Ergeti local single mandate election district of N67 Zugdidi DEC and presented the report⁵ to the Parliament of Georgia according to the Article 14, paragraph 1, subparagraph “O” of the Organic Law of Georgia “Election Code of Georgia” (The Election Code of Georgia).

For the first time, in 2015, the draft budget 2016 of election administration was approved by the decree of the Parliament of Georgia, which increases the level of independence of the administration.

⁵ See the report on By-elections of Sakrebulo (local municipalities) on the CEC official website: <http://www.cesko.ge/ge/arqivi-6-ge/shualeduri-archevnebi-2015/sakrebulo-shualeduri-archevnebis-angarishi>

Strategic Pillar 1: Institutional Strengthening

Strengthen independence, professionalism of and confidence in the Election Administration; establish a system with an effective budget policy and continuous organization and professional development. Contribute to the development of democratic processes.

Within the strategic pillar “Institutional Strengthening”, the CEC set the goals to ensure effective EMB management, develop the human resources, improve infrastructure and strengthen the image.

The following activities have been implemented by the CEC in order to achieve each goal:

Goal 1: Ensure effective EMB management

The CEC improved the rule for developing, approving, correcting and implementing the annual action plan to ensuring effective management at the Election Administration. The initiated changes promote improving accountability process at the CEC. It is worth noting, that the reporting form has been changed and the following paragraphs have been added: result in accordance with indicator, percentage of the performance, important supporting measures and the activi-

ties for the next reporting period. In addition, deadlines for submission budget request, quarterly and annual reports were clearly defined in the rule.

Goal 2: Human Resources Development

Effective HR management policy

In order to develop the human resources and create modern systems, the election administration has developed an effective human resources management policy. Within the framework of the policy, job description and evaluation forms of the employees, as well as the criteria for recruiting qualified staff, internal regulations the administration and health insurance packages were improved, updated and introduced.

Staff Selection Competitions at the CEC and DECs

In order to select the qualified human resources, staff selection competitions were announced at the CEC and DECs during the reporting period:



In total **1012** applicants submitted their applications to participate in the competition for **11** vacant positions at the CEC



280 applicants submitted their applications to participate in a competitions for **21** vacant positions at **10** DECs



838 applications were submitted for the internship competition at the CEC; **7** interns were selected as a result of a two-staged competition



Improve internal regulations of election administration

Within the framework of developing effective HR management policy of the election administration, the CEC developed new draft regulations for staff members. The norms that promote effective and qualified performance of employees are prescribed in the regulations.

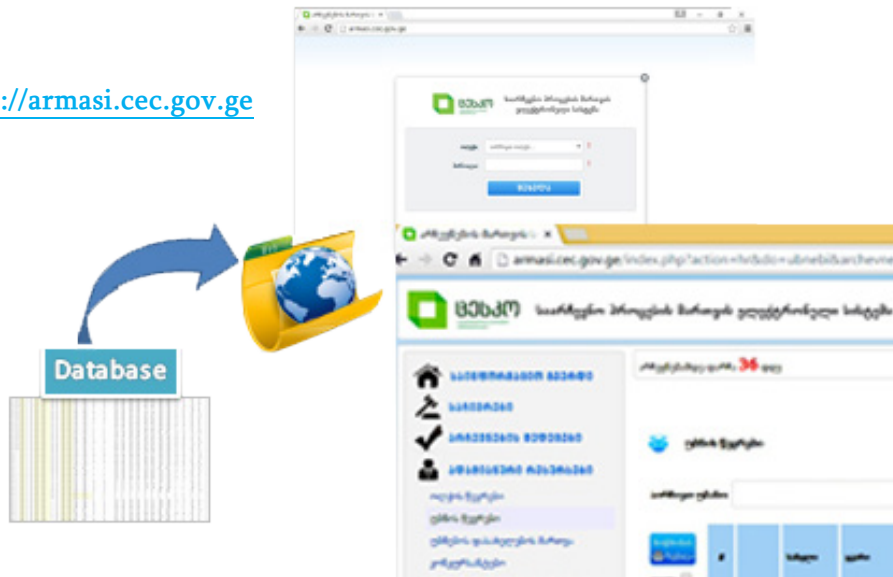
Health insurance for the employees

In order to ensure the healthcare of the employees, the CEC provided the insurance for the members of administration, staff members, contracted employees and the DEC members. The database and the relevant documents on health insurance were updated.

Improvement of the HR module in Election Process Management System (EPMS)

HR module has been updated in Election Process Management System (EPMS). The main objective of improving digital system of HR management is to develop a user-friendly program of the electronic data on the CEC structural units and each employee. The process will improve and simplify the data search, distribution and management of the “human capital”. For the perfection of digital system of the HR management, several technical changes have been made in the program.

<http://armasi.cec.gov.ge>



Staff training system

For the purpose of continuous professional development of the election administration employees, the staff training system has been established at the CEC.

The CEC elaborated training and developing plan as well as the questionnaire on training needs of the election administration officials. As a result of the processing the data obtained from the employees, the Qualification Development Plan for 2015 has been drafted.

Development/introduction of the orientation training system

In order to introduce new employees of the CEC with the election administration activities and integrate them within the inter-organizational culture, the CEC developed “Guideline for Employees”. The document covers the basic issues, necessary for the new employees, which will support their engagement in the working process and their integration with the team.



