



The European Union
for Georgia

EU4Business: Support to SME and
Private Sector Development



Project “Georgia on European Way: Effective Model for DCFTA and SME Strategy Implementation” Closing Conference

DCFTA Implementation: Partnerships, Push-backs and Potential

May 8, 2019
Tbilisi, Georgia

Venue: Holiday Inn Tbilisi, located at 1, 26 May Square

Since signing the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU in 2014, and subsequent initiation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), Georgia has come several steps closer to integration into the European market. Yet, the DCFTA represents both an opportunity and a challenge for Georgia’s small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In addition to providing a boost to exports and foreign direct investment, it could catalyse institutional and regulatory reforms, helping align Georgia’s domestic standards with those of the EU single market. On the other hand, the DCFTA requires changes both in the ways Georgian producers operate and in the ways their activities are regulated. Until now, it has not been clear to what extent Georgian SMEs are willing and capable of adapting to these new, more stringent requirements.

This conference will present results of the two-year project “Georgia on the European Way: Creation of Effective Model for DCFTA and SME Strategy Implementation” (launched in April 2017), funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument of the European Union and co-funded by Lithuanian Development Cooperation and Democracy Promotion Programme and the Slovak Official Development Assistance - SlovakAid. The project addressed the lack of awareness about opportunities provided by the DCFTA Agreement between Georgia and the EU. It sought to increase the role of Georgian civil society organizations (CSOs) in a nation-wide DCFTA/SME communication campaign and their capacities to assist local small and medium entrepreneurs in their preparations to access the EU single market.

The conference will present Project results, assess the challenges that Georgian SMEs are facing in terms of DCFTA and SME strategy implementation, and good practices for CSOs to become “campaign agents” and inform a significant portion of the population about the benefits of the AA/DCFTA, as well as advocate for reforms and improvements to the implementation process. Conference participants will also discuss recommendations for policy reforms developed during the two-year consultation process in all 10 Georgia’s regions – including the proposals of the local and central councils, and the good experiences of Lithuania and Slovakia.





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Agenda

Working languages: English and Georgian with simultaneous interpretation

May 8, Wednesday:

9.30-10.00 Registration & Welcome Coffee

10.00-10.45 **Opening remarks:**
Dovilė Šukytė, Policy Analyst, Eastern Europe Studies Centre

Welcome Remarks by main supporters of the Project:

H.E. Carl Hartzell, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia

H.E. Giedrius Puodžiūnas, Ambassador of Lithuania to Georgia

H.E. Pavel Vizdal, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Georgia

Keynote Speech:

Khatia Tsilosani, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia

Introduced by **Konstantin Zhgenti**, President, Association of Business Consulting Organizations of Georgia

10.45-12.15 **Civil society engagement in economic development: good practices and lessons learned**

The session will look into current status quo of Georgian civil society organizations' capacities to work on economy related issues and to assist both Georgian government and small and medium enterprises with the DCFTA implementation.

Questions for discussion: How to increase civil society's role in economic development at the local level? Which tasks should be delegated to the civil society organizations and where are their limits? Particularly, how can civil society organizations in Georgian regions assist with the DCFTA implementation and what is their role when it comes to engaging with local businesses? Is civil society only a messenger between the government and local businesses or can it do more? Finally, how to strengthen trilateral cooperation between civil society, small and medium business and decision-makers at local and central levels?

Moderator: **Diana Potjomkina**, PhD Fellow, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Ghent University and United Nations University – CRIS, Belgium

Panellists:

Tamta Tsotskhalashvili, Project Evaluator & Former Head of the European Integration Coordination Division, Office of the State Minister of Georgia for European Integration

Rusudan Kalichava, Executive Director, Association ATINATI, Zugdidi, Georgia

Shota Buchukuri, Director, Mountain Development Center, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Georgia





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Giorgi Chumburidze, Business Support Center Kutaisi

Maksym Koriavets, President, Polissya Foundation for International and Regional Studies, Ukraine & Member of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

12.15-12.45 Coffee break

12.45-14.15 DCFTA and SME strategy implementation in Georgia: how can SMEs benefit?

The session will focus on small and medium enterprises in Georgia by looking into how they have been benefiting or are preparing to benefit from the DCFTA, including their motivation to enter the EU market.

Questions for discussion: What progress has been achieved in the Georgia-EU trade relations since signing the DCFTA? What are the main obstacles for Georgian small and medium businesses to benefit from the DCFTA? What should be done to address these challenges and to accelerate SME strategy implementation? Most importantly, who should be involved and how?

Moderator: **Natia Daghelishvili**, PHD, Project Officer of Georgian Institute of Politics, Associate Professor of Grigol Robakidze University

Panellists:

Aleksi Kochlashvili, Project Evaluator & Lecturer, International Black Sea University, Georgia

Dominik Papenheim, Programme Officer, Delegation of the European Union to Georgia

Giorgi Chitadze, Director of Department, Georgian Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Giorgi Katcharava, Executive Director, EU-Georgia Business Council

Konstantin Zhgenti, President, Association of Business Consulting Organizations of Georgia

Lali Chankseliani, LTD MISHERI, Ozurgeti, Georgia

14.15-15.15 Lunch

15.15-16.45 DCFTA implementation in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine: challenges and perspectives

The session will take a closer look into the DCFTA implementation in all three countries – Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – including main difficulties, and by exchanging lessons learned will aim to provide a roadmap of what has to be done next.

Questions for discussion: What is the impact of DCFTA on the economies of its signatories? Five of the “20 Deliverables for 2020” for the Eastern Partnership are connected to DCFTA, what progress has been achieved on their implementation? How to turn DCFTA-related challenges into advantages for Georgian, Moldovan and





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Ukrainian economies? How to increase the number of small and medium enterprises profiting from DCFTA? What are the gains of DCFTA for ordinary citizens? Finally, when can the full potential of DCFTA be reached?

Moderator: **Ruslanas Iržikevicius**, Editor-in-Chief, Lithuanian Tribune, Lithuania

Panellists:

Mariam Gabunia, Head of the Foreign Trade Policy Department, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia

Lali Gogoberidze, Advisor Business Environment, LLC Reformatics, Georgia

Veronika Movchan, Academic Director, Institute for Economic Research and Policy Consulting – IER, Ukraine

Iulian Rusu, Policy Moderator, Institute for European Policies and Reforms, Moldova

16.45-17.00 Closing Remarks





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Leading partner:

Eastern Europe Studies Center (EESC, Lithuania)

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Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP)



Association of Business Consulting Organizations (ABCO, Georgia)



ATINATI (Georgia)



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Association Caucasus Genetics (Georgia)

