



High School
Of Justice

HIGH SCHOOL OF JUSTICE

ACTIVITIES REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2015

*The Mission of the High School of Justice is Staffing the Justice System
with Highly Qualified Professionals*

Activities Report for the year 2015

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INTRODUCTION

This document provides information on the activities carried out by the Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) - High School of Justice throughout 2015.

Since 2014, activities carried out by the High School of Justice have been based on the Strategic Development Plan (2014-2018), which constitutes the main guidance document of the School. The strategic plan has been developed with the support of the Council of Europe and with the participation of experts in the framework of the Council of Europe project “Developing the Capacity of the High School of Justice of Georgia”.

Activities carried out by the School in 2015 are based on the following strategic goals:

1. Delivering quality trainings;
2. Organizational development;
3. Publicity and Transparency.

By developing Strategic Development Plan, the High School of Justice moved to a qualitatively new stage of development, since carrying out activities based on the Strategic Plan significantly contributes to strengthening of the capacity of the School and improving the quality of justice.

1. PROVIDING QUALITY TRAINING

Training of Judicial Candidates

Introduction of Training Evaluation Framework

In the reporting period, all stages of the training of judicial candidates were subjected to the training evaluation framework. The framework includes the quality control of both theoretical course and mandatory internship and seminar stages. Methodologically, the framework envisages conducting both quantitative and qualitative surveys among participants of the training process and in-depth analysis of the information obtained.

Upgrading 5-Month Theoretical Course of the Training Program

Training program for the 11th group of listeners at the School has been completely subjected to the training evaluation framework. On the basis of the in-depth analysis of the results obtained, intense work aimed at upgrading the stage of 5-month theoretical training for judicial candidates has been performed. The School has been working on the substantial part as well as in terms of the logical sequence of the fields of law

within the program. Within the training period, the High School of Justice took into account as much as possible all the recommendations, which had been identified as a result of the analysis by judicial candidates, members of the Council of Teachers including the Council of Europe experts.

On June 9, 2015, the Independent Council of the High School of Justice approved training program (upgraded) for the 12th group of School listeners. The 12th group of judicial candidates (12 listeners), started learning on June 15, 2015 under the upgraded program. In 2015, 2 out of 12 listeners completed the training, listener status of one of them was suspended, and 9 of them still continue learning at the High School of Justice.

Improvement of Internship Process

Development of Uniform Standards for Internships

As a result of the assessment of the training quality conducted among members of the 11th group of School listeners and facilitators of interns (mentor judges), recommendations have been adopted for improving the training stage.

For the purpose of further introduction of the European standard and exchange of expertise throughout internship, with the support of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), representatives and 12 mentor judges of the High School of Justice paid a visit to Bremen in the period from May 31 to June 6, 2015.

Following the above processes, a working group has been created, which, on the basis of the information obtained, has developed a guidance document (internship standard) for internship facilitators. The document was approved by the Independent Council of the High School of Justice and is already being used by mentor judges.

The internship standard ensures the introduction of a unified approach by mentor judges throughout internship and managing result-oriented process.

Evaluation Criteria throughout Internship

For the assessment of the consistency of internships and effectiveness of mandatory internship, an individual recommendation form has been developed and introduced. The form was approved by the Independent Council of the High School of Justice. The individual recommendation form of the mandatory internship is aimed at the standardization of the internship process and avoiding routine approach. The recommendation form includes the following key information: description of works completed by School listeners during the

mandatory internship; theoretical knowledge demonstrated by School listeners during the internship and practical application thereof; personal qualities and professional skills demonstrated.

Assessment criteria for the judicial candidates to assess mentor judges have also been developed thereby providing an additional lever for monitoring the quality of the internship process.

Mentor judges of the 11th group of School listeners have filled out an individual recommendation form for each intern. The group members, for their part, have evaluated their mentor judges in terms of the content and frequency of assignments given, provision of prompt and comprehensive feedback, communication level and presentation skills.

Upgrading the Eligibility Criteria for Internship Facilitators and Enhancement of the Selection Process

Throughout the reporting period, intensive work has been performed in terms of improvement of the eligibility criteria for internship facilitators. In order to increase the degree of objectivity and transparency of the process, by the decision of the Independent Council, the School Statute has been amended and the internship facilitators' selection procedure and eligibility criteria have been specified.

In particular, in accordance with the above amendment, an internship mentor shall select candidates for internship facilitators in coordination with the head of the body, where the relevant internship is to take place. In addition, the criteria to be taken into consideration while selecting internship facilitators have been specified as follows:

- a) The duration of the exercise of authority by a candidate in the relevant position;
- b) Experience as an internship facilitator;
- c) Ability to act as an internship facilitator throughout the internship period;
- d) The candidate's willingness to act as an internship facilitator.

Furthermore, according to the above amendments, in the course of selection of internship facilitators, results of the assessment of internship facilitators obtained on the basis of the survey among School listeners may be taken into account.