Professional development of election administration staff through trainings

During the reporting period, employees of the CEC and the DEC members participated in the various trainings and seminars conducted by the Training Center and invited experts. The main goal of the trainings was to improve qualification and share experience.. In total, three trainings for the DEC members and ten trainings for the CEC employees were organized.⁶



Participation in conferences and workshops

The representatives of Georgian election administration and the Training Center participated in six international conferences and one electoral symposium. The participation ensured strengthening cooperation with the EMBs of various countries and sharing mutual experiences on election related issues. The participants were required to prepare reports on relevant business trips to create database about the best practices and innovations obtained during the international events.⁷

⁶ See detailed information on conducted trainings in the Annex: Table №1 and Table №2.

⁷ See the detailed information on the participation of the CEC and the Training Center representatives in conferences and symposium in the Annex: Table №3

Participation in observation missions

In order to monitor the polling procedures on an international level, the representatives of the CEC and the Training Center participated in five observation missions, particularly:

- The Municipal Elections of the Republic of Lithuania;
- The Parliamentary Elections of Estonia;
- Presidential Elections of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- Federal Elections of the Congress of Mexico;
- The Municipal Elections of the Republic of Moldova.

Goal 3: Improve Infrastructure

Improving CEC infrastructure implies equipment of the organization with modern material-technical base and utilization of innovative informational technologies. The improved infrastructure will simplify information accessibility for election administration representatives and for all electoral stakeholders. It will also support the smooth operation of the election administration and organization of elections on highly professional manner.

Various repair and rehabilitation work

The safety standards were not ensured in certain parts of the CEC administrative building. The risks of equipment damage inside the building and hindering the relevant working processes were high enough during the natural disasters (rain, wind). After dismantling the equipment, the CEC printing house was relocated in an alternative place.

Ensure accessible elections


Several working meetings have been conducted in order to adapt the CEC official website for the visually impaired voters. Regular consultations with the experts are scheduled. The updated website will be available to the visually impaired voters as soon as it is launched.

Aiming at ensuring the adapted polling stations, the CEC of Georgia in coordination with relevant institutions and DEC's obtained and processed the information on the state-owned adapted (with ramp) buildings, where the polling stations were located or/and could be located. **974** buildings are adapted in total.


Within the framework of the CEC archived documents' systematization, the terms of storing the existing documents in the CEC archive were revised in accordance with the regulations, defined by the election administration nomenclature. Also, the archival materials for temporary and permanent storage were sorted/processed. In addi-

tion, on the basis of the Act of Document Destruction, expired documents and the documents of 2014 Municipal Elections (I and II rounds) were deleted.

The CEC implemented **archive digitalization/systematization** to maintain the unified database of the documents assigned for permanent storage. The plan for perfection of electronic archive program was developed as a result of preliminary research and analysis of the content and capacity of the documents assigned for the permanent storage. The plan is based on small expenses and rational utilization of human and material resources:



7 types of **48 621** units of scanned digital documents are uploaded to the unified database. The process has been gradually implemented since 2012

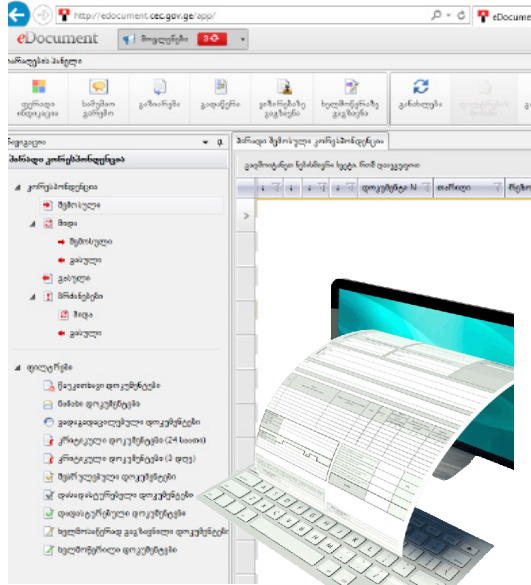


19 579 documents are digitalized in the electronic archive program



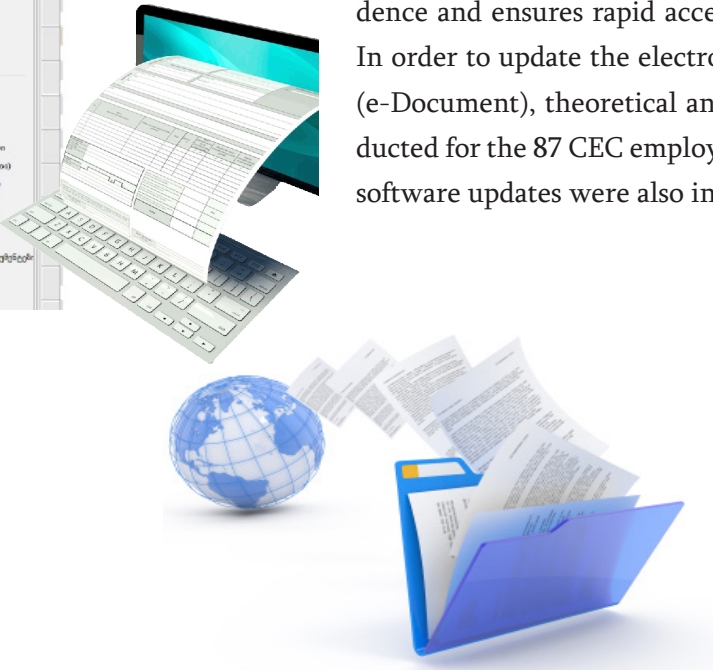
During the reporting period, **7 046** different units (documents) were added to the digital archive program





