

Politics

NDI's study on the country's well being

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has conducted a new study on how well the country is doing.

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The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia introduces changes to the Organic Law on the Courts

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Economics

Geostat: 1.8 million visitors traveled to Georgia in the II quarter, a decrease of 37.2%

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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

On September 12th, Central Election Commission –(CEC) published a statement on the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, which is a set of norms of voluntary ethics for the upcoming 2020 parliamentary elections in Georgia developed by CEC with the help of international partners and within the participation of political

On the Code of Conduct for Political Parties



CEC
ELECTION ADMINISTRATION
OF GEORGIA

"With the support of Switzerland, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), the CEC of Georgia has facilitated the process of drafting a Code of Conduct for political parties for the Parliamentary Elections 2020."

parties. The code is aimed at protecting democratic values and fundamental freedoms, also, conduct of substantive, program-oriented, inclusive election campaigns, which assures that equal opportunities are provided for electoral stakeholders.

The Code of Conduct for Political Parties was developed in response to the recommendations received from numerous reports by international election observation missions and other international shareholders. The recommendations regarded setting and development of standards which would regulate ethical election campaigns,

including the prevention of the spread of hate speech and xenophobia. The statement reads that a similar recommendation was made in the relevant report of the Public Defender of Georgia (ombudsman), where the ombudsman calls on the Central Election Commission of Georgia to develop and propose to the political parties the document of mutual agreement "on the use of hate speech during the election period, uniform definition of hate speech and refraining from such statements."

According to the statement, the process of drafting a code was facilitated by the support of Switzerland, the

U.S Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). The Code of Conduct for Political Parties complies with recognised international standards and is based on the principles of ethics signed by the presidential candidates, organised by CEC with the support of Switzerland, during the presidential elections of 2018.

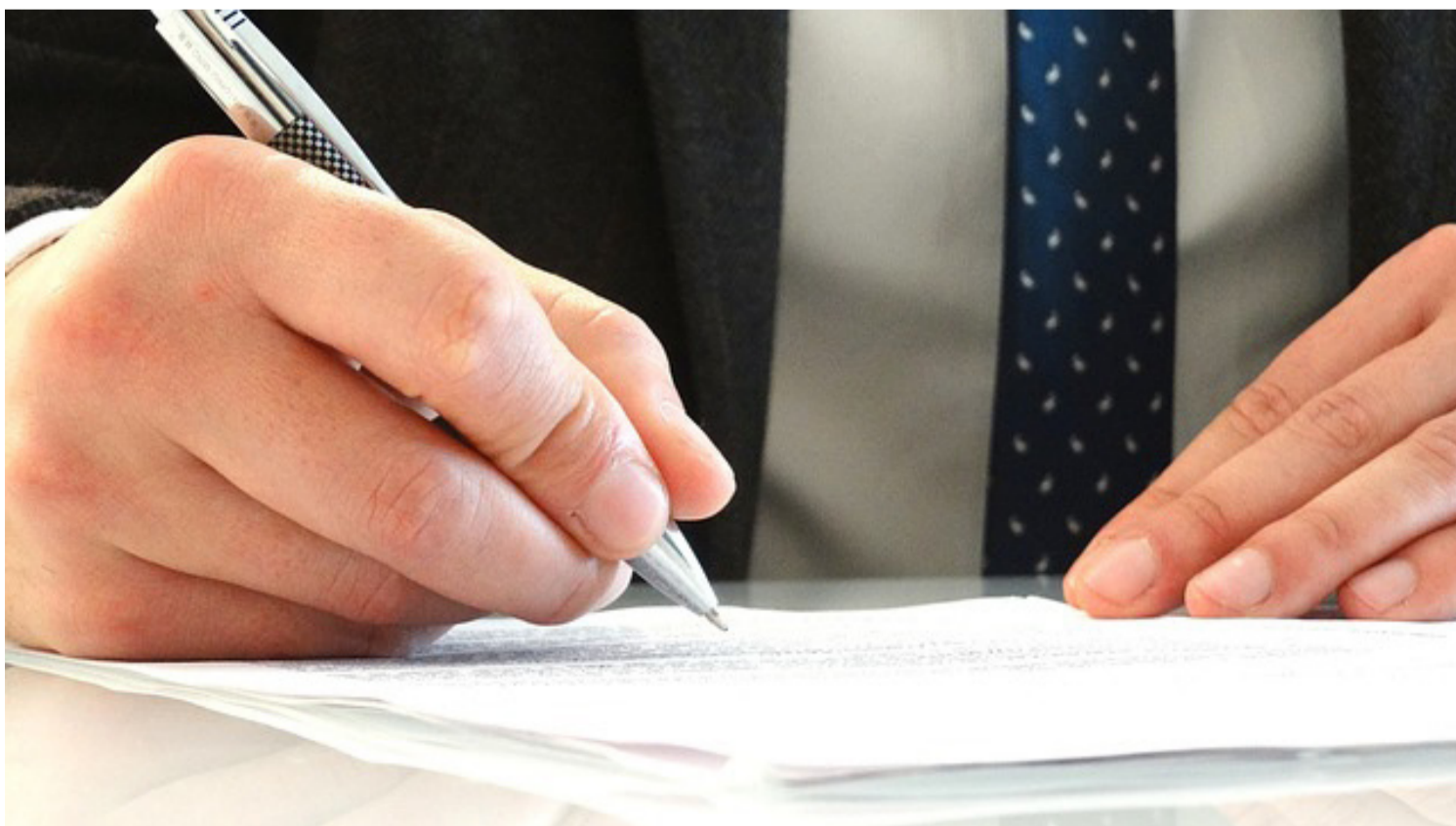
CEC notes that the code is also based on the universally recognised principles of electoral ethics and includes the standards on fair and decent competition, recognition and respect for the rights of voters and participant parties.