Seminar Process Improvement

Development of a Uniform Standard for Seminars

As a result of the assessment of the quality of training conducted among members of the 11th group of School listeners and seminar leaders, recommendations have been adopted for the improvement of the final stage of the training for judicial candidates.

A guidance document (seminar standard) has been developed for seminar leaders. The document allows seminar trainers to ensure that the process is lead on the basis of common approaches.

Evaluation Criteria throughout Seminar

In order to evaluate the consistency and effectiveness of the seminar process, seminar work description form has been developed and introduced. The description form was approved by the High School of Justice. The form contains the following key information: description of works performed by a listener; theoretical knowledge of a Justice Listener demonstrated during seminars and practical application thereof; personal qualities and professional skills demonstrated.

In addition, assessment criteria for judicial candidates to evaluate seminar instructors have also been developed thereby providing an additional lever for monitoring the quality of the process.

Seminar leaders have filled out seminar work description form for each member of the 11th group of School listeners. The group members, for their part, have evaluated their seminar leaders in terms of the content and frequency of assignments given, provision of prompt and comprehensive feedback, communication level and presentation skills.

Extending the Duration of Training for Judicial Candidates

Extending the duration of training for School listeners remains one of the top priority issues for the High School of Justice. The Independent Council of the High School of Justice has approved draft amendments to the Law of Georgia on High School of Justice as well as draft explanatory note.

The High School of Justice has prepared the draft amendments concerning the extension of judicial training period. In particular, the initial 10-month period stipulated by the law is to be extended to 24 months, and 6-month training period for persons of certain category is to be extended to 14 months.

The aforementioned bill was sent to the High Council of Justice, Ministry of Justice of Georgia, Supreme Court of Georgia and Legal Issues Committee of the Parliament of Georgia.

The draft amendments have been developed due to the need to introduce reasonable and more effective training periods for School listeners. Extending the training period contributes to deepening theoretical knowledge of School listeners as well as to developing skills required for practical work.

The current duration of trainings does not provide for the reasonable distribution of time among training components (theoretical training, internships, seminars) without affecting the effectiveness of any of the above training components. Extended period of training under the bill allows the allocation of significant amount of time from the training period for strengthening the component of internships and practical sessions. Listener's internship is an important component of the training course, and accordingly, extending the internship period will contribute to the development of practical skills necessary for the further work of a listener on the one hand, and on the other hand, will ensure further integration of such listener in the environment, wherein the listener, as a judge, will have to work in the future.

The initiative developed by the High School of Justice is based on recommendations of the Council of Europe and on the experience of European countries on judicial training. It is important to note that the necessity to extend the training period is pointed out by School listeners, who have already undergone training at the High School of Justice. A survey was conducted among both former and current School listeners, and an absolute majority of participants thereof have suggested that the extension of the duration of training for School listeners at the High School of Justice would be reasonable.

In the reporting period, during the year 2015, the matter was covered by media for the purpose of lobbying the issue of extension of training period.

Professional Trainings for Sitting Judges and Court Officials

Development of the Training Quality Evaluation Framework and Assessment Process

A four-level evaluation framework of the quality of training activities carried out by the School has been developed and introduced. The internationally recognized "Kirkpatrick's 4-Level Evaluation Model" provides for the measurement of four levels of training: Reaction, Learning, Behavior and Results. After processing and analyzing the Model, training evaluation tool has been created. The questionnaire is divided into four substantial parts and allows obtaining and analyzing the following information: 1- training process; 2- training evaluation; 3- organizational part of the training; 4- future/desirable training topics. The questionnaire also includes comment fields, wherein participants can leave further suggestions and comments.

Modern four-level training evaluation system enables the School to fully measure the effectiveness of training activities carried out by the School and continuously ensure the effectiveness of training quality based on recommendations received.

All the activities carried out by the High School of Justice in 2015 has been evaluated with the application of the aforementioned model.

Identification of Training Needs and Improvement of the Analysis Process

High School of Justice has introduced an integrated approach in order to identify training needs. Topics are being identified through various methods and comprehensive information is being obtained. In particular: quality evaluation framework - “Kirkpatrick's 4-Level Evaluation Model” is used at the end of professional trainings. The framework provides for the possibility of identification of training needs by participants and ensures the continuity of the process.

In September, 2015, School’s web portal, which was created in 2014 with the support of USAID/JILEP, was fully launched. One of the possibilities provided by the web portal is that judges/court officials can electronically identify the topics in relation whereto they need to undergo training. It is noteworthy that topics for retraining of judges and court officials in 2016 were identified through an electronic survey via the web portal.

Framework was further introduced, which, for the purpose of assessing training needs, involves study and analysis of the following sources: commitments undertaken by the state; recommendations of foreign and international organizations; comparative analysis of decisions handed down by the European Court of Human Rights; and novelties and trends in the field of judicial training in developed states.

