

Business Monitoring of the Georgian Administrative Code

Report No. 3: September 1 – November 30, 2001

Over the last three months, PSI has been very active in the monitoring, public relations, and implementation stages of the “Business Monitoring of the Georgian Administrative Project.” Early in September, focus group results were analyzed and the first meeting of the Business Coalition was held. After the meeting, the primary activities of the working group focused on the work with a Business Coalition that was created to engage in advocacy activities surrounding the Administrative Code. The principle issues that the Coalition focused on include (each of these is summarized in detail below):

- Public relations campaign to help educate the society on the Administrative Code;
- Monitoring of cases related to the government implementation/ignorance of the Administrative Code which are of particular concern to the Coalition members;
- Ways in which Businesses Association can engage in the decision making process;
- Methods to improve transparency and participation (by business associations) in the government purchasing and procurement activities;
- Participation by the civil society in the issues surrounding Georgia’s national poverty reduction program.
- Monitoring of the Energy Regulatory Commission on its decision to approve the increase in the cost of electricity, a process that was started following a request by a group of citizens extremely concerned by the price hike.

I. Focus Group Results and Analysis

A. Basic Achievements

General Information

As representatives of public institutions state, about 20-30 applicants per week address their offices requesting information under the General Administrative Code. To their opinion, the number of persons willing to obtain information is actually greater but the population does not know where, how and what kind of information to request.

Statements made by the public officials were confirmed during the discussions within the small business representatives’ focus group. In addition, two reasons making the small businesses abstain from requesting information from public institutions were pointed out. The first reason is lack of confidence and hopelessness: people from small and medium businesses just do not believe in their ability to obtain any information lawfully from public institutions. They think one needs much time, acquaintance and more often money to obtain necessary and adequate information. In fact, one should pursue each application and make the relevant functionaries comply with their obligation under law. Another reason is lack of time: small and medium businesses are so busy with their routine work that they have neither time nor energy to *fight with others*. Instead, they prefer to give bribe to functionaries of bodies of control and other authorities rather than to speak language of law with them.

In fact, representatives of small businesses even do not have knowledge of their rights and they cannot afford to hire a lawyer. On the other hand, lack of confidence among each other and unfair competition impedes them to unite in associations and direct their efforts towards defending their rights. A reflection of such attitude of small and medium businesses is the fact that applicants requesting information from public functionaries are basically natural persons and non-governmental organizations. The role of small businesses is extremely miserable.

Applications of private persons mainly concern information and documentation relating to buy-and-sell and court disputes. Non-governmental organizations on their part are basically interested in information on the state budget and functionaries. There have been cases where non-governmental organizations were defending interests of private persons in the courts and have been, hence, concerned with relevant data.

B. Mechanism of Release of Information

According to the Administrative Code, there shall be a functionary in each public institution responsible for accepting and keeping a record of filed applications and for providing information.

Here arises a problem because, as respondents from the functionaries' Group state, not a single functionary but an independent institutional unit composed of two or three persons is necessary to respond to the filed applications. But usually this is beyond the financial abilities of the public institutions. Nay, functionaries responsible for the release of information simultaneously occupy other positions as well, for instance positions of Head of Unit or Head of Registry. Because of this the search for and release of the requested information goes in the background.

As the representatives of public institutions state, applicants for public information personally file the applications and personally go to find out replies thereto.

Applications are registered in a special record and this is the basis for starting the search for the requested information. If the information is at hand, an appropriate functionary immediately makes a Xerox copy and hands it to the applicant.

Here arises another problem: functionaries do not know for what price they should provide copy-making service and how to use the received money. In other words, the law does not determine what expenses should be born by applicants for the copy-making service (market price, prime cost or just for free) and how the paid money should be used (should it be transferred to the state budget or should it be employed for the purposes of the relevant public institution or for the payment of salaries and allowances to the institution's personnel).

If the requested information is located in another institution, then the recipient institution sends a formal request (via mail or courier service) for the information to that institution. Where this is the case, as our respondent's state, the term established by law (10 days) is not enough.

In addition, the law does not determine procedures for the release of information. This issue is open to free consideration of public institutions subject to their internal regulations. Hence, different public institutions have different internal regulations and the procedures provide for differing terms for the release of information. Due to this reason, mostly it is impossible to foresee what time period is needed for searching and releasing of the requested information.