Update, improve and implement E-management system (e-Document)

Electronic system of correspondence management (e-Document) has been operated at the CEC since 2012. The goal of the software is to simplify the correspondence management and ensure accessibility. The system provides effective electronic management of the correspondence and ensures rapid access to the necessary documents and tasks. In order to update the electronic correspondence management system (e-Document), theoretical and practical trainings were gradually conducted for the 87 CEC employees, users of the mentioned program. The software updates were also installed on users' personal computers.



Certification of the election administration officials

The Training Center has conducted the certification exam of election administration officials in order to define their knowledge of election legislation and general skills. The certification process supports recruitment of the qualified employees at the Election Administration.⁸

The CEC Training Center, as a member of the groups working on the issues related with ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities, translated informative video on the certification exam on ethnic minority languages (Armenian and Azeri). The training Center also produced an informative video accompanied with the sign language for the persons with disabilities. The videos were aired by the Public Broadcaster and Adjara TV Company of the Public Broadcaster. They were also uploaded on the official websites and social networks (Facebook pages) of the CEC and the Training Center.

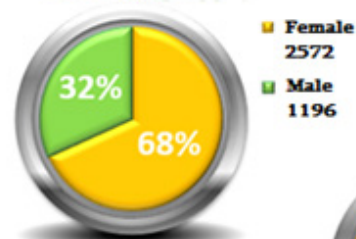
⁸ According to the Article 17, Paragraph 3, Subparagraph E of the Organic Law of Georgia “Election Code of Georgia,



Certification of the Election Administration Officers

Number of applicants registered

3768 applicants



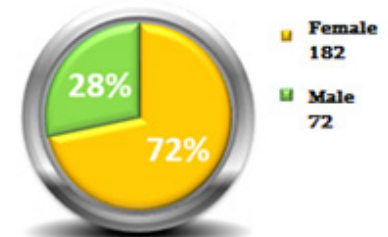
Applicants attending exam

1172 applicants



Applicants successfully passing exam

254 applicants



In total, 3 768 applicants were registered for the certification exam, including 2 572 women (68% of the registered applicants) and 1 196 men applicants (32%). 1 172 participants attended the examination (31%). 254 participants successfully passed the exam (182 women, 72 – men).

Technological innovations and security

The CEC intensively utilizes the modern electronic programs in electoral processes. The special software has been created and tested for electing DEC members via electronic voting system during the CEC meetings.

The CEC conducted the consultations with the representatives of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia on acquiring licensed software. At the meetings the parties verified the number of the licensed software to be provided to the CEC and the relevant list was forwarded to the analytical department of the Ministry of Finance.

The CEC conducted tender in order to update and prolong the license of the antivirus system, utilized at the CEC. The tender endured updated licensed antivirus system, installed on the servers and computers of the CEC.

Goal 4: Strengthen the Image

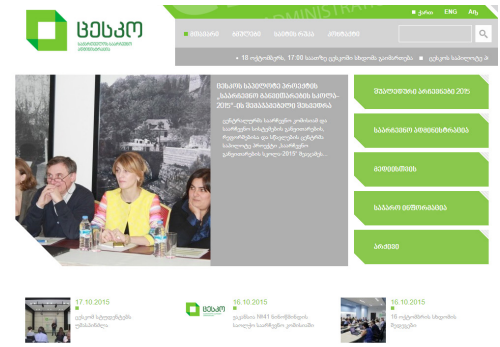
The goal of strengthening the CEC image is to increase trust toward the election administration among voters and other electoral stakeholders, which implies positioning the CEC as a regional thought leader offering its assistance in the election management field.



In order to implement **effective PR campaign**, the CEC provides media and other electoral stakeholders with timely and exhaustive information on its activities. Information is published through press releases, newsletters, internet, social networks, as well as through the direct contact with the media and all stakeholders.⁹

The CEC official website

During the reporting period, **81** press releases and **180** legal acts were prepared and uploaded on the CEC official website. The information covered issues related with the conducted meetings, conferences, seminars, visits, CEC meetings, By-elections, briefings and other activities of the election administration, both in Georgian and in English languages.¹⁰



⁹ See the newsletters <http://www.cesko.ge/uploads/other/29/29771.pdf>; <http://www.cesko.ge/uploads/other/29/29934.pdf>; <http://www.cesko.ge/uploads/other/30/30144.pdf>; <http://www.cesko.ge/uploads/other/30/30245.pdf>

¹⁰ See the detailed information about legal acts posted on the website in Annex N4



Media monitoring

On a daily basis election administration conducts monitoring of the news on the CEC and political life in the country, both, in Georgian and international media/sources. Media monitoring covers more than 60 news agencies. All leading newspapers are being monitored including: “Alia”, “Kviris Palitra”, “Resonance”, “Akhali Taoba”, “Versia”, “Asaval-dasavali”, “Prime Time”, “Republic of Georgia”, “Georgia and the World”, “Chronic +”.

