საქართველოს პარლამენტი

Communications Strategy & Action Plan of
Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council

2019-2020

ევროკავშირი
საქართველოსთვის
The European Union for Georgia

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1. About Open Parliament and Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council

Open Government Partnership - OGP[1] is an international initiative founded in 2011, aiming to promote governance based on the principles of transparency, accountability, participation in decision-making and public interest. More than 70 countries are participating in OGP[2].

Georgia was on of the first countries to join the initiative in 2011 and started implementation of its principles[3]. Initially, OGP only considered strengthening the transparency and accountability of executive branches of the government. Later in 2014, the platform expanded and included activities of legislative branch. In 2015, Georgia was the first country to prepare and approve Open Parliament Action Plan for 2015-2016[4] and signed the "Declaration on Open Parliament"[5]. The plan was defined through cooperation of the Inter-faction Working Group and the Consultation Council of the Parliament.

On December 30th of 2015, based on the order of the Chairman of the Parliament a "Permanent Council for Open and Transparent Governance" (now "Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council") was established, overtaking the work of Inter-faction Working Group of the Parliament. The Council is based on inter-faction principles and consists of 12 members, including the Chairman of the Parliament, 7 MPs from the parliamentary majority, 2 MPs from the parliamentary minority, and 2 opposition MPs outside of the parliamentary minority[6] [7]. The main mission of the Council is to ensure transparency of parliamentary activities, to define an Action Plan for the Parliament of Georgia within OGP framework and its implementation.

The Consultation Group to the Council consists of 15 local and international non-governmental organizations[8]. Its main mission is to prepare recommendations and proposals for the Parliamentary Council, promoting effective execution of its functions, and monitoring of implementation of the commitments taken under the Open Parliament Action Plan.

From 2015 to now the Parliament of Georgia has adopted and implemented 3 Action Plans: 2015-2016, 2017 and 2018-2019 (ongoing)[9]. First two Plans included 34 commitments, 15 of which have been fully implemented and 14 – partially[10]. The third, ongoing Action Plans includes 5 ambitious commitments.

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[1] https://www.opengovpartnership.org/
[2] https://www.opengovpartnership.org/participants
[3] http://justice.gov.ge/Ministry/Department/273
[4] https://bit.ly/2RhPdQZ
[5] https://bit.ly/2JfWU7e
[6] https://bit.ly/2PgLrdh
[7] https://bit.ly/2KhLzY8
[8] https://bit.ly/2tGSPSY
[9] https://bit.ly/2z2CslI
[10] Council reports: https://bit.ly/2Pk74cx

Members of Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council

Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia	Irina Pruidze, Chairwoman of the Council, First Deputy Chairwoman of Committee on European Integration
Tamar Chugoshvili, First Deputy Chairwoman of the Parliament	Eka Beselia, Chairwoman of Committee on Legal Issues
Giorgi Kakhiani, Chairman of Procedural Issues and Rules Committeee	Irakli Kovzanadze, Deputy Chairman of Budget and Finance Committee
Giorgi Tughushi, Deputy Chairman of Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee	Guguli Maghradze, Deputy Chairwoman of Education, Science and Culture Committee
Emzar Kvitsiani, Deputy Chairman of Diaspora and Caucasus Issues	Kakhaber Kuchava, Chairman of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee
Tinatin Bokuchava, Deputy Chairwoman of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee	Otar Kakhidze, Chairman of European Georgia faction

2. Foreword

This document is a strategic plan for the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council and covers a two-year period (2019-2020). The Council confirms a strategy document and its Action Plan **[See Annex I – Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council Communications Action Plan: 2019-2020].**

Preparation of this strategy and the action plan is one of the commitments (an initiative of the Young Lawyers Association) taken under the third Open Parliament Action Plan (2018-2019). It aims to define communication of the Council and other Members of the Parliament with the society in 2019-2020. The Council, with active participation from the Department of Public Relations and Information (hereafter – Department), is responsible for the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan.

A communication strategy is an important mechanism for institutionalization and development of systemic approaches to public relations processes. Therefore, this document defines the mission, vision, and main principles of the Council's communications with the society. During the preparation process of this document the current conditions and challenges facing the Council in the field of public communications were analyzed and recommendations addressing those challenges were prepared.

The strategy includes goals, based on which the Council along with the Department will prepare and implement informational and other events.

The document also discusses messages of the Council, based on its vision. The strategy includes communication methods that will enable the Council to have an effective communication with target internal and external audiences and interest groups.

The strategy includes an annex of the two-year Action Plan (2019-2020), which details measures to be implemented by the Council in the next two years (see Annex 1).