The signature of the code (printed or e-version) is provided to all political unions registered for the elections and if desired, parties can join it with the signature of the chairperson.

In the statement published by the Embassy of Switzerland to Georgia, Switzerland congratulates political parties that have signed the Code of Conduct and encourages all parties to join.

"We call the parties to abide by the Code of Conduct, . . . to promote a constructive election environment, ensuring mutual respect and diversity. Switzerland is proud to contribute to facilitating political dialogue and strengthening democracy in Georgia, which is part of its strategy for supporting democratic processes and conflict prevention worldwide," reads the statement.

US Ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan believes that CEC deserves commendation for drafting the Code of Conduct and recommends political parties to sign it. According to her, the code will facilitate the conduction of 'free, fair and transparent' elections.



The code has been welcomed and signed by the ruling party, as well as the majority of opposition parties.

NDI's study on the country's well being



NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE

56% of the population surveyed by NDI think that the biggest problem facing the healthcare system is the cost of medicines.

By ANASTASIA SOKHADZE

According to a study conducted by NDI on August 6th-11th, 2,045 telephone interviews were recorded throughout Georgia based on a representative sample. The survey was conducted among the adult population of the country (excluding the occupied territories). The average margin of error of the survey is +/- 1.3 percent.

39% of the respondents believe that the country is developing in the right direction, while 32% think that development is going in the wrong direction.

According to the results of a survey published by the organization, 20% think that Georgia is not changing at all, 8% do not know the answer, and 1% refuse to answer the question.

As for democracy, the question asked by the organization:

Is there democracy in Georgia? - 37% of the respondents say no, 48% think that there is democracy in the country, while 14% do not know the answer to the question.

56% of the population surveyed by NDI think that the biggest problem facing the healthcare system is the cost of medicines.

29% of the surveyed population think that the cost of medical services and visits to the doctor is also a problem; 17% think the problem is access to hospitals and medical services; 15% think that the problem is the lack of professionalism of doctors and medical staff; 12% think there are no problems in the healthcare system; 8% name low quality drugs as a problem; 7% - coronavirus-related challenges; 5% - bureaucracy in the healthcare system; 3% - poor infrastructure and equipment in hospitals; 2% - price of medical products; 1% - Poor sanitation in hospitals and clinics. 9% are unaware of the problems.

Irakli Sesiashvili, Chairman of the Defense and Security Committee, does not trust NDI surveys and says they are politically motivated.

"My attitude towards NDI research is well-known. Based on the research that has been conducted so far, I believe that there is a political motivation in them, so I do not pay too much attention to these studies. You know

that over the years, the NDI and IRI surveys were absolutely out of touch with reality. Despite their respect for their head offices, the error in the survey results was very large because of their political bias," said Sesiashvili.



Irakli Sesiashvili makes a comment on the survey, saying that they are politically motivated and to pay it no attention.

The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia introduces changes to the Organic Law on the Courts

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Chairman of Parliament of Georgia Archil Talakvadze met with the representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, High Council of Justice and NGOs to introduce changes to the Organic Law on the Courts, which has been prepared according to the recommendations of the Venice Commission. The information is published by the Parliament of Georgia.

According to Talakvadze, the changes are related to two of the following key issues - the obligation of substantiation of the decisions made by the judges to be appointed for life tenure, and the opportunity to appeal the made decisions.

According to the draft law,



The draft law has been prepared according to the recommendations of Venice Commission.

the standard of justification of the decision, which will be carried out by the Secretary of the High Council of Justice, will be introduced at every stage of the selection process of candidates for the Supreme Court. Apart from the standards of justification, appealing the decision of the High Court of Justice to the Chamber of Board Expert will be possible at every stage of the selection of judges.

As Talakvadze noted, both issues were included in the important recommendations of Venice Commission which were related to the court, "therefore, we are committed to adopt these changes at the plenary session and thus, further enhance the judicial independence and make this process more transparent and fair," he said.