The CEC also ensures monitoring of TV companies: Public Broadcaster, Rustavi 2, Imedi, Maestro, Tabula, the Caucasus, Obieqtivi, Adjara TV of Public Broadcaster, GDS, Ertulovneba, Palitra TV and others (in addition relevant regional TV channels in case of necessity).



Image Campaign

The CEC announced competition for designing image-advertisement concept. However, the competition commission could not reveal the winner. Later, a special working group has been established from the internal resources, which developed the new image advertisement concept and special messages: “Development Continues” and “25 years of Development”. The concept of the advertisement was based on the development stages of the election administration. 10 outdoor banners were prepared and placed throughout Georgia

Organize Annual Meeting of the Election Management Bodies



On February 24-26, 2015 the CEC of Georgia hosted 5th Annual Meeting of the Election Management Bodies in Batumi. The theme of the event was “Inclusive Elections”. Meeting was organized in close cooperation with the International Center for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS). **90** representatives of **19** election management bodies, various international organizations and vendor companies oriented on electoral technologies participated in the meeting. The meeting participants have shared experiences, challenges and approaches they have addressed while making the election process available to everyone and discussed the necessity to increase engagement of women, the groups with special needs, ethnic minorities in electoral processes and the role of election administration in this regard.

At the same conference, the CEC of Georgia, its Training Center and ICPS, in cooperation with Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judiciary of Mexico and Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania, presented the joint initiative of establishing the International Association of Election Training Organizations (IAETO). The Memorandum of Intention on IAETO was signed, envisaging appropriate exchange of experience and expertise among members with the objective of improving training and capacity building in the electoral field.



Social events

On April 12, 2015 the CEC representatives congratulated the Easter Holiday to 80 elderly inhabitants of Tbilisi residential care facility and gifted them with Easter sweets.

On June 1, 2015, the CEC chairperson congratulated the International Children's Day to the children of family-type orphanage of the "Social Partnership Found". By the CEC initiative, children attended the performance at Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre and various gifts were presented to them.

On June 13, 2015, the election administration staff members participated in disaster relief activities in Tbilisi and transferred contributions from their personal financial income.

It should be noted that the CEC and the Training Center have transferred **367 000** GEL to the public budget as a result of various cost saving.

Strategic Pillar 2: Civic and Voter Education

Increase the level of civic engagement through educational programs; increase voter turnout and increase the number of informed voters.

To support the “Civic and Voter Education Priority” of the election administration, the CEC set a goal to implement civic and voter education programs, develop the electoral culture and contribute to the civil society engagement in electoral processes.

The CEC implemented the following activities in order to achieve each goal:

Goal 1: Civic and Voter Education Initiatives

The training course in electoral law for the higher academic institutions in Georgia

Under the auspices of the CEC, the Training Center implements the educational program oriented on civic education and electoral culture development at the higher academic institutions. The program is designed in the field of electoral law for the students of the faculties of law and political and social sciences (media school). The Training Center completed the semester trainings planned for the 2014-2015 academic year at the higher academic institutions.

The CEC Training Center developed electronic presentations and manuals for the lecturers and the students of the higher academic institutions. The following methodologies were introduced during the training process: e-learning,

theoretical studies, practical training, role-playing (mock elections, press conferences, debates and competitions on election related issues).

During the reporting period, the election-education course, specially elaborated by the CEC Training Center was implemented for **328** students of **10** higher academic institutions (out of **19** higher institutions, which were signatory parties of the MoU).

Pilot training programs for the final grade students of the public schools

The CEC Training Center, together with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, works on electoral education for secondary stage students (XI-XII grades) of public schools. The joint collaboration aims at raising youth awareness on importance of democratic elections, voters' role in elections, and equal rights and opportunities of men and women in civil-political life. Working meetings were conducted and memorandum was prepared with this regard. The pilot project is implemented in the mountainous regions and in the regions, densely populated with ethnic minorities.

Informational meetings for underprivileged children (16-17 year olds)

The CEC Training Center implemented the public awareness project for the children and youth placed in orphanages and other alternative child care places. The project was implemented on the basis of the memorandum signed by the CEC, the Training Center, LEPL Social Service Agency and NELP Association SOS Children's Village of Georgia.

The two-week course was conducted in two stages. The first stage was carried out at Tbilisi SOS Children's Village by the representatives of the Training Center and the second stage was implemented in Kutaisi SOS Children's Village.

E-learning program developed by the Training Center included the theoretical part and the practical exercises. 33 participants attended the training course and were awarded with relevant certificates.

Law Clinic

Within the framework of the law clinic, the CEC Training Center implemented election education course. The course was carried out in four stages and covered one semester. **20** students of the law faculty from **3** higher academic institutions, which were signatory parties of MoU, completed the course. The mentioned program significantly contributes to the improvement of the students' skills in the field of electoral law and supports creation of the potential resources of qualified lawyers for the election administration.