Implementation of the activities in this plan will ensure: *1) increase of public awareness of OGP, Council mission, its activities and results 2) increase of public awareness of the Parliament and Parliamentarism[11]; 3) promotion of public engagement and participation in the parliamentary activities 4) increase of public awareness and usage of the new technologies and innovative approaches defined in the Action Plan to boost the communication between the Parliament and the public; 5) informing of the international community about ongoing activities and achievements in the field of legislative transparency of the Parliament of Georgia in the framework of OGP.*

3. Methodology

Following methodology was used to prepare the Strategy and the Action Plan:

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[11] This is one of the commitments taken under the Open Parliament third Action Plan for 2018-2019: https://bit.ly/2PiN9uA

- ✓ <u>**Analysis of existing information**</u> – Declaration on Open Parliament, Provisions of the Council, Open Parliament Action Plans of Georgia (completed 2015-2016, 2017; ongoing: 2018-2019) and the reports of implementation, press releases of the Department; news regarding the activities and events of the Council published on the website of the Parliament and its social media channels (text and video material) were analyzed. The 2014-2016 Communication Strategy document of the Parliament of Georgia prepared with the support of EU-UNDP was also used during the preparation of the given strategy.

- ✓ <u>**International Experience**</u> **–** Various measures aiming to improve legislative openness in the other member countries of OGP have been researched and analyzed – specifically, cases from Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, and other countries.

- ✓ <u>**Meetings and questionnaires for interested parties**</u> – In preparation of the Strategy and the Action Plan consultations were held with the members of the teams of public relations and information, and public service departments; to prepare the document SWAT analysis was conducted with the Members of the Parliament, staff members and members of the Consultation Group (consisting of international and local organizations).

4. Existing challenges and recommendations

A methodologic and analytical tool known as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) was applied. Using this method, the current condition of the Council was analyzed and its strengths and weaknesses were identified, as well as, appropriate recommendations for successful public communication were prepared, along with identifying the current or possible future challenges of the Council.

Based on the capacities and challenges, the following strategic goals and activities were defined (See Annex I).

S – Strength	➢ Competence of the members of the Council and the Consultation Group; their readiness to increase openness of the Council activities and to maximize public engagement in the parliamentary activities; ➢ Competence of the Parliament's Department for Public Relations and Information and its human resources (4 divisions: media monitoring and analysis; press center; public relations and public event planning and web management); ➢ Steps taken in regards to youth/student engagement; ➢ Local meetings in various regions of Georgia; ➢ Support of donor organizations (however, this could also be a threat, in case of its absence the Council won't be able to function); ➢ Connection to private sector and its readiness to cooperate; ➢ High international awareness of the Council's activities.
W – Weakness	❖ Lack of a unified strategic vision and action plan for the Council' public communication; ❖ Low awareness of the Council and Open Parliament activities/results within and outside of the country; including among the Member of Parliament and staff; ❖ Non-systematic (in a form of a campaign) distribution of news regarding the Council across the online channels of the Parliament; ❖ Inconsistent informing of media and coverage of news regarding the Council activities and measures implemented to improve legislative openness (based mainly on events); ❖ Lack of detailed budget in accordance with the Action Plan; ❖ Limited resources (financial and human); ❖ Lack of interest among MP members of the Council, their busy schedule and rotation.

O–Opportunities	❖ Expansion of the Consultation Group format and finding interested parties and organizations; ❖ Providing news to the public in a systemic way and promotion of products created within the Action Plan in a form of a campaign (which will increase public engagement in parliamentary activities); ❖ Active usage of social networks and implementation of social campaigns; ❖ Increased public participation in the Action Plan preparation process, with a goal of attracting new ideas; ❖ Periodic informing of the diplomatic missions in Georgia; ❖ It is recommended that the Council have its own budget or at least, approximate annual budget be known to allow for effective management of the existing resources; ❖ Creation and implementation of working meeting format of the Council with journalists.
T- Threats	❖ Lack of public interest towards the activities of the Council; ❖ Non-systematic usage of internet and social media space by the public; ❖ Political processes and other acute issues on the agenda of the Parliament; ❖ Distribution of incorrect information regarding the results of the Open Parliament project by political opponents or media.

5. Mission, vision, values, and goals of the Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council

5.1. Vision

Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council is a competent, transparent, and well-regarded body, which promotes strengthening of parliamentary democracy in Georgia and effective communication of achievements in parliamentary openness in the country to the public.

5.2. Mission

Ensuring increased public trust towards the legislative body, through engagement of the public in parliamentary activities, participation in decision-making and providing increased access to parliamentary information.