Nay, in most public institutions bureaucratic system does not allow release of information without an approval by a relevant minister or a deputy minister and accordingly this is quite time-consuming.

If an applicant cannot obtain a reply personally, it is sent to him or her by mail.

Another problem is that often certain information and documentation just do not exist at all – they were either lost during civil disturbances or due to other reasons.

C. Problems Relating to the Release of Information

To sum up what was said above, in releasing information functionaries basically face the following problems:

- 1) Lack of financial resources, which makes it impossible:
 - (a) to establish special departments within the public institutions or, at least, assign a functionary responsible only for dealing with applications for public information;
 - (b) to send replies via an express mail that would ensure prompt and guaranteed receipt;
- 2) Absence of a single and organized system of release of requested information;
- 3) Sometimes the necessity to request information from other public institutions, which is often time-consuming;
- 4) Bureaucratic obstacles in some public institutions.

As respondents from both groups have stated, the law does not provide an unequivocal definition of commercial and professional information.¹

This problem is of especially pressing character when it comes to institutions responsible for coordination of activities of commercial entities (for instance, the National Bank, State Insurance Supervision Service) or having their own business (such as higher state institutions that provide both free and chargeable services).

Because of this, in most cases such institutions either refuse to release information or provide an inadequate and very general reply.

Eventually, it is fair to say that functionaries of public institutions are not much willing to release information. They prefer to provide rather general and non-specific information *in order to avoid any possible further problems*. Most functionaries require the applicants to specify why they need the information they are trying to obtain. Because of inadequate legislation (absence of appropriate regulations) and inactivity of applicants the question of whether to release information does in fact wholly depend on the free will of the functionary.

¹ According to the law, public institutions are not entitled to release information that includes private organizations' commercial or professional secrecy unless so prescribed by a court decision. It is up to the private organization itself to make a list of what it considers its commercial or professional secrecy. If a public institution approves such list. The information included in it is thereafter considered confidential. Criteria for granting approval by public institutions are not defined and this makes it possible, in principle, to mark everything "confidential".

The summing up of what was said by respondents from both groups leads to a conclusion that if an applicant is seeking for a legible, adequate, and timely response, he or she should pursue his or her application through the whole process and make the relevant functionaries act in accordance with their obligation under law or ask his or her acquaintances for assistance.

D. Participation in the Decision-Making Process

Our research shows that the population and non-governmental and business sectors are very inactive in the sense of participation in the decision-making by the public institutions. In fact, no one tries to get involved in the decision-making process. The reasons are the same:

- (a) lack of knowledge of one's rights;
- (b) hopelessness; and
- (c) being absorbed in their everyday work.

Functionaries, on their part, do not feel themselves obliged to involve interested persons in the decision-making and legislating process. To their opinion, the Code does not provide such obligation. Nay, they think that it is even inappropriate to allow the non-governmental and business organizations participate in this process since this makes the decision-making difficult and time-consuming and that state interests may be interfered with.

In fact, only contesting parties are usually invited to participate in the decision-making and provided that these parties are formally registered in the relevant institution or where a case is heard by a court. Alternatively, non-governmental and business organizations are invited if:

- (a) These organizations insist or bring an action before the court (for instance, the Urbanists' Association);
- (b) The organization is backed up by a strong donor or a political force (for instance, the Association for the Protection of Landowners Rights);
- (c) The organization employs experts who are more qualified than those employed by public institutions and these public institutions are in need of qualified expertise (for instance, the Freight Forwarders' Association).

Finally, one would arrive at a conclusion that the possibility of obtaining adequate information and involvement in the decision-making process almost wholly depends on the activity of and knowledge of their rights by the second and the third sectors. In addition, it is necessary to improve the relevant legislation and make it more specific and legible in the process of which representatives of these sectors should play a crucial role.

