

REGIONAL CONFERENCE
MONEY IN POLITICS



18–19 FEBRUARY 2016
TBILISI, GEORGIA

PRACTICAL INFORMATION



#moneyinpolitics

Welcome to this two-day regional conference that is co-organized by the State Audit Office of Georgia (SAOG), the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Council of Europe , International IDEA, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD).

INTRODUCTION

Few would deny that money plays a central role in the political dynamics of Eastern and Central European politics. Despite differences in political systems and cultural values, many countries in this region share common challenges in the areas of money in politics.

Like in many parts of the world, involvement in politics has become a lucrative affair for a select few as witnessed by the influence of oligarchs or corporations and the large flows of money into politics. The phenomenon of business people advancing their corporate or personal interests as elected representatives is not unusual and private sector kickbacks in return for government favors have been behind party funding scandals in many countries.

Another crucial and recurrent issue is the misuse of administrative resources, often during the electoral process. Whether the abuse is related to unequal access to media or to governments extracting money from state owned companies, its effects on the ability for equal competition between the government and the opposition is damaging. Even more serious is the reported penetration of illegal funds into politics, stemming for example from organized crime or foreign sources.

Transparency remains an additional challenge; official reports are often incomplete and only show an estimated fraction of the amounts that flow in and out of politics. In cases where data is made public it is often in a



disorganized and non-user-friendly manner- all of which hinders public scrutiny. Although there are numerous factors that contribute to poor transparency surrounding political finance, the relatively low donation and spending limits in many countries contributes to parties seeking funding elsewhere.

In response to these problems, countries in Eastern and Central Europe have issued over the last decades more detailed regulations on money in politics than any other region in the world¹. Elaborate political finance regimes include limits on donations and spending, strict transparency rules and sometimes generous public funding schemes that aim to counterbalance private donations. However, despite the detailed legal frameworks on political finance, many countries are still grappling with the implementation of the rules. Although not unique to this region, the enforcement of rules remains a considerable challenge, fueled by a lack of political will to create strong enforcement mechanisms, a lack of mandate or capacity of the competent oversight agency and unclear reporting procedures for parties and candidates.

WHY A REGIONAL CONFERENCE?

Guided by a series of regional recommendations on political finance regulation, promoted among others by the Council of Europe through the reports of its Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), and by the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe, several countries in this region have taken serious steps towards improving their legal frameworks and the practical implementation of political finance rules.

With increasing *de jure* control over money in politics in Eastern and Central Europe, the focus of discussions during this conference will be on the implementation of these rules and on assessing what has worked and how to

¹ International IDEA's Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns, page 3 (2014).



effectively enforce political party finance rules. Enhancing disclosure of political party funding and monitoring the use (or abuse) of administrative resources will also be topics for debate. The above discussions will ultimately aim at moving from a policy-based discussion to a practice-based discussion, where new laws and practices introduced are based on their proven effectiveness in other contexts.

The conference also represents an opportunity for political finance oversight agencies and civil society to create alliances and deepen their collaboration across national borders. Topics for discussion during the conference include: how to design effective regulatory bodies; how to monitor political finance income and expenditure; and how to increase transparency through better reporting.

In short, the conference aims to achieve the following:

- Identify areas of political finance implementation that require reforms, using OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe Election Observation Missions' reports as well as GRECO Reports, and offer suggestions on how to design such reforms;
- Exchange good practices and lessons learned regarding the effective enforcement and monitoring of political finance legal frameworks;
- Identify approaches, mechanisms and procedures for improving the implementation of existing regulations; and
- Contribute to the creation of a regional peer network on political finance.

The regional conference on Money in Politics in Tbilisi will build on global findings from similar recent political finance conferences, including the Global Conference on Money in Politics held in Mexico in September 2015.

FORMAT, VENUE AND PARTICIPANTS



The conference will take place over two days. The first day will start with thought-provoking presentations on contemporary developments of money in politics in the region. This overview of political finance will be followed by parallel working sessions, which will allow participants to examine challenges and experiences in more detail. The working sessions will continue during the second day of the conference, with a final session dedicated to illustrate findings and recommendations emerged during the discussions.

Participants will primarily be composed of key actors that shape or enforce political finance policy at the regional and national level. This includes political party officials, political finance enforcement agencies, international organizations, watchdogs from civil society, international and citizen observers, as well as academia.

For more details you can consult the event program or visit the website created for this event at: www.moneyinpolitics2016.sao.ge

WELCOME TO TBILISI!

ARRIVAL



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If you wish to be picked up at the Airport, please ensure you provide in advance your flight itinerary to Mr. Zurab Aznaurashvili at zaznaurashvili@sao.ge or +995 599 98 11 55. If you choose to arrive to Tbilisi earlier than 17th of February or stay longer after the event, transportation will be still provided by the SAOG.

Once you have confirmed these details, SAOG staff members will gladly welcome you at the Tbilisi International Airport and provide appropriate transportation to your hotel. Our welcome team will be holding the event's image and will be waiting for you at the exit, after you go through the regular immigration procedures and pick up your luggage.

Please note that on the day of your departure from Tbilisi, you should be at the hotel reception to be transferred to the airport, two hours before your flight.

VISA

There are some nationalities that require a visa to Georgia. In the following link you will find information about whether you are required to complete this process or not:

<https://www.geoconsul.gov.ge/HtmlPage/Html/View?id=32&lang=Eng>

PREMISES AND ACCOMMODATION

The conference will take place over two days in **Hotel Marriott Tbilisi** - 13 Rustaveli Avenue, Tbilisi 0108, Georgia.

Opening and Closing remarks will be held in the Ballroom. The working sessions will be held in the Ballroom and Meeting room King George.

