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**GEORGIAN
YOUNG
LAWYERS'
ASSOCIATION**

Free, Fair and Equal Electoral-Political 2019-2022 Cycle in Georgia

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INTRODUCTION

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) has started implementing the project - "Free, Fair and Equal Election Political Cycle 2019-2022" throughout the country in August 2019. One of the project's goals is to promote the improvement of the election environment through monitoring and evidence-based advocacy. To achieve this, the organization will monitor ongoing political processes and develop recommendations that will be communicated to the public and presented to decision-makers. We present the Newsletter №30, describing the events that took place in March 2022, which impacted the political environment.

I. DISTRIBUTION OF POSTS IN MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLIES

The process of distribution of posts in almost all municipal assemblies has been completed, although problems were still observed in terms of the full functioning of some. The issue of the legitimacy of the chairperson elected amid a procedural dispute remains unresolved in the Senaki City Assembly: the final decision of the court, based on the appeal of the Georgian Dream in February against the election of Irakli Kacharava, a member of the party Lelo for Georgia, due to the lack of a quorum, has not yet been announced.¹

Gigi Parulava, a member of the Party For Georgia, was elected chairperson of the Zugdidi Sakrebulo on February 14.² After that, the City Assembly session was postponed four times due to a lack of quorum.³ The session became possible only on March 22.⁴ The deputy chairpersons were also elected on the same day.⁵

II. THE PRE-ELECTION ENVIRONMENT OF THE 2022 BY-ELECTIONS IN BATUMI AND RUSTAVI

According to the CEC decree, by-elections of the Parliament of Georgia in the Rustavi-Gardabani constituency and the majoritarian elections of the Sakrebulo in Batumi will be held on April 2.⁶ The Georgian Dream has nominated Irakli Shatakishvili as a candidate in Rustavi,⁷ while from the opposition, Lelo for Georgia has nominated Badri Japaridze, a former member of parliament.⁸ His term as an MP was terminated by the Georgian Parliament in February following a guilty verdict.⁹ Japaridze was supported by the United National Movement.¹⁰ However, at a briefing on February 27, he said that in the wake of the ongoing war in Ukraine, which left citizens "extremely frustrated," he considered it impossible to conduct the election process, so he announced his withdrawal of can-

¹ Lika Chkhetiani, Newsletter #29, February 2022, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, p. 3, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xuYeyo>, updated: 13.04.2022.

² *Ibid.*

³ Facebook page of Zugdidi Municipality Assembly, February 22, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3OpNpUr>; updated: 13.04.2022; Facebook page of Zugdidi Municipality Assembly, March 1, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xurpS0>, updated: 13.04.2022; Facebook page of Zugdidi Municipality Assembly, March 11, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jJdJdM>, updated: 13.04.2022; Facebook page of Zugdidi Municipality Assembly, March 16, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/37dYEP3>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁴ Facebook page of Zugdidi Municipality Assembly, March 22, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3uJtPdT>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Lika Chkhetiani, Newsletter #29, February 2022, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, p. 4, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xuYeyo>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁷ GD Names Candidates for Batumi, Rustavi By-Elections, information portal Civil.ge, February 2, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/470664>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁸ Expelled MP to Vie for Rustavi By-Elections, information portal Civil.ge, February 16, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/473230>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹ Lika Chkhetiani, Newsletter #29, February 2022, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, p. 6-7, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xuYeyo>, updated: 13.04.2022.

¹⁰ UNM will support Badri Japaridze in by-elections in Rustavi, information portal Radio Tavisupleba, February 16, 2022, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31706868.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

didacy in Rustavi.¹¹ He also called on the ruling party to postpone the elections.¹² After the withdrawal of Lelo for Georgia from the election campaign, only Mamuka Tuskadze, a candidate for the Social Justice Party, and Kamal Muradkhanov from the Georgian Unity and Development Party remained as opposition candidates in the Rustavi-Gardabani constituency.¹³