II. Formation of the Business Coalition

PSI's Business Coalition has had a total of six seminars starting in September, in the following order:

Seminar No. 1—September 11, 2001
Seminar No. 2—September 20, 2001
Seminar No. 3—September 28, 2001

Seminar No. 4—October 12, 2001
Seminar No. 5—October 19, 2001
Seminar No. 6—November 19, 2001

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The first seminar brought together the entire coalition of 70 members; please see attached list for the full membership. The Coalition was built on the basis of the Alliance for Business Environment Development (ABED), an organization which was launched under PSI's strategic leadership in December 2000. Additional members from Georgian businesses were chosen using the date of Kap Surveys and Focus Groups which were conducted as part of the project earlier in the year. Those businesses which expressed particular interest in the Administrative Code or who were judged to be in a position to contribute to the monitoring and advocacy activities were asked to join the Coalition. Furthermore, the working group contacted all those organization who were asked to participate in the surveys but did not respond to all or some of the questions related to the Coalition. Finally, other interested parties and individuals were also welcomed into the Coalition.

A. Coalition Seminar No. 1

During the first meeting, the Working Group conducted a report on its past work, explaining to Coalition members the results of the surveys and its analysis of the Administrative Code (please see PSI Reports No. 1 and 2).

Following the presentations by the Working Group, the second part of the meeting was devoted to selecting the best cases related to the Administrative Code which the Working Group would monitor. The details of these cases are outlines below.

Furthermore, the Coalition discussed additional issues that were related to the Administrative Code or which could be resolved by using the Code that were of particular concern to the members and the business industries that they represent. These issues were developed using the evidence presented by the Working Group and specific examples that Coalition members presented at the meeting.

It was determined that an issue of particular concern was business community's role in the role in the decision making process. As PSI's evidence suggested (and as many Coalition members stated during the meeting), obtaining information, though not the easiest activity, was ultimately possible. However, using this information to actually participate in the decision making process was actually difficult, largely because there were no effective methods and instruments developed by the government to incorporate the civil society into the decision making process. To this end, the Coalition asked the Working Group to develop strategies using the Administrative Code to improve civil society's role in the decision making process. Specific areas that were of general interest to the Coalition included (a) transparency in purchasing and procurement and (b) accreditation of business associations by the government agencies.

The issue of specific and immediate interest to the Coalition members was Georgian government's Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program (PREGP), specifically focusing on the program's impact on the business environment. The government had just published a draft of the Program. Coalition members felt that this Program had the potential to significantly impact the business environment because the Program's real goal is to improve economic growth, and beneath the title of poverty reduction, this program is government's 15-year plan for economic and social development (this is the first long-term program in Georgia's history since independence), methods for economic government, etc. The Coalition decided to devote its next meeting to outlining a framework for a strategy to increase the business community's participation in the completion of this document.

B. Coalition Seminar No. 2

As planned at the previous meeting, the second meeting was devoted to the discussion of how to increase business's community's role in decision making through participation in the completion of the drafting of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program. The Working Group presented a strategy which could be used to improve and strengthen the business civil society's role in the finalization of this program, specifically discussing ways in which the Administrative Code can be used to this end. The strategy aimed at achieving effective participation through a series of debates and expert workshops on specific topics related to the structure and contents of the document. This strategy was accepted by the Coalition and the group decided to hold a number of meetings between the Coalition and other stakeholders—legislators, executive branch leaders, donor organizations. The Coalition also asked to submit this strategy to the government and donor organizations who are supporting the PREGP.

C. Coalition Seminar No. 3

Coalition's following three seminars were all devoted to the group's desire to participate in the drafting of the Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program. This seminar involved the detailed and formal presentation of Coalition's strategy to increase business community's participation in the drafting of the Program to the members of the Press, representatives of the Program's Government Commission, local officers of international donor organizations, and other stakeholders.

D. Coalition Seminar No. 4

This seminar was devoted to the discussion of two cases that the Working Group is monitoring:

- Georgian Polling and Marketing and Intersectoral Management and Consulting Case;
- Association of Banks of Georgia Case.

Please see III.C for details.

E. Coalition Seminar No. 5

This seminar was devoted to the discussion of ways in which the process with which the government gives out relevant public information to stakeholders is improved. The Working Group proposed a method for introducing an Institute of Accreditation for Stakeholders within governmental agencies. This Institute can create a requirement of information sharing between the government and stakeholders, and improve the definition of "stakeholder" for the government, thus assisting various agencies in deciding which specific stakeholders they must work with. Accredited organizations must be business and professional associations; this can help increase and strengthen their role within the business community, and is therefore beneficial for the civil society at large.