5.3. Values

All Council members agree that values listed below are main operating principles. They are loyal to these principles and conduct their activities based on these values:

- ❖ <u>**Openness and transparency**</u> **–** Activities of the Council are open to the public and transparent. Every member of the Council is ready for open and transparent communication with the public, which is one of the main prerequisites for establishment of public trust and communication.

- ❖ <u>**Strategic planning**</u> **–** Strategic approach to activities is crucial for success, which also includes goal-oriented strategic communication and effective utilization of local and international resources.

- ❖ <u>**Coordinated work**</u> **–** High level of internal coordination is of paramount importance. Successful public communication often depends on coordination of activities among the Council members, the Council and Parliament staff and other units.

- ❖ <u>**Professionalism**</u> **–** Professionalism implies possession of necessary knowledge and diligence towards work. Comprehension of responsibilities towards the public, timely and effective performance of duties, as well as, aspiration to expand professional knowledge and develop skills is a prerequisite for all Council members.

- ❖ <u>**Innovation**</u> **–** The Council views its work in regards to public communication objectively and critically and constantly tries to utilize modern methods, new technologies and innovative approaches to increase public participation (in the Council and Parliament activities).

5.4. Goals

Within the next 2 years the Council will plan and conduct activities based on the following goals:

Goal 1
- Increase public awareness of OGP, Council mission, activities, and results (in regards to legislative openness in the country)

Goal 2
- Inform the public on ongoing processes relating to openess of the Parliament and promote paritcipation of interested parties

Goal 3
- Promote new technologies and innovative approaches to ensure parliamentary openness, as well as, increase public awareness about utilizing these technologies and methods to increase communication with public

**** In the process of implementation of the measures to achieve these goals particular attention will be paid to participation of youth, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities and other interested parties as well as promotion of achievements and processes of legislative openness in Georgia on the international level.

6. Target audience

Legislative openness is a complex process, success of which depends on cooperation between the Parliament and citizens. Therefore, this process implies providing information by the Council to citizens and ensuring their participation in the ongoing reforms and activities.

The Council, due to its institutional significance, has a wide internal and external audience. The most important among them are the citizens of Georgia, communication with them is one of the main goal of the Council.

Internal and external audiences of the Council:

External target audience	Internal target audience
❖ Population (inside and outside of the country, rural and urban inhabitants, diaspora, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, and etc.); ❖ Non-governmental sector/civil society; ❖ Representatives of public and private educational institutions: pupils and students, teachers (central and regional); ❖ Media (central, regional, and international); ❖ Private sector; ❖ Foreign partners: governments and parliaments of the OGP member countries, international organizations, diplomatic representatives, etc.; ❖ Local and central government representatives.	❖ Members of the Parliament; ❖ Leadership and members of Parliament staff; ❖ Political groups within the Parliament – fractions and individuals responsible for their public relations; ❖ Members of the Consultation Group (local and international organizations); ❖ Donor organizations working with the Council; ❖ Chancellery of the Government of Georgia ❖ Ministry of Justice; ❖ Member organizations and agencies of Ministry of Justice OGP forum; ❖ City Hall of Tbilisi.

7. Mediums and channels of communication with the target groups

Direct and indirect communication mediums can be used for communication with a target audience. In an indirect communication the target audience receives information through intermediary parties. Intermediary, interested parties include media (central, regional, and international), civil and non-governmental organizations, interest groups (business sector, educational facilities, etc.).

In a direct communication, the target audience receives information in a meeting with a member of the Council, in a Council meeting or a public meeting, as well as, through information dispersed by the Council and its services. To achieve the goals the Council will use following internal and external communication mediums and channels:

✓ **Branded informational publications** – Creation of a brand visual identity of the Council (presentations, schedule of the Council, folder, electronic event banners, event photos, monitoring reports, etc.) and its utilization during various events. The Council will prepare and distribute informational and educational print and electronic materials (flyers, infographics, etc.) about its

role, mission, achievements, and other important subjects. Additionally, in the content or description section of other informational publications of the Council, it should be noted that the publication was prepared within the framework of the Council's activities. Along with other logos, logo of OGP should be used in publications.

- ✓ **Organizing special and innovative contests and awarding winners** – For example: electronic tests (quiz) – how well do you know your parliament, intellectual contests among students and universities, country-wide contest for analytical articles about the Parliament based on public information (promotion of public information module usage), awarding active citizens to increase awareness of Parliament's activities. Winners will receive various material and immaterial gifts. To promote an event, it is important to conduct an informational campaign and organize an award ceremony. It is also important to organize informational meetings across the country, with participation of the Council members, with students and teachers (schools and universities), non-governmental organizations, media, municipalities, private sector, and other interested groups.