Goal 2: Increase Level of Electoral Culture

To ensure development and implementation of the creative civic-educational projects for the stakeholders and general public, as well as contribute increasing public awareness and electoral culture, the CEC and its Training Center implemented the following activities:

Students' Debate Club

Within the frameworks of the Students' Debate Club, debates were conducted for those students of higher academic institutions, who completed the election law course, developed by the CEC Training Center. The students of Guram Tavartkiladze Teaching University, Caucasus University and Sokhumi State University participated in the first semi-final debates.¹¹

The debates covered the following issue: “whether there should be the mandatory gender quotas in the party lists”. The winning team has been identified by the jury, composed by the CEC Chairperson, commission members and the Director of the CEC Training Center. The students were awarded with the relevant certificates.

¹¹ See the photos of debate club uploaded on the Training Center official website <http://electionreforms.ge/?page=gallery&ln=2>

“Electoral Development Schools 2015”

The CEC planned pilot project – “Electoral Development Schools 2015”. The project aimed at:

- Increasing civil participation, promotion of elections among the youth and raising public awareness on civil and gender equality issues;
- Developing trainer skills for the DEC members;
- Creating additional human resources through sharing the experience and knowledge of election administration officials.

The target audience of the “Electoral Development Schools 2015” was the youth aged 17-25. The project was implemented in 10 electoral districts throughout the Georgia (Telavi, Gurjaani, Akhaltsikhe, Marneuli, Rustavi, Gori, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Ozurgeti, Batumi).

The Training Center conducted training of trainers (ToT) for the trainers selected from the DEC members. The Trainings were conducted according to the guideline developed by the CEC and its Training Center.

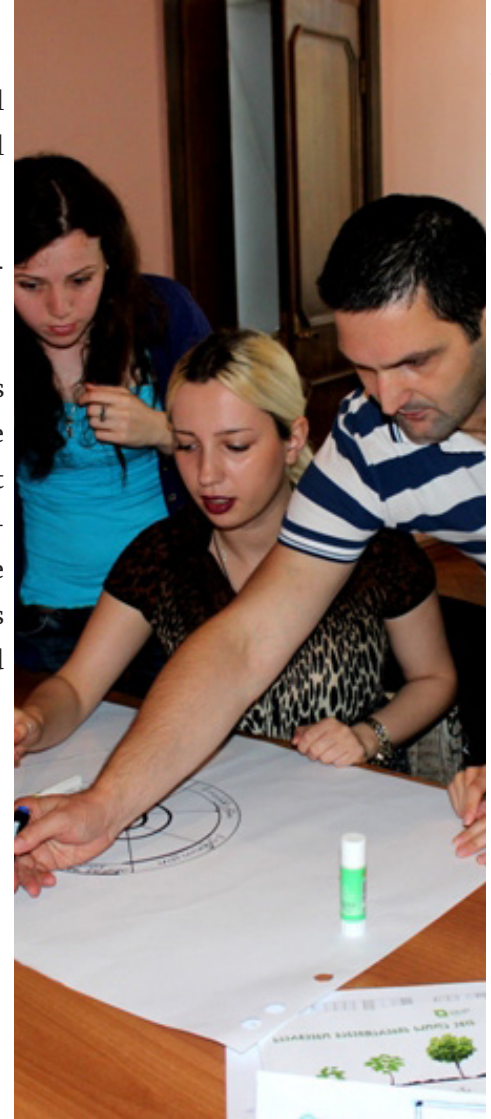
The pilot project was implemented by the CEC and the Training Center, in cooperation with the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) and



International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), with the financial support of the Council of Europe (CoE) and US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Informational calendar on the importance of elections and electoral suffrage on ethnic minority languages

Representatives of the CEC and the Training Center held two workshops to support engagement of ethnic minorities in electoral processes. The workshops resulted in development of the structure, form and content of the informational calendar. Information on the importance of elections and electoral suffrage will be reflected in the calendar as well. The calendar will be distributed in the mountainous regions and in regions densely populated with ethnic minorities. The calendar will be published in Georgian language as well.



Goal 3: Encourage and Support of Civil Society in Electoral Processes

The goal to support civil and public engagement includes increasing civil sector participation in electoral processes through their capacity building.

To achieve these goals, the CEC and the Training Center implemented the following activities:

Grant contest for NGOs

The CEC approved the updated “Rules for Grant Contest”, elaborated by the Training Center. The adopted normative act offers important innovations to the NGOs, which will support the proactive cooperation with civil society organizations (CSO) and ensure transparency of the process.

On March, 24, 2015 the Training Center announced a grant contest on the following priorities:

- Voter Education for developing electoral and civil culture;
- Support women participation in public-political (election) process;
- Support development of the electoral capability for political parties (in regional perspective);
- Support participation of ethnic minorities in public-political (election) process

The CEC Training Center organized the informational meeting with the NGO representatives on the grant contest. The aim of the meeting was to provide NGO representatives with more information on terms and conditions of the grant competition and rules of submitting the relevant documents.

75 grant applications were submitted in total. According to the decision of the grant competition commission 25

projects were funded.

The Training Center prepared the schedule of activities, planned by the NGOs within the frameworks of the funded projects. The schedule ensures publicity and transparency of the process, and is published on the official website of the Training Center.¹²

Monitoring and presentation of the projects funded within the frameworks of the grant contest

The Training Center ensured the monitoring of the projects implemented by 12 NGOs in 2014.

According to the “Rule for Grant Contests”, the monitoring group conducted the control of the activities implemented within the grant projects. The monitoring mechanism implied the field work and discussions of the interim/final reports, submitted by the NGOs. LEPL “Levan Samkharauli National Forensics Bureau” ensured the financial and accounting expertise of the projects.