F. Coalition Seminar No. 6

Coalitions final meeting during the reporting period, on 19 November 2001, was devoted to three topics. First, a discussion of the results on the Debates on the Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program (please see III.D. below). Second, worked on the development a plan for the creation of a pilot Accreditation Institute at Georgia's National Center of Intellectual Property (building on the discussions at the previous seminar; please see III.C. below). Third, discussion of a request by a group of citizens for the Working Group to engage in the monitoring of Georgians Energy Regulatory Commission (please see III.D below).

III. Coalition's Activities

Building on the ideas developed during the Coalition's first meeting, the Work Group has spent the next three months engaging in activities that would contribute to the implementation of the Administrative Code. These have included:

A. Public Relations Campaign

The Working Group has led the Coalition is a strong public relations campaign to help educate the public on the ways in which the Administrative Code can be used to their benefit in their relations with the public. The activities surrounding the campaign have included:

- **Use of the television "Running Script Line" to request information on citizen's difficulties in obtaining information from the government.** All of Georgia's main television stations run announcements from the public at the bottom of the TV screens during their most popular shows (such as movies). PSI placed a number of announcements about the project and the Code using this technology. These announcements have resulted in a number of intriguing contacts by the citizens at large. One of these contacts in late mid-November has provided an intriguing case (dealing with the Energy Regulatory Commission) which is discussed below under section "E."
- **Publication of two articles.** The project staff has prepared two articles about the project and its activities for publication in Georgia's main newspapers. The articles are entitled: "Administrative Code and Georgian Realities" and "Administrative Code at Service of Citizens; Decision Making Process is Behind Transparency."
- **Production of a TV show.** Working with "Studio Re," which airs a weekly public affairs program on the Channel 2 of Georgian State Television, the Working Group and the Coalition are producing an hour long show about the Administrative Code and the project. The show will devote part of the program to an analysis of the Code and a discussion of the rights that citizens and civil society have per the Code. The second part of the program will be devoted to a discussion of the problems with the code—largely the fact that methods for participation in the decision making process are not

working (nor are they clearly outlined). The show is expected to air in January. “Studio Re” has been supported by the National Endowment of Democracy (NED).

B. Case Monitoring

Originally, the Working Group sent 40 request of information to various Ministries and Agencies. Of these, we received all but eight (20 percent). To these eight agencies PSI sent an “Administrative Warning” and in seven of these cases we received a response. Only one of the cases, involving the Ministry of Finances, an answer was not received and that case was forwarded to Court. There is a line of cases waiting for argument in regional court (where the case must start) and PSI is waiting for its turn, which is expected to happen January.

As far as the agencies that sent responses, quality varied dramatically. Only one case, involving the National Bank of Georgia, provided specific answers to the questions that were posed. This response was received on time. None of the other cases provided full answers to the questions, with some making absolutely no answers to the questions that were posed, while others trying to provide responses. We have contacted these agencies, requesting better information.

PSI and the Coalition decided to take the Ministry of Finance Case to Court for two primary reasons. First, because it was the only agency of the government that chose to completely ignore our request for information. Second, because Coalition members felt particularly interested in the process of preparation and execution of the Georgian budget. This process, which is of particular importance to the business community, is one of the most closed and least transparent activities of the Georgian government. Its results are often extremely hurtful to the business environment. Because of this, the Coalition has asked the Working Group to develop a strategy which can use the procedures of the Administrative Code to improve the monitoring of the budget process and to increase government’s (and specifically, the Ministry of Finance’s) accountability in this area.

C. Transparency and Decision Making Process

To follow the issue brought up by the Coalition on the issue of transparency of government’s procurement and purchasing processes, and business’s role in the decision making process in this area, the Working Group researched and monitored a case brought to it by two members of the Coalition; help arranged participation of a different Coalition members in a banking tender; and developed a strategy to increase the role of business associations in this process.

Institute of Polling & Marketing (IPM) and Intersectoral Management & Consulting (ICM) Case

IPM, Georgia leading social research company, and ICM, a leading consulting firm, were participating in tender which was organized by the Georgia’s Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs. The tender was called “Service of Monitoring of Year 2001 Assistance to Socially Disabled Individuals (and Families).” They lost the tender.

Following the loss, IPM and ICM requested information on the decision making—why did it lose, what information was used in the decision making, who won, etc? No information was provided to them after three different requests. This took place at about the same time that PSI was working with various businesses and business associations to create the Coalition. Once IPM and ICM

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learned about the Coalition, it contacted PSI to request that the Coalition provide advocacy on its behalf as part of the Administrative Code project.