As Talakvadze noted to the media after the meeting, the changes will be considered in the plenary session of the current

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Weather

Tuesday, September 15

Day ☀️ Clear
High: 30°C
Night 🌙 Clear
Low: 19°C

Wednesday, September 16

Day 🌧️ Showers
High: 29°C
Night 🌧️ Partly Cloudy
Low: 18°C

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Geostat: 1.8 million visitors traveled to Georgia in the II quarter, a decrease of 37.2%



The intercity traffic in Georgia was banned until June 8th.



The volume of expenditures made by local visitors in January-June decreased by 10.2% and amounted to 649 million.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) released the data according to which in the second quarter of 2020, 1.8 million local visitors made 2 million visits to the territory of Georgia. According to statistics, the number of visitors in the second quarter of this year decreased by 37.2% compared to the same period last year, while the number of visits decreased by 39.2%.

As for the data of the first half of 2020, according to Geostat, the number of visits in January-June decreased by 22.5% and amounted to 5.1 million.

According to the Geostat report, 925,200 small visits of 31.4% were made in the second quarter, and the number of

overnight visits was 1.1 million (a decrease of 44.6%).

It should be noted that the main part of visitors - 39.1% belonged to the age group of 31 to 50 years. As for the gender picture, 50.5% of the visitors were women.

The survey shows that in the second quarter mostly residents of the capital traveled. According to statistics, 40.7% of visitors are residents of Tbilisi, 11.8% - Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region, 11.6% - Kvemo Kartli region, and residents of other regions, in total, 35.9%.

The Geostat report also discusses the goals of the visitors, their expenses and the regions they visit. Statistics show that the main purpose of visits in the second

quarter of this year (47.9%) was to visit friends and relatives. The visitors mainly traveled to Tbilisi and Imereti region.

As for expenses, in the second quarter, local visitors spent ₾ 268 million on travel, which is 25.2% less than in the same period last year.

It should be noted that the average cost of the visit increased by 23.2% and amounted to 132 GEL.

Expenditures incurred by local visitors in the second quarter of 2020 were broken down by category as follows:

- Purchases - ₾ 91.6 million, a decrease of 24.8% over the same period last year;
- Food and beverage - ₾ 76 million, an increase of 10.1% over the same period last year;
- Transport - ₾ 52.9 million, a decrease of 26.8% compared to the same period last year;
- Accommodation - ₾ 6 million, a decrease of 8.5% over the same period last year;
- Entertainment - ₾ 0.4 million, a decrease of 89.8% over the same period last year;

Other expenses totaled ₾ 40.7 million, which is 51.3% less than in the second quarter of 2019.

It is noteworthy that in the second quarter of 2020, the main part of the expenditures made by local visitors came from shopping (34.2%), food (28.4%) and transport (19.8%). Expenditure on other categories totaled 17.6%.

As expected, the pandemic caused by Covid 19 also had a negative impact on local tourism. A state of emergency has been declared in Georgia since March 21st, and a curfew has been imposed at the beginning of the second quarter.

The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia introduces changes to the Organic Law on the Courts

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week. He also noted that the judicial reform is a long-term process, however, the ruling team has a plan that is followed consistently.

US Ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan assessed the meeting as 'very beneficial and important', she believes that the amendments are aimed at strengthening the judicial processes, and enhancement of its transparency and accountability. Ambassador Degnan stated that the process is important for reinforcement and development of the judicial system of Georgia.

The draft law has received a negative evaluation from the Public Defender of Georgia, Nino Lomjaria. She believes that the amendments fragmentally focus on certain aspects of the selection of Supreme Court judicial candidates and the basic recommendations of OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission regarding the drawbacks in the process

still remain unresolved. In particular, the rule of secret decision-making by the High Council of Justice during the selection of the judges is still maintained,

"which poses a serious problem in terms of transparency and credibility of the selection process."

As the statement of Public

Defender reads, The draft law provides not the justification for the decision of the High Council of Justice, but "justification of the Secretary of the Council",

which according to the Public Defender, is already available information to the public. "Thus, the change does not improve the existing procedure and does not make a decision justified."

The statement reads that the decision made in the process of selection of judges of Supreme Court can be appealed to the Qualification Chamber of the Supreme Court, which, as Lomjaria notes, is staffed with the judges that were elected by the Parliament of Georgia under the flawed procedure in December last year. The ombudsman believes that decisions made by them cannot be trusted "since there has not been reasoned decision-making during the selection of these judges and the selection process received quite negative feedback from all key actors."

Public Defender believes that the draft law does not respond to the systemic problems in the process of selection of Supreme Court judges.



The initiators of the changes to the draft law are MPs - Irakli Kobakhidze, Guram Macharashvili and Rati Ionatamishvili.