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**Civil societies of EU and Georgia call for strengthening of media freedom and equal labour market opportunities for men and women**

2nd meeting of the EU-Georgia Civil Society Platform in Brussels

**Georgia has the best track record in freedom of media among the Eastern Partnership countries, but nevertheless sustained efforts are called for in order to raise the standard of journalistic quality, objectivity and ethics, as well as secure their independence and sources of financing. This was one of the main messages of the EU-Georgia** [**Civil Society Platform (CSP)'s second meeting**](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-eu-georgia-02) **held on 16th February at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. The Platform also made recommendations for the Georgian government to mainstream gender equality into government action plans and consolidate efforts to ensure fully-fledged implementation of the Labour law as well as the international labour standards.**

Following its establishment in Tbilisi 8 months ago, the CSP meeting assessed the state of play in the implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, media freedom and equal opportunities in labour market. The CSP adopted a [joint statement](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/final-joint-declaration-2nd-eu-georgia-csp.pdf) with concrete recommendations to relevant authorities both in the Georgia as well as in the European Union. It included an appeal to the Georgian public institutions to increase their internal cooperation and prepare an action plan for strategic communication, and to the EU Member States to support Georgia in developing the communication capacities of its civil servants.

The CSP also called on the Georgian Government and local authorities to promote gender equality more vigorously and aim, in cooperation with civil society organisations, especially the social partners, to create the conditions necessary for bringing women's opportunities into line with those available to men and assuring equal pay for equal work.

At the opening of the meeting, **Archil Karaulashvili**, First Deputy State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia enlisted all the areas where progress had been achieved in Georgia over the past year, however noting that the Georgian government had “no right to relax, as the corruption is not sleeping".

"Georgia has been and remains an excellent partner for cooperation, and we hope that the people will be able to feel the tangible benefits of the Association Agreement very soon ", said **Dirk Schübel**, Head of Unit Eastern Partnership bilateral, European External Action Service , referring among other positive achievements to the expected lifting in the coming month of visa requirements to Georgian citizens with biometric passports for travelling in the Schengen area.

Two reports were debated, namely on equality of opportunity and treatment of men and women in the labour market – by CSP member Raisa Liparteliani and CSP co-chair Andrzej Adamczyk. Frédérique Rychener, Policy Officer of DG Employment on Neighbourhood Policy, presented the European Commission's analysis and strategy in this regard.

Media freedom and audiovisual media development were discussed, and the CSP adopted two reports on these topics by Indre Vareikyte, EESC member and Natia Kuprashvili, CSP member.

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**Background information**

The Platform is one of the bodies set up within the framework of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia. It allows civil society organisations from both sides to monitor the implementation process and prepare recommendations both in Georgia as well as in the EU. Its 18 members represent European civil society networks and civil society organisations from Georgia, to discuss issues of common interest.

The CSP's [inaugural meeting](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-1st-eu-georgia) was held on 16th June 2016 in Tbilisi.

**For more information, please contact:**

Milen Minchev - EESC Press Unit

E-mail: press@eesc.europa.eu

Tel: +32 2 546 87 53

*The European Economic and Social Committee represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. It is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process. The Committee has 350 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union.*