International guests will get double occupancy rooms. Special rate for the conference participants will be 120 USD (excluding VAT +18%) per night with breakfast.



For sponsored participants the room reservation will be made by sponsor organization, for self-funded participants the booking will be made by SAOG representatives (please contact Mr. Zurab Aznaurashvili at zaznaurashvili@sao.ge).

For those staying at Hotel Marriot Tbilisi, participants are accommodated in single standard rooms. Each room is equipped with a bathroom. The telephone in the room can be used for internal calls (not working with local or international numbers). Hair dryers and irons are available from the reception.

INTERNET AND WI-FI

Participants can access the Hotel Wi-Fi network during the event. Password will be provided during the registration.

MEDICAL CARE

Medical facilities are located in different parts of the city; the closest to the Marriott Tbilisi is High Technology Medical Center <http://www.htmclinic.com/en>

WEATHER AND CLOTHING

The average daily temperature in February ranges between 2 and 8°C, and there can often be a lot of rain at this time of year. Make sure to bring warm and comfortable clothes as well as an umbrella.

CONTACT

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding your arrival or during your stay, please feel free to contact Mr. Zurab Aznaurashvili at zaznaurashvili@sao.ge or +995 599 98 11 55

A NOTE ON GEORGIA

Capital city: Tbilisi

Population: ~ 3,7 million



Population of Tbilisi: ~ 1,7 million

Language: Georgian

Ethnic groups (2002): 83.8% Georgian, 6.5% Azerbaijani, 5.7% Armenian, 1.5% Russian, 2.5% others

Religion: 83.9% Orthodox Christian, 9.9% Muslims, 3.9% Armenian Christians, 0.8% Roman Catholics, 1,5% other.

Electric plug: European plug with two circular metal pins

Country Dialing Code: Georgia: 00995 or +995

Money: The Georgian currency is Lari (GEL). 1 EUR = 2.64 GEL, 1 USD = 2.42 GEL. You CANNOT pay in Euro or US dollars. You can exchange money at the airport or bank offices, but it is preferable to use one of the many exchange boxes or cash points across the city.

Safety: Tbilisi is a safe city but as with other popular tourist destinations you need to be vigilant.

Emergency Number - Any kind of emergency: 112

Public Transport: Tbilisi public transport includes underground (metro), buses, minibuses and taxis.

City buses

The buses travel around the entire city and cost 50 Tetri (20 cents). You can buy a ticket at the ticket machine in the bus. The ticket machine doesn't give change so the fare should be paid exactly. Buses run at fixed times from 7am till 12pm. Early in the morning and in the evening they run infrequently. Buses stop at specified bus stops.

Metro



Tbilisi Underground, called the Metro for “Metropolitan”, has two lines and 21 stations. It operates from 6:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The cost is set at 50 Tetri (20 cents). Metro tokens can only be purchased inside the metro station from cashiers’. Metro stations are identified by the red (M) sign.

IF YOU STAY FOR THE WEEKEND

If you decide to stay for the weekend SAOG representatives will be organizing a tourist group trips with several options. In case of interest please contact Mr. Zurab Aznaurashvili (zaznaurashvili@sao.ge; +995 599 98 11 55)

ORGANIZERS

THE STATE AUDIT OFFICE OF GEORGIA (SAOG)

The SAOG represents the modern, independent and successful audit institution with the highest professional standards, the interference in the activity of which is prohibited by the law. With its work SAOG supports the parliament in overseeing the activities of the government and significantly contributes to the Parliamentary oversight over the government. On December 30, 2011, legislative amendments in the Georgia’s organic law “On Political Unions of Citizens” came into force. According to the law, monitoring implementation on legality and transparency of the political parties registered in Georgia was entrusted to the State Audit Office of Georgia.

OSCE OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS (ODIHR)

OSCE-ODIHR is one of the world’s principal regional human rights bodies. Based in Warsaw, Poland, ODIHR is active throughout Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and North America. The office promotes democratic elections,



respect for human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, and the rule of law. Established in 1991, ODIHR employs nearly 150 staff from 30 countries. The office's activities are funded through a core budget, which is approved annually by participating states, as well as through voluntary contributions.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE (IDEA)

Over the past fifteen years, International IDEA has provided direct technical assistance to a range of actors working on political finance and has worked in countries as diverse as Bhutan, Ecuador, Kenya, Mongolia, Myanmar, Sweden and Peru. International IDEA produces knowledge resources on political finance legislative frameworks and their practical implementation, which guide both researchers and reformers around the world. The Political Finance Database, for example, offers the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on political finance regulations from 180 countries. Last year International IDEA and published a new handbook on political finance: Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns, while its study on Political Party Finance Regulation after the Arab Spring provides rich regional overviews on how such regulation works in practice at national level.

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS (IFES)

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supports citizens' rights to participate in free and fair elections. Its independent expertise



strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions. As the global leader in democracy promotion, IFES advance good governance and democratic rights by: Providing technical assistance to election officials; Empowering the underrepresented to participate in the political process; Applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle. Since 1987, IFES has worked in over 145 countries – from developing democracies, to mature democracies.

THE NETHERLANDS INSTITUTE FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY (NIMD)

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is a democracy assistance organization that promotes the deepening of democracy through interparty dialogue and capacity strengthening of political parties. Based in the Netherlands, NIMD works with over 200 political parties in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and South Caucasus. Together with the political parties and the local implementing partners, NIMD contribute to inclusive and stable political systems in these countries. Furthermore, NIMD assist political parties to become more responsive and policy-focused. Special attention is paid to empowering members of marginalized groups. To foster the democratic culture in a country, NIMD also provides political education programs for (aspiring) politicians. These programs focus on democratic values, knowledge and skills.