As for Batumi, here, the Georgian Dream has nominated Ramaz Jincharadze, the current Deputy Minister of Health and Social Affairs of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, as a candidate for the City Assembly.¹⁴ Mate Putkaradze, son of the late majoritarian member of the Batumi City Council Nugzar Putkaradze, was nominated by the United National Movement as his opponent.¹⁵ After Putkaradze's death, the Georgian Dream had 16 deputies in the Batumi Sakrebulo, the National Movement had 14, the Lelo for Georgia had 1, the Party for Georgian had 2, and 1 member was independent.¹⁶

III. ELECTRONIC ELECTIONS AT THE 4TH MAJORITARIAN CONSTITUENCY IN BATUMI

On March 31, the Central Election Commission of Georgia submitted a report on the April 2 by-elections of the Parliament of Georgia and local self-government.¹⁷ The report covered the activities carried out by the CEC in the period from February 1 to March 31.¹⁸ At the presentation of the report, special attention was paid to the use of electronic technologies for conducting elections in the 4th majoritarian constituency of Batumi.¹⁹

The CEC Ordinance²⁰ of March 25 and its annex²¹ describe the changes in the voting day procedures based on the use of new technologies in the elections.²² According to the annex, an electronic verification device would be used to identify the voter during the voting process.²³ The list of voters registered at the respective polling station would be pre-loaded into the device.²⁴ A registrar would check the correspondence of the person who came to the voting and the photo of the electronic ID card submitted by them, after which the voter would place the ID card in the reader of the verification apparatus.²⁵ After successfully passing the electronic verification, the person would go through the marking and be given the opportunity to vote.²⁶ During the voting, the voter would be given a special

¹¹ Rustavi, Batumi brace for April 2 By-Elections, information portal Civil.ge, March 31, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/482972>, updated: 13.04.2022.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Candidates Nominated for the By-Elections of the Parliament of Georgia on April 2, 2022, official website of the Central Election Commission, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xv0Egc>, updated: 13.04.2022.

¹⁴ Expelled MP to Vie for Rustavi By-Elections, information portal Civil.ge, February 16, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/473230>, updated: 13.04.2022.

¹⁵ Rustavi, Batumi brace for April 2 By-Elections, information portal Civil.ge, March 31, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/482972>, updated: 13.04.2022.

¹⁶ Rustavi, Batumi brace for April 2 By-Elections, information portal Civil.ge, March 31, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/482972>, updated: 13.04.2022.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Giorgi Kalandarishvili Presented Interim Report of April 2 By-Elections, official website of the Central Election Commission, March 31, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3OdK3Ub>, updated: 13.04.2022.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Ordinance of the Central Election Commission of Georgia #30/2022, March 25, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3uLto2N>, updated: 13.04.2022.

²¹ "Guidelines for Precinct Election Commission Members – How to Carry out Some Election Procedures by Electronic Means for the By-Elections of the Assembly of the Batumi Municipality on April 2, 2022", Central Election Commission, Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/37fOgX1>, updated: 13.04.2022.

²² Ordinance of the Central Election Commission of Georgia #30/2022, March 25, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3uLto2N>, updated: 13.04.2022.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ "Guidelines for Precinct Election Commission Members - How to Carry out Some Election Procedures by Electronic Means for the By-Elections of the Assembly of the Batumi Municipality on April 2, 2022", Central Election Commission, Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training, pp. 30-33, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/37fOgX1>, updated: 13.04.2022.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

frame-envelope together with the ballot paper.²⁷ The voter must fill in the ballot paper using a special marker, put it in the frame-envelope and bring it to the ballot box folded in this way.²⁸ A vote-counting machine would be installed on the ballot box.²⁹ If the electronic counting machine returned the ballot paper, the ballot paper would be considered invalid, and the registrar would hand over the new ballot paper to the voter.³⁰ After the closing of the polling station, a receipt of the preliminary results of the counting of votes would be printed from the electronic counting machine,³¹ after which the election commission would start the procedure of counting the ballot papers.³²

On March 22, the Central Election Commission (CEC) conducted mock elections at two polling stations in Batumi to study the use of electronic technologies.³³ On April 2, elections will be held in the same way in 14 polling stations in Batumi.³⁴