- ✓ **Strategic approach to communication with media** – media coverage (broadcasting, print, and online) of various events planned and organized by the Council is crucial for establishment of strong connection with the public. Therefore, it is essential that the Department of Public Relations and Information is actively involved at the earliest stages of Council event planning, including strategic planning (format selection, main messages, definition of communication channels, etc.).

  The Department will assist the Council in preparation and distribution of media announcements, press releases, news, analytic articles, interviews, and other communication material. Additionally, the Council and the Department will select main topics relevant to a particular time period and will ensure their proper coverage through internal and external communication channels. Distribution of interviews and thematic discussions across various media channels is of particular significance. For these purposes, the Department will, based on various time periods but at least once in 4 months, select 2 topics (these topics could be ones of particular interest to media and receiving extensive coverage, or topics that are important but do not receive adequate media attention). The Council will also utilize regional broadcasters.

- ✓ **Production and distribution of video material** – Production of serial video clips about new electronic services (petition portal, mobile application, public information module, etc.) developed within the Council framework, and their distribution through the Parliament website and social network channels will significantly increase public awareness of Council activities, as well as, interest of citizens to participate in the legislative process. Production of videos based on journalistic standards will also enable other media outlets, especially regional broadcaster, to further distribute it (as a social commercial); these clips can also be used at various meetings.

- ✓ **Internet and social media** – The Council will use internet and social media (the Parliament website and social networks) to communicate with opinion makers, youth, and urban population. The Department will ensure timely processing and distribution of clips across various channels

(including website, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Flickr; with appropriate photo and video material). To reach widest possible audience, it is recommended that material (also in English language) distributed across social media channels be sponsored and be re-shared/sponsored on social network/official pages of the Members of the Parliament.

✓ **Taking photos at events and other important meetings** – The Department will ensure photo documentation of Council activities and distribution of these materials across various communication channels (website, social media, media).

✓ **Communication with external audience** – The Council will organize topical meetings with public and private educational institutions (school and higher educational institutions, students, and teachers), media, non-governmental organizations, international and donor organizations, diplomatic missions, etc. These meetings must be attended by the chairpersons of fractions and committees. Various formats can be used at these meetings: roundtable/discussions, presentations, etc. Additionally, the Council will ensure distribution of various publications, video material, event-related articles, etc. produced internationally within the Open Parliament program.

✓ **Communication with internal audience –** To solidify internal communication system, it is important to develop and implement internal communication system between the Council and members of the Consultation Group. To exchange information about strategic plans and significant activities regular meetings (direct meetings, electronic communications, etc.) are crucial.

Also of particular importance is once-in-three-months meeting of leaders of the Department of Public Relations and Information with the Chairman of the Council. In these meetings the heads of the Department will exchange information on conducted and planned activities, as well as, on challenges, strategic plans, and significant activities. To exchange information, at least one meeting in 6 months should be organized between the Department and the Council. Meetings of the Council and the Consultation Group with the Chairman of the Parliament to discuss strategic topics and other important issues are crucial. To inform (regarding events, achievements, etc.) the Members of Parliament and the staff e-mail communication should be used.

✓ **Distribution of Parliament Bulletin** – Once a quarter, the Parliament prepares and distributes (electronically and in print) Parliament Bulletin, which includes important parliamentary and non-parliamentary news, interviews, photo reports and other materials for the reporting period. Information about the activities and events of the Council should also be included in the Bulletin.

✓ **Placement of communication materials in the Parliament building and public institutions, and organization of appropriate informational corners** – To promote parliamentary activities and increase participation of citizens in the legislative process, it is essential that informational corners/stands be organized in the citizen reception space of the Parliament building, media center and other similar spaces. Publications (brochures, reports, flyers, etc.) prepared within the Council framework will be displayed in these spaces. It is also important that such corners be organized in

public institutions where a large number of citizens are often present – such as Houses of Justice, Civil Centers, Governor's/Governor representative offices, higher education facilities, etc.

✓ **Electronic communication** – It is essential that the Council prepare database (name, last name, position, institution, contact number, e-mail address) of the target audience (local and international) working on the topic of open parliament; various types of information should be provided to these groups through mailing lists.

*** For participation of persons with disabilities appropriate sign language and braille translations must be used at events, in publications and video material; For engagement of ethnic and religious minorities materials must also be translated in other languages; For international target audience, materials must be translated in English and/or include English subtitles.

When defining appropriate communication channels, which target group will receive information through that channel must be analyzed. To reach wider audience, diverse communication methods must be used.