The Working Group wrote a letter to the Ministry and the Pension Fund information them about our activity and demanded the information as mandated by the Code. In response, initially there was a great deal of pressure on Dr. Gia Areshidze, the Project Manger, who signed the letter to the Ministry, including threatening phone calls and contacts by Dr. Areshidze's acquaintances who were instructed to find out why PSI was pressuring the Ministry to release this information. Ultimately, once PSI threatened to take the case to Court, the Ministry released the information, including the methods that were used to judge the tender.

While PSI as a whole and the Working Group specifically are not experts in this area, it seems that the tender was judged incorrectly, without following the methods that were outlined for the judging panel. Using this information, IPM and ICM are planning on launching a legal case, and should it request assistance, PSI and the Coalition will advocate and monitor on its behalf.

Association of Banks of Georgia and Pension Payment Tender

Earlier this year, the State United Social Fund, which is supervised by the above-mentioned Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, announced a tender to select a bank which would distribute pension to citizens across Georgia. One of Coalition's most active members, the Association of Banks of Georgia (ABG), requested assistance enabling its representative to join the decision making commission. The issue of pensions is one of the most important social and political questions facing the country, because the government is having a very difficult time paying citizens their meager assistance; 14 Georgian Lari, or about US \$7, a month. These funds, which in total represent fairly large amounts, are often used by corrupt government officials for investments, while citizens often wait three months for the payment of their pensions.

The Coalition, and the Working Group, used many resources—direct lobby of government officials, public statements, etc.—to ensure that ABG was included as a member of the tender commission. This way, it first, helped determine the terms of the tender, and second, helped choose the winner during the competition. This was the first time that a business association was permitted to participate in such a high level (if judged by its impact on the society and the industry) of decision making.

[Please note that Dr. Gia Areshidze used to be Vice President of the ABG.]

Business Association Accreditation Experiment

Through various communications and meetings, Coalitions members universally agreed that one of the primary reasons for why they are not able to participate in the decision making process include:

- Government's inability to distribute information in a timely and targeted fashion;
- Government agencies' inability to select who are the stakeholders, and who should be asked to participate in this process.

To address this problem, using the rights guaranteed to the civil society by the Administrative Code, PSI has worked with Georgia's National Center of Intellectual Property to develop a pilot model for accrediting business associations. The goal of this activity is to develop a full and complete list of associations and other civil society organizations that must be a part of the informational and decision making process involving the Georgia's National Center of Intellectual Property. Furthermore, this activity can be used to establish agreements between the Center and the accredited associations about requirements of information sharing.

We hope that this accreditation scheme can serve as a model for developing similar accreditation processes at other government agencies, since by ensuring that all business and professional associations and other stakeholders are accredited by the various government agencies, the extent of participation by the civil society in the decision making process can be dramatically improved.

D. Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program (PREGP)

As explained above, Coalition members were convinced that it was essential to use their common interests and participation in PSI's current project to participate in the decision making in the development of Georgia's Poverty Reduction and Equitable Economic Growth Program. To this end, PSI organized a seminar on this topic, at which Coalition members were joined by the Press, representatives from Georgia's Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth National Program Preparation Government Commission, and local offices of a number international organizations (such as IMF, World Bank, USAID, etc.). At this seminar, Coalition members presented their vision on the ways in which participation can be guaranteed. The meetings had the following specific objectives:

- To propose specific comments on the structure and the contents of the Program;
- To consider formation of a mechanism ensuring participation of the society in the Program improvement process.

The Coalition members thought that their participation was particularly relevant because of an interesting paradox presented by the World Bank. On the one hand, the Bank was saying that this program must be written by the people, while on the other, it was directing the government to write it, based on the idea that people were fully represented by the government. However, since this is not the case in Georgia (since the civil society was not participating in the decision making on this issue and since the people severely distrust the government), Coalition members thought that they must do everything possible to play an active role in the authorship of this program.