On the basis of the monitoring results, all 12 NGOs successfully implemented the activities within the grant projects.

Furthermore, according to the financial and accounting expertise conclusion, the allocated funds are spent and documented properly and the unspent balance (if any) was completely returned.

The NGOs presented the public report on implemented projects.¹³ The summarizing meeting was attended by the representatives of election administration and the CEC Training center, together with the representatives of

¹² See the official website of the Training Center - <http://electionreforms.ge/index.php?page=news&id=797>

¹³ See detailed information on the presentation of the implemented projects by 12 NGOs, funded within the framework of the grant competition, announced on September 15, 2014 <http://electionreforms.ge/index.php?page=news&id=776&ln=2>

40
political parties, civil society, non-governmental and international organizations.

The budget funding of the political parties

On the basis of the Article 301 of the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens, the CEC Training Center, within its competencies, allocated funds for the political parties in order to support their capacity building and to ensure competitive political system. The funds were allocated for conducting researches, trainings, conferences, business trips, regional projects, civil and electoral education projects.

Meetings with representatives of international and local organizations



During the reporting period, by the initiative of the “Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy” (NIMD) meeting was conducted at the CEC. The NIMD representatives provided the meeting participants with the information on their current and planned activities.

On June 19, 2015, meeting was held between the CEC Chairperson and the representatives of the Ukrainian delegation. The delegation visited Georgia within the framework of the joint project of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and OSCE on gender audit of Ukrainian political parties and development of action plan regarding the gender equality.

The meeting also envisaged obtaining information about the implemented, current and future activities in gender perspective.

During the reporting period, three meetings of the **technical working group (TWG)** were conducted at the CEC. Representatives of NGOs, as well as international organizations, accredited in Georgia attended the meeting. According to the TWG meeting format, Tamar Zhvania, the CEC Chairperson provided meeting participants with detailed information on election administration activities. Projects and activities, carried out by the participant organizations were discussed at the meetings. At one of the TWG meeting the Director of Financial Service of Political Parties, State Audit Office of Georgia delivered presentation on “Anticorruption Recommendations and Political

Finances” that covered the 2014 Municipal Elections.

Within the framework of participation in inter-agency task force, the CEC, under its competences developed the part of governmental action plan on human rights protection for 2016-2017. The document was prepared according to the evaluation and monitoring plan of election administration Strategic Plan 2015-2019.

The Election Administration prepared interim report on implemented activities to ensure public awareness among the ethnic minorities and submitted the report to the Office of the State Minister in Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia.

Furthermore, to fulfill the activities, prescribed by the Ordinance¹⁴ of the Government of Georgia, election administration prepared report on the activities implemented for the persons with disabilities in order to ensure their full participation in June 15, 2014 Municipal Elections and the report was submitted to the Public Defender Office.

¹⁴ N76 Order of the Government of Georgia of January 20, 2014, 2014-2016 Government Action Plan on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Chapter XI. Participation in political and public life)

Proactive cooperation with the Open Government Partnership (OGP)

The CEC and the Training Center are the members of the Forum Open Government Partnership (OGP). Within the framework of the OGP format Georgia has undertaken the obligations in the various directions, including rising public awareness on electoral processes. Under the auspices of the CEC, the Training Center frequently participates in OGP forum meetings and quarterly submits the reports on the conditions of fulfilling the activities related with the obligations. The Training Center also participated in OGP European regional conference. Within the frameworks of the meeting the representatives of Georgia and various countries shared their experiences on the achievements and challenges.

The CEC Call Center

The CEC, through its Call Center ensures public awareness of voters and other stakeholders on electoral issues. The information is provided to the stakeholders via phone, online chat and online operators as well as via automatic voiced informational service.



The number of incoming calls at the Call Center amounted to **1 153** and the number of online chat visitors – **569**. 63 is the number of outgoing calls. **117** persons benefited from the automatic informational service and **79** SMSs were sent out from the Call Center.

Strategic Pillar 3: Electoral Environment

Create an inclusive electoral environment through the active participation of stakeholders in election process

Under the strategic priority of improving electoral environment, the CEC set the goals to participate in the process of improving legal framework, ensure electoral integrity, promote inclusive, equal and gender-balanced environment and improve DEC and PEC boundary delimitation process.

Goal 1: Support Improved Legal Framework

The CEC's main goal in supporting improved legal framework refers to the process of developing the legislative proposals and the harmonization of the election law with international standards.

The election administration implemented the following activities in order to comply legal acts with international standards and establish the best practices:

Legal maintenance of the CEC activities

The CEC legal department regularly provided legal consultations to the employees of the administration and the Training Center as well as DEC members, local observers and representatives of election subjects. Consultations and legal support was provided to the DEC members on the issues related with application/complains.

Workshops with the DEC members

The CEC representatives conducted workshops with the DEC members on the legal gaps in the Election Code of Georgia revealed during the 2014 Municipal Elections. The workshops aimed at preparing relevant recommendations and drafting the proposal of amendments to the Election Code of Georgia.

Particularly in February 2015, the CEC Legal Department initiated and organized eight workshops with the heads of the CEC structural units and the representatives of the CEC Training Center. In March, 2015, seven working meetings were conducted in Tbilisi, Telavi, Kutaisi, Gori, Senaki, Batumi and Borjomi with the DEC Chairpersons and their coordinators (**160 persons**).