IV. TERMINATION OF STATE BUDGET FUNDING FOR LELO FOR GEORGIA AND LABOR PARTY

From March 1, 2022, funding from the state budget was suspended for two opposition parties – the Lelo Georgia and the Georgian Labor Party.³⁵ The termination of funding for the representatives of these parties, Badri Japaridze, and Shalva Natelashvili, was conditioned by the suspension of the mandate of the MP based on the decision of the Parliament.³⁶ The amount of funding for the parties was determined according to the number of votes received in the 2020 parliamentary elections and was more than 800,000 GEL for Lelo and up to 300,000 GEL for the Labor Party.³⁷ According to the results of the 2020 elections, the Lelo had four mandates in the parliament, and the Labor Party had 1 mandate.³⁸ Mamuka Khazaradze, elected based on the proportional list from the Lelo, left the parliament voluntarily.³⁹ Badri Japaridze's mandate was terminated on the basis of a guilty verdict against him and Shalva Natelashvili - on the basis of unsubstantiated absences.⁴⁰ After the termination of the mandate for Badri Japaridze, Lelo had only two mandates left in the parliament and the Labor Party - none.⁴¹

The decision to cut funding for the parties was based on an amendment to the Law on Political Associations of Citizens,⁴² which was adopted by Parliament in June 2021⁴³ and entered into force on 1 February 2022.⁴⁴ Under

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “Guidelines for Precinct Election Commission Members – How to Carry out Some Election Procedures by Electronic Means for the By-Elections of the Assembly of the Batumi Municipality on April 2, 2022”, Central Election Commission, Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training, pp. 30-33, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/37fOgX1>, updated: 13.04.2022.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “Guidelines for Precinct Election Commission Members – How to Carry out Some Election Procedures by Electronic Means for the By-Elections of the Sakrebulo of the Batumi Municipality on April 2, 2022”, Central Election Commission, Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training, p. 41, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/37fOgX1>, updated: 13.04.2022.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.45-46.

³³ “Simulated elections using electronic technologies will be held in Batumi”, official website of the Central Election Commission, March 22, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3OdIFRG>, updated: 13.04.2022.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Lelo and Labor Party lost state budget funding, information portal Radio Tavisupleba, March 9, 2022, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31744767.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

³⁶ Lika Chkhetiani, Newsletter #29, February 2022, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, p. 7, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xuYeyo>, updated: 13.04.2022.

³⁷ Lelo and Labor Party lost budget funding, information portal Radio Tavisupleba, March 9, 2022, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31744767.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

³⁸ Lelo and Labor Party may lose budget funding, information portal Radio Tavisupleba, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31693223.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Lika Chkhetiani, Newsletter #29, February 2022, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, p. 7, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xuYeyo>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁴¹ Lelo and Labor Party may lose budget funding, information portal Radio Tavisupleba, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31693223.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁴² Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens, Article 30, parts 5 and 6.

⁴³ Lelo and Labor Party may lose budget funding, information portal Radio Tavisupleba, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31693223.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

the amendment, a party loses the right to receive funding from the state budget if half or more than half of the deputies elected by the party are terminated prematurely, and it is impossible to replace them.⁴⁵ Under the same amendment, a party will not receive funding from the budget for 6 months unless more than half of the members of parliament elected by its nomination attend more than half of the plenary sessions of parliament for unjustified reasons.⁴⁶ In the case of the above-mentioned parties, the replacement of suspended MPs became impossible after the majority of opposition parties abolished the spare lists in the Central Election Commission in protest of the boycott of the results of the 2020 parliamentary elections.⁴⁷

GYLA did not agree with the amendment to the Law on Political Associations of Citizens.⁴⁸ The organization also sent an appeal to the Legal Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Georgia.⁴⁹ According to the organization, funding from the state budget allowed political parties to carry out their activities not only during the elections but also in the period between elections, both in parliament and outside it.⁵⁰ Deputies already had individual responsibilities for missing the sittings, according to parliamentary regulations, so using this as a precondition for terminating funding for political parties would, in GYLA's view, be an overly severe, disproportionate means that would jeopardize the ability of political parties to continue their activities and would damage political pluralism.⁵¹