Target audience	Medium
External target audience	
❖ Population: Urban and rural, diaspora, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities; ❖ Non-governmental sector/ civil society organizations; ❖ Public and private educational facilities: pupils, students, teachers (central and regional); ❖ Private sector.	❖ Broadcasting (TV and Radio), print and online media; ❖ Parliament Website; ❖ Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube; ❖ Meetings, thematic events, event schedules, invitations, etc.; ❖ Print publications (reports, posters, flyers, etc.); ❖ Video and photo material; ❖ Mailing lists.
❖ Foreign partners: governments and parliaments of OGP member countries, diplomatic representatives, international organizations, etc.	❖ Participation of the Council members in international events; ❖ Mailing lists; ❖ Meetings/Presentations; ❖ Articles/Press releases; ❖ Video and photo material.
❖ Media: central, regional, and international	❖ Press releases, media announcements; ❖ Mailing lists; ❖ Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube; ❖ Meetings, Presentations; ❖ Print publications (reports, posters, flyers, etc.); ❖ Video and photo material.
❖ Representatives of the central and local governments	❖ Meetings, thematic events; ❖ Social media; ❖ Mailing lists; ❖ Print publications (reports, posters, flyers, etc.)

Internal target audience	
❖ Members of the Parliament; ❖ Leadership of the Staff of the Parliament and appropriate team members; ❖ Chancellery of the Government of Georgia; ❖ Ministry of Justice; ❖ Member organizations and agencies of OGP Forum of Ministry of Justice; ❖ City Hall of Tbilisi; ❖ Political groups of the Parliament – factions and their PR team representatives; ❖ Member of the Consultation Group of the Council: local and international organizations; ❖ Donor organizations working with the Council.	❖ Direct communication: meetings, seminars, presentations, articles, etc. ❖ Mailing lists; ❖ Parliament Website; ❖ Social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube.

8. Main topics and messages in public communication

Main topics – It is essential for the public to have information on the functioning of the Council, what role it plays in the establishment of the Parliamentary democracy, what commitments have been made in the Open Parliament Action Plans, progress, and the results that the Parliament has achieved on those commitments; it's also important that the public be more informed and participate more actively in the parliamentary activities.

Main messages – Parliament is the highest legislative body of the country and guarantor of democracy in the country. Therefore, the main messages of the Council should rely upon the principles of openness, transparency and professionalism and should include the main topics that the Council is working on. It is also essential to note inter-factionary character of the Council, allowing it to ensure development of the Parliament as an institution.

The messages should encourage the population to actively engage in the parliamentary activities; encourage the senses of civic and social responsibilities. It is also encouraged that the term "Your Parliament" be established and be frequently used.

Individual messages must be defined for each Council event; however, they should not go beyond or contradict general messages and communication principles. It is important that the messages regarding the Council, as an institution, distributed by the Parliamentary subjects be in accordance with the pre-defined messages and help establish and strengthen a positive institutional image for the Parliament.

Key Messages:

- ❖ *Participate and make parliament more open*
- ❖ *Council is an inter-faction body that ensures institutional development of the Parliament*
- ❖ *This is your parliament*
- ❖ *Your idea for the open Parliament*
- ❖ *Success of the country depends on your active participation*
- ❖ *Participate in legislative process*
- ❖ *Control the government with the Members of the Parliament*
- ❖ *Reach your MP*
- ❖ *Be an active citizen, participate in parliamentary activities*
- ❖ *Petition – Your voice in parliament*

The Parliament of Georgia is the highest representative body of the country, which means that every member of the Parliament is elected through a vote cast in a ballot box. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the perception that the Parliament belongs to citizens.

9. Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy

Monitoring and evaluation are important parts of the Strategy. It allows for an analysis of achievements. Flexible monitoring and evaluation system will be used in the reporting period. Monitoring will allow for evaluation of implementation effectiveness of proposals made in the strategy action plan, as well as, identification of specific short-fallings and challenges in the implementation process.

Action plan monitoring – The Council together with Department of Public Relations and Information of the Parliament of Georgia will evaluate the level and quality of achievements of goals/activities defined in the Strategy and Action Plan. Based on the evaluation the Council will prepare a monitoring and evaluation report and present to the Working Group for a review/discussion and hear their recommendations.

The quality of achievement of Strategy goals and aims will be evaluated after the completion of the Strategy, at the end of 2020, based on the Action Plan Annual Evaluation Reports. The Council will present the report to the Consultative Group.

Also see Annex I – Open Governance Permanent Parliamentary Council Communications Action Plan: 2019-2020