On the basis of the expressed opinions and recommendations, the legal department prepared the draft proposals on amendments to the Election Code of Georgia and presented it to the CEC members. The representatives of the legal department held five working meetings with the CEC members and integrated their comments the final version of the draft amendments. The proposal with attached explanatory card was submitted to the legislative body.

Goal 3: Ensuring inclusive Electoral Environment

Ensuring the inclusive polling environment is one of the main goals of the election administration. As a result of various activities, the CEC achieved significant results in ensuring the accessible electoral environment, engagement of ethnic minorities in electoral processes and improvement of mechanisms for consultations with the electoral stakeholders.

Meetings with ethnic minority representatives in regions

The election administration conducted meetings with ethnic minority voters, in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions in order to raise their awareness on electoral issues ensure their full participation in elections and equal electoral environment.

At the meeting in Gardabani ethnic minorities representatives were informed about the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of election administration, as well as activities of the CEC planned for ethnic minorities in 2015. The meeting participants were also briefed about the process of certification of election administration officials and the CEC Call Center.

The meeting was conducted in Marneuli, within the frameworks of the joint project “Empowering the Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Political Life of Georgia” implemented by the Netherland Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and OSCE High Commissioner Office. The meeting participants were provided with the information on the planned and implemented activities for ethnic minority voters and their employment at the CEC.



Roundtables with NGOs working on ethnic groups

For the purpose of ensuring access of the voters and electoral stakeholders to the information, CEC conducted the meeting with the deputy public defender and the members of the national minority council under the auspices of the Public Defender Office. The CEC chairperson presented to the meeting participants the CEC activities planned for the ethnic minority voters in 2015.



Meeting with the Administration of Muslims of all Georgia



In order to provide the equal election environment for ethnic minorities voters, CEC leadership conducted the meeting with the Sheikh of all Georgia, Mufti of East Georgia and representatives of the Administration of Muslims of all Georgia. The guests got acquainted with the information on the planned activities of the CEC in 2015.

Employment of persons with disabilities at the CEC



Two persons with disabilities were employed at the CEC Call Center and the financial department for the purpose to ensure inclusive election environment and engage persons with disabilities in social life. In addition, concrete measures were defined to facilitate their integration into society.

Support independent participation of visually impaired voters in elections



The CEC studies the best practices on independent participation of visually impaired voters from the EMBs of various countries.

At the first stage, the CEC requested relevant information from **53** EMBs of other countries. As of today, **11** countries (Belarus, Latvia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Ukraine and Germany) responded the request and delivered information about their experiences on independent participation of visually impaired voters in the elections.

As a result of processing and studying the provided information, the CEC requested additional information from only four countries (Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, Slovenia, Belarus).

Goal 4: Support the development of an environment with greater gender equality

The goal of the CEC to ensure gender-balanced and equal electoral environment implies elaboration and implementation of gender policy, as well as encouragement of women's participation in political and public life.

To achieve the mentioned goal, the CEC implemented the following activities:

Elaboration of gender policy of election administration

The gender policy of the election administration supports the women participation in political and public life and constantly ensures raising voter awareness on gender equality issues.

According to 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of the election administration, the CEC has started active work on developing gender policy document. The meeting was conducted with the representatives of the Council of Europe. The participants discussed the necessity of support from the stakeholders involved in the process of elaboration and implementation of the Action Plan. At the meeting, possibility of methodological support of the Council of Europe was also discussed. It should be noted that daily program "Gender News" of Radio Tavisupleba, released information about the planned activities with this regard.

Training on Gender equality issues in terms of elections

The Training Center, in cooperation with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) implemented the training of trainers (ToT). “Gender equality: main principles, their importance and the mechanisms for ensuring equality” was the main topic of the training. The representatives of the CEC and the Training Center, as well as lecturers of the partner universities and trainers of the election administration participated in the training course. The following issues were discussed at the training: basic concepts of gender, gender equality and policy, gender equality in Georgia, gender and elections (quota mechanisms).

The ToT was conducted for 21 participants. Within the framework of the training gender module “Gender and Elections” was developed. Relevant issues were determined for the target groups as well as training method and terms. The mentioned modules have been integrated into the training course of the CEC pilot project – “Electoral Development Schools 2015”.

Processing election information gender composition perspective

The gender statistics of the voters registered in the unified voters’ list and the voters who participated in the elections during the June 15, 2014 Municipal Elections, is available on the CEC website under the banner “Election Map”.

The information on the candidates, nominated through the proportional and majoritarian system as well as information on elected Sakrebulo (local municipality) members, and mayors/governors is available in gender perspective for the stakeholders.

In addition, the CEC processed the gender statistics at all election administration levels.

Gender equality issues within grant contest

On March 24, 2015 the CEC Training Center announced grant contest on the following priority - “support women participation in public-political (electoral) process”. The five grant project submitted under the mentioned priority were funded. The projects aimed at encouraging women participation in electoral processes and considered conducting educational programs, informational campaigns, TV programs and other activities for the propose to realize women’s political and civic rights.

Goal 5: Improve DEC and PEC Delimitation Process

Improvement of DEC and PEC delimitation process implies the unhindered realization of active electoral suffrage.