The bill was also criticized by the report of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR on 20 March 2021,⁵² although the ruling party did not heed the recommendations.⁵³

V. GEORGIA'S APPLICATION FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

Against the background of Russia's military aggression in Ukraine, on March 3, the Georgian government signed an official application for membership in the European Union.⁵⁴ The Prime Minister, Irakli Gharibashvili, stated about it in his video announcement.⁵⁵ Georgia's decision was preceded by Ukraine's application for membership on February 28.⁵⁶ Georgia, like Ukraine,⁵⁷ has requested an expedited review of the application.⁵⁸ Georgia's application for membership and the request for an expedited procedure was linked by the leader of the parliamentary majority Irakli Kobakhidze to the changing geopolitical situation after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.⁵⁹

⁴⁵ Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens, Article 30, parts 5 and 6.

⁴⁶ Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens, Article 30, parts 5 and 6.

⁴⁷ "Talakvadze on Restoring Opposition 'Spare Lists': We Are Not Going to Correct Their Mistake", information portal Radio Tavisupleba, February 15, 2022, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31704509.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁴⁸ GYLA urges MPS not to violate the terms of the "Charles Michel agreement", official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, June 9, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Eel7Y6>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Appeal to the Committee on Legal Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia", official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, June 9, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/38U0hSk>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² GYLA urges MPS not to violate the terms of the "Charles Michel agreement", official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, June 9, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3Eel7Y6>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵³ Nanuka Kruashvili, Newsletter #21, June 2021, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, p. 10, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3KO92vI>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵⁴ "The Prime Minister signed the application for Georgia's membership in the European Union", information portal Radio Tavisupleba, March 3, 2022, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31734377.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵⁵ Georgia's PM Signs Application to Join the EU, information portal Civil.ge, March 3, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/477269>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵⁶ „Georgia, Moldova follow Ukraine in applying to join EU”, information portal POLITICO, March 3, 2022, available at: <https://politi.co/3uK0Eax>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵⁷ "Ukraine wants to join EU. Here's how that would work", information portal NPR, February 28, 2022, available at: <https://n.pr/36eRvgC>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵⁸ "Georgia will apply for EU membership under fast-track procedure", information portal Radio Tavisupleba, March 2, 2022, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31732611.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁵⁹ Georgia to Apply for EU Membership Immediately, information portal Civil.ge, March 2, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/477045>, updated: 13.04.2022.

The opposition also supported the official application for membership.⁶⁰ According to the chairperson of the United National Movement, Nika Melia, “the government was forced” to take this step.⁶¹ Giorgi Gakharia, the leader of the Party for Georgia and former Prime Minister, stressed that it was crucial that the statement to be followed by the necessary steps from the government to conduct the process quickly and efficiently.⁶² At the same time, he called on the opposition and the government to unite in this process.⁶³ Mamuka Khazaradze, the leader of the party Lelo for Georgia, linked the government’s decision to the ongoing protests in Georgia in early March in support of Ukraine and thanked the youth for that.⁶⁴ Elene Khoshtaria, the leader of the political movement Droa, also stressed the importance of national consensus and the successful implementation of democratic reforms in the process.⁶⁵

Following an official meeting of the EU Council in Versailles on 7 March, the Heads of Mission of the EU Member States formally addressed the European Commission for their opinion (avis) on Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova’s membership applications.⁶⁶ **According to GYLA, this procedural decision had a great symbolic purpose, as it officially launched the important stage of the EU accession process for Georgia.**⁶⁷

On March 15, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a resolution on EU integration.⁶⁸ The resolution voiced Georgia’s European aspirations and called on the government to step up work on implementing the Association Agreement and European integration to ensure that Georgia is properly prepared for EU membership.⁶⁹ The document also called on EU leaders to “take all necessary steps to accelerate Georgia’s accession to the EU”.⁷⁰