Program 2015 for Retraining Judges and Currently Serving Officials

In 2015, the High School of Justice conducted 85 professional trainings, wherein a total of 1298 participants took part¹ (gender balance: 38% – male 62% – female).

Out of 85 activities in total that were carried out in the framework of the program for retraining judges and other court officials:

- ✓ 64 trainings were conducted for sitting judges, wherein 897 participants took part;

¹ The aggregate number represents a statistically processed number, which means that one and the same judge or other court official may be repeated several times therein if throughout the year such judge or other court official attended various trainings organized by the High School of Justice.

- ✓ 21 trainings were conducted for other court officials, wherein 400 participants took part.

Out of 85 activities in total, 21 trainings were conducted in the countryside/outside the city, out of which:

- ✓ 7 trainings were conducted at Tskaltubo Regional Training Center (and one of them was conducted using a video conferencing system);
- ✓ 3 trainings were conducted at Batumi Regional Training Center (and two of them were conducted using a video conferencing system).

Using Web Portal in the Training Process

In September, 2015, School's web portal, which was created in 2014 with the support of USAID/JILEP, was fully launched. The portal system ensures that all representatives of the School's target group (School listeners, judges, court officials) have their personal page, through which they can independently manage their learning process. The web portal not only contributes to the application of modern training methods but also increases the level of process transparency and objectivity.

In the reporting period, the 12th group of School listeners was retrained on the use of the web portal and the group is able to fully use the functional designed for them on the portal. The use of portal by listeners is provided at every stage of the training program. Within the scope of the theoretical course, listeners are able to obtain information via the portal on training calendar as well as training materials. In addition, the 12th group's theoretical course final examination has already been conducted through the web portal. Furthermore, for some members of the 12th group (2 listeners), the School final examination has been conducted via the web portal. Listeners have uploaded their completed works to the web portal and Examination Commission members have made appropriate assessments there through as well.

It is noteworthy that a significant part of Justice Listeners' internship is also linked with the web portal. Therefore internship facilitators evaluate listeners on a daily basis and draw up a recommendation. It should be noted herewith that all trainers and internship facilitators engaged in the training program were retrained in using the web portal.

In the reporting period, special trainings were conducted for sitting judges and court officials on using the web portal. It is also noteworthy that judges and currently serving court officials can now register via the web portal on trainings under the retraining program.

Development of the Mechanism for the Advancement of Training Program Curricula

High School of Justice has developed and introduced into practice standard method for the development of curricula.

In accordance with the above method, initially, the subjects of the curriculum to be developed are determined, thereafter relevant donor organization is found, and such donor, in its turn, identifies foreign or local experts for the purpose of involvement in the process. Simultaneously, the School identifies/nominates judges/court officials (generally, 2 or 3 judges/court officials), who will be engaged in curriculum development process and will further be School trainers on that particular topic.

Thereupon a working group is formed, which includes a donor organization expert, judges/court officials nominated by the School and a representative of the School Administration. The working group shall develop the curriculum with relevant materials, whereupon the donor organization expert shall conduct Training of Trainers (ToT) for Georgian judges/court officials engaged in the process on the developed curriculum. Following the Training of Trainers, a Pilot Training is to be conducted.

In case some gaps or additional issues of any kind are identified during the pilot training, the working group shall continue to work until the improvement thereof. At the end of the working process, an additional Training of Trainers shall be conducted for the judges/court officials nominated by the School.

Creation of Curricula

In 2015, the development of curricula on Refugee Law (UNHCR) and Fight against Discrimination (OSGF/UNION SAFARI) was completed with the application of standard method for the development of curricula.

Last year, curricula were developed on such important issues as gender equality (USAID/JILEP) and Result-Oriented Management (CoE).

Currently, the following curricula are being developed: Labour Law (ILO), Judicial Ethics (advanced module, USAID/PROLOG), Fight against Inhuman Treatment (OHCHR), General Course on Human Rights (USAID/PROLOG and CoE), Legal Course for Journalists (GIZ) Commercial Law (GIZ and PROLOG).

It should be emphasized that the already developed curricula have been integrated in training programs implemented by the High School of Justice. A similar systematic approach will be used in relation to curricula currently being under development.

Special Training Course for Court Officials

In order to ensure the staffing of the judicial system with highly qualified professionals, the High School of Justice conducts a special training course for court officials. The 2-month course is intended for those willing to work as an assistant judge, clerk of the court and/or other court official.

Through the special training course for court officials, listeners obtain theoretical knowledge and practical skills they need to have as highly qualified court officials. The course covers both legal and non-legal subjects.

Generally, in the scope of the training course, sitting judges deliver trainings on subjects concerning legal issues and on those relating to court activities. Trainings on other issues are led by invited professionals from the relevant field.

At the end of the special training course for court officials, listeners pass test exams. Upon successful completion