Using the rights available in the Administrative Code, which gave it the opportunity to gain access to the information on the structure of the draft document and program indicators that are being used to write the document, the Coalition, PSI and its affiliated organization called Alliance for Business Environment Development (ABED), which a member of the Coalition, developed a model for how the society should participate in the authoring of the document. As a result of these discussions and on the basis of their vision, PSI and ABED have formulated mechanism for public participation in decision making which was then translated into a new project. This mechanism begins by using public debates, attended by broad range of representatives from the Parliament, Government, academic circles, businesses and society. A single debate is devoted to a specific issue contained in the Program using a case study. These debates are used to identify key problems and concerns and

to select experts who can contribute specific, high quality, knowledge and ideas to the process. Afterwards, these experts are selected to attend workshops with the purpose of working out specific policy recommendations.

The above-described mechanism was submitted for consideration to the Government and donors and at discussed at the third seminar. As a result, the World Bank Institute and the Commission decided to ask ABED to conduct debates on this topic. ABED, with extensive support from the members of the Coalition, has conducted two pilot debates on November 7 and 13, 2001. These debates gained very positive opinion among both business community and the society in general. Results of the debates have been presented at the International Conference on PREGP in Budapest as a positive example of participation of the society in the PREGP designing process. A Compact Disk which summarizes the debates, key vies of the stakeholders, and analyzes the results will be delivered to CIPE via courier in late December.

Recently, in mid-December, as a result of a very active lobbying campaign mounted by PSI and the Coalition, Dr. David Gzirishvili, PSI's Senior Fellow and Director of its Center of Social Welfare, was appointed, with the consent of the Government and the donor organization, National Expert in Participation in the PREGP preparation process. This appointment is of considerable importance in attaining goals of the Coalition.

As a result of PSI's and Coalitions activities with the Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth Program, the decision making and participation roles of civil society and businesses in the development of this program have been dramatically increased. We believe that all of this was possible only because of the Administrative Code, whose transparency and decision making provisions were integral in convincing the Commission that giving the Coalition a role in this process was mandated by statute. Furthermore, we believe that the Coalitions involvement in this area is a good pilot example of how the Administrative Code should be used to increase decision making. Finally, our involvement with this process has been very extremely helpful in determining the areas around the decision making which must be improved in the Code and the ways of improving them.

E. Energy Regulatory Commission Case

As noted above, PSI and the Coalition was contacted in mid-November by a group of citizens concerned about the decision made by the Georgia's Energy Regulatory Commission ("SEMEK") to approve the increase in the price of electricity. This increase, of 2.5 Georgian Tetri per kilowatt, has been terribly unpopular amongst the populations and has been the single most important topic of discussion amongst the citizens and political circles on a daily basis. Among the many different controversies that have surrounded the increase has been the question of whether it is justified. The private company that provides electricity service in Tbilisi, AES Telasi, claimed that the increase was warranted by its unplanned and additional investments. AES Telasi presented an audit of its investments to the Commission and requested a 4.5 Tetri increase. The Commission meanwhile conducted its own audit, with government funds, and determined that AES's investments warranted an increase of only 2.5 Tetri.

When the news about an audit conducted by the Commission was made public, a group of citizens concerned about the increase in the costs of electricity requested that the Commission provide the full audit for public viewing. However, the Commission refused, claiming that the company that

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conducted the audit had requested that the information be kept private. It was during a TV program discussing this issue that PSI's advertisement informing the public about the current project and the Coalition was ran. This group of citizens then contacted PSI to request our assistance in gaining the audit information.

This request was presented to the Coalition to determine whether the members felt conformable engaging in such a controversial topic. The Coalition members felt that it was of particular interest for them to learn about activities of the Regulatory Commissions. Formation of the Commission, by itself, was an extremely positive event because it would serve as a mechanism for regulating anti-trust cases on the one hand and for responding to the society's interests (including, of course, those of the business community) on the other hand. The main goal of the Commission is to protect interests of the society. However, how they manage to deal with tasks becomes known to the society only if their work is fully transparent.

During the monitoring process of the Commission, which is currently under way, the goal for the working group, as outlined by the Coalition, is as follows:

- To obtain the evidence indicated by the decision-makers in the decision on increasing the electric power tariff;
- To achieve granting the business associations, local communities, etc., the right to be accredited to the decision-making bodies.

The Working Group, in late November, requested the relevant information from the Commission and was refused. Afterwards, PSI sent an Administrative Warning to the Commission, and should information not be forthcoming, the case will be moved to court of law. Furthermore, the Coalition members are committed to engaging in all necessary lobby and pressure activities to gain this information, which is of particular importance to them and to the process of creating transparency in the Georgian government.