At the end of March, the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, Shalva Papuashvili, held official meetings with the representatives of the European Union in Brussels.⁷¹ The chairperson met with the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, the European Commissioner Didier Reynders, the MEPs - Iratxe Garcia Perez and Marina Kaljurand.⁷² Summing up the meetings, Papuashvili noted that he had received confirmation that the EU was working hard to speed up bureaucratic procedures and that work on a self-assessment questionnaire necessary to obtain candidate status had already begun.⁷³ After meeting with Shalva Papuashvili, Roberta Metsola wrote on Twitter that the EU recognized Georgia’s application for membership.⁷⁴ She noted that Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova “belonged to the European family”.⁷⁵ The President of the European Parliament also stressed that the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and a real parliamentary dialogue were essential for democracy.⁷⁶ Iratxe Garcia Perez, President of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament,

⁶⁰ Georgia’s Opposition Backs EU Membership, information portal Civil.ge, March 3, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/477247>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ EU Commission to Present Opinion on Georgia’s Application, information portal Civil.ge, March 7, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/477936>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁶⁷ “Decision of the Council of the European Union: What should we expect?” official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, March 8, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vfW82y>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁶⁸ Parliament Unanimously Backs Resolution on Georgia’s EU Integration, information portal Civil.ge, March 16, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/479613>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Papuashvili Discusses Georgia’s EU Bid in Brussels, information portal Civil.ge, March 31, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/482767>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ “Papuashvili: EU is trying to speed up the bureaucratic procedures of the application for membership”, information portal Radio Tavisupleba, March 30, 2022, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31778351.html>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁷⁴ Papuashvili Discusses Georgia’s EU Bid in Brussels, information portal Civil.ge, March 31, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/482767>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁷⁵ Roberta Metsola, Twitter post, March 30, 2022, 7:59 PM, available at: https://twitter.com/EP_President/status/1509, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

also commented on the meeting with Shalva Papuashvili on the reforms in Georgia,⁷⁷ EU membership, and the Russian military aggression in Ukraine on Twitter.⁷⁸ She noted that her party was ready to help the Georgian people achieve their European aspirations and expected progress in democratic reforms and the rule of law.⁷⁹

VI. 2022 REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS OF THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT SUBMITTED TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT⁸⁰

At the end of March 2022, at the request of the European Parliament’s Foreign Relations Committee, an annual report made by an external researcher on the progress of Georgia’s fulfillment of its obligations under the Association Agreement was published. The report covered the period from April 2021 to February 2022.⁸¹ The assessments given in the document were based on both primary sources (e.g., law records, policy documents, statistics, interviews) as well as secondary sources such as reports and assessments already published by international organizations and local civil society.⁸²

It should be noted that in the process of working on the report, the author consulted with GYLA. Accordingly, the report repeatedly cites the organization’s assessments of current political processes and democratic reforms.⁸³

According to the report, the quality of democratic governance in Georgia has deteriorated sharply since April 2020, especially since July 2021.⁸⁴ The concentration of power in the hands of the ruling party is growing, the space for resistance is reduced, and as a result of political polarization, democratic institutions have gradually lost their essence.⁸⁵

The report mentions the 2020 parliamentary elections and the resulting deep political crisis, which could have been resolved through an agreement reached through the mediation of President Charles Michel. According to the report, the April 19 agreement presented an opportunity for improving the democratic process in Georgia, although its annulment further reduced trust in political institutions.⁸⁶ **GYLA supported the April 19 agreement, believing that it had provided an important basis for easing the political crisis and democratic development in the country. According to GYLA, with the withdrawal from the April 19 agreement, the ruling party refused to strengthen democratic institutions.⁸⁷**

The report cites problems identified in the 2021 local government elections, such as the use of administrative resources in the pre-election campaign and the blurring of the line between state institutions and the ruling par-

⁷⁷ “Shalva Papuashvili met with the President of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats”, official website of the Parliament of Georgia, March 30, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xu3Rg1>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁷⁸ Papuashvili Discusses Georgia’s EU Bid in Brussels, information portal Civil.ge, March 31, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/482767>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁷⁹ Iratxe Garcia Perez, Twitter post, March 30, 2022, 6:47 PM, available at: <https://twitter.com/IratxeGarper/status/150>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁸⁰ This chapter is taken unchanged from the following source: “Critical Report to the European Parliament on the Implementation of the Association Agreement by Georgia”, official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, April 8, 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3M4orb5>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁸¹ “EP Report Critical on Georgia’s Association Agreement Implementation”, information portal Civil.ge, April 4, 2022, available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/483669>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁸² Hannah Ahamad Madatali, Talander Jansen, Laure Delcour, “Association agreement between the EU and Georgia: European Implementation Assessment (update)”, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jN09Gd>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁸³ See p. 37, 38, 39, 43, 46, 51, 52, 65.