For the purpose to update the unified voters’ list information was transferred to the CEC by the state agencies defined by the Election Code of Georgia. The CEC processed the relevant information. As of March 1, 2015 the total number of voters amounted to **3471719**.

Strategic Priority 4: Electoral Operations

To ensure Election Day is organized on a highly professional level: to inform society of ongoing election processes and results in an efficient manner

Within the frameworks of the strategic pillar “Electoral Operations”, the CEC set a goals to increase qualification standards of the DEC and PEC members, to ensure expeditious announcement of election results and provide electoral stakeholders with accurate election related information.

In order to achieve the goals, the CEC implemented the following activities:

Goal 3: Provide Stakeholders with Timely and Accurate Election Related Information

The CEC processed the information on budgetary finances received by the political parties/election subjects in 2008-2014. The process served to establish a standard of publishing the statistical data on political financing. A special website was designed at the CEC with its own administration system. The electronic database on the political party/election subject funding was published on the CEC webpage. The data is available for all electoral stakeholders.¹⁵

¹⁵Visit the following link <http://funding.cec.gov.ge>

Elaborate/ publish statistical data on electoral expenditures

The CEC studied the information on election expenditures published on the websites of other EMBs. As a result of the research, the standard form of statistical information on election expenditures was developed. The mentioned standard form was designed as a result of the consultations with representatives of various public authorities. Currently, the format of publishing standard on the CEC website is under discussion.

The election administration continues its working on a forecast model for planning the election budget, which represents a new approach in budgeting. The elaborated model requires further processing and examination.

Problems and their Solutions

During the reporting period, certain problems were revealed at the election administration. The CEC addressed own resources to deal with the problems, particularly:

The CEC announced an open contest to create an image-advertisement concept. However, the competition commission could not reveal the winner. Later, a special working group was set up using their own recourses and the group elaborated the new image-advertisement concept which was based on the administration development stages.

While implementing reporting system, it was identified that presenting reports by the CEC structural units according to the common standards was an obvious necessity. Therefore, for the employees working on the reports, a special presentation was delivered highlighting the reporting standards. During the infrastructural problems at the CEC administrative building, the institution operated under the force majeure conditions. In order to deal with the mentioned issue, the financial department elaborated the rule of weekly checks, examination and inspection of administrative building and its surrounding areas. The mentioned will contribute to the timely identification and prevention of the needs in the future.

Conclusion

During the reporting period, various supportive activities prescribed by the election administration Strategic Plan 2015-2019 and Action Plan 2015 were successfully implemented. It should be underlined, that according to the CEC 2015 Action Plan majority of scheduled activities were fully and timely implemented.

Implementation of the mentioned activities significantly contributed to the institutional strengthening of the election administration, civic and voter education, creation of inclusive electoral environment and providing stakeholders with timely and accurate election related information. As a result of the work performed, the main trends were highlighted and the CEC plans to work with this regard in the upcoming period.

Table N°1

Trainings DEC members		
Name of Training/Seminar	Number of participants	Implemented by
Elections review and basic course of procedures	39	Training Center
Training for DEC members on media relations	69	IFES/USAID
Development skills for the DEC members in the field of correspondence and HR management	69	CEC

Table №2

Trainings for the CEC employees		
Name of the Training/Seminar	Number of participants	Implemented by
Analytical writing course in legal writing	11	Training Center of Justice
Training course for CEC employees in Microsoft Excel	15	CEC
Implementation of the convention on the persons with disabilities through the professional and civic activities - Georgia	1	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland
Informational Security	2	IT-knowledge
Financial modeling using Excel	4	The Academy of the Ministry of Finance
International Public Sector Accounting Standards IPSAS	1	The Academy of the Ministry of Finance
Accounting and reporting of budgetary organizations	1	The Academy of the Ministry of Finance

Ways of election dispute resolution in East and South Caucasus: access to justice and effective legal remedies	2	OSCE/ODIHR, Poland
OSCE/ODIHR training for long-term observers	1	OSCE/ODIHR, Serbia
Local democracy in terms of gender equality	2	Swedish International Center of Local Democracy (ICLD), Sweden

Table №3

International conferences and symposiums		
Name	Implemented by	Place of Conferences/Symposiums
Election administration: regional challenges and Lessons Learned	IFES and CEC of Ukraine	Kiev, Ukraine
Second International Conference – Electoral Integrity and Regional Cooperation	Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania	Bucharest, Romania

12 th International Conference of Electoral Management Bodies	Council of Europe	Brussels, Belgium
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe	Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and National Assembly of France	Paris, France
25 th Anniversary of the First Democratic Elections in Czechoslovakia Following the Fall of Berlin Wall	IFES	Prague, Czech Republic
Conference on “Democratic Governance”	Carl Friedrich Goerdeler - Kolleg for Good Governance	Lvov, Ukraine
10 th International Electoral Symposium	ICPS/Jamaica Election Administration	Montego Bay, Jamaica

Table №4

Name	Quantity
Conclusion on registering/not registering election subjects and draft ordinance	5
State procurement agreement	157
Draft order of the CEC Chairperson	203
Employment Contract	127
Document prepared by the Training Center	2
Memorandum, rule, regulation and instruction prepared by the CEC structural units	29
Draft ordinance	69
Draft decree	5