⁸⁴ “Association agreement between the EU and Georgia: European Implementation Assessment (update)”, p. 35, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jN09Gd>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸⁷ Decision of the ruling party to annul April 19 agreement contravenes the interests of Georgia for the democratic development, official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, July 28, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3M4QQh9>, updated: 13.04.2022.

ty.⁸⁸ **GYLA has constantly been focusing on these issues in its interim reports. In the process of long-term monitoring of local self-government elections, it has filed a number of complaints regarding the use of administrative resources.**⁸⁹

The report adopted by the European Parliament also negatively assessed the change in the rules for electing members of the Central Election Commission (CEC) in a few weeks after the elections.⁹⁰ In particular, the legislation provided for the so-called anti-deadlock mechanism, according to which if the CEC member or chairperson could not get enough votes for the first time, the candidate would be re-voted for the second (2/3 majority), third (by 3/5 majority) or fourth (by a simple majority) time. An interval of 4 weeks was established between the voting and the revote(s). According to the December amendments, the CEC chairperson and members are elected by at least 2/3 or by a majority of the full membership, and the interval between voting is also abolished.⁹¹ **According to GYLA, the change in the rules for selecting a CEC member contradicts the consensus-oriented approach, deepens polarization in the long run, and has a negative impact on trust in the election administration.**⁹²

The report is particularly critical of justice reform. The report explicitly states that despite the procedural changes brought about by judicial reform, the real balance of power remained intact - the judiciary was still controlled by an influential group of judges, the Clan.⁹³ The report also mentioned the resumption of the process of appointing judges to the Supreme Court, contrary to the agreement reached by Charles Michel.⁹⁴ In violation of the terms of the 19 April Agreement and the Association Agreement, the appointment of judges on the basis of vague procedure and flawed legislation ultimately led to changes in the justice system being based on “either consensus between the ruling coalition and the opposition, or broad civil society participation”.⁹⁵ **GYLA opposed the extension of the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court⁹⁶ and advocated for reforms that would lead to a real shift in the balance of power in the judiciary.**⁹⁷

The report prepared for the European Parliament also referred to the events of July 5, the abolition of the Office of the State Inspector, and the delay of anti-corruption and decentralization reforms. They based their assessments, among other things, on the opinions of GYLA. Finally, the report concludes that in 2020-2021, Georgia experienced a severe setback in fulfilling the democratic values and political commitments enshrined in the Association Agreement.⁹⁸

⁸⁸ Association agreement between the EU and Georgia: European Implementation Assessment (update), p. 36, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jN09Gd>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁸⁹ Mariam Latsabidze, “Second Interim Report of the 2021 Local Self-Government Election Observation Mission”, The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, 2021, p. 5, The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3EfkSw2>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹⁰ Association agreement between the EU and Georgia: European Implementation Assessment (update), p. 36, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jN09Gd>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹¹ Lika Chkhetiani, Newsletter #29, February 2022, Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, pp. 4-5, Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xuYeyo>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹² Mariam Latsabidze, What (not) to expect from the October 2 elections? The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association website, July 27, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3EiKQyP>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹³ Association agreement between the EU and Georgia: European Implementation Assessment (update), p. 39, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jN09Gd>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹⁶ The selection of candidates for judges of the Supreme Court is arbitrary and unfair, The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association website, June 24, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3JEOiot>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹⁷ A new perspective on judicial reform, The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association website, June 21, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3JEOvbf>;

Tamar Khukhia, “Georgian Justice Reform - Opportunity Missed”, The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association website, December 16, 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3uIAIkT>, updated: 13.04.2022.

⁹⁸ Association agreement between the EU and Georgia: European Implementation Assessment (update), p. 37, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jN09Gd>, updated: 13.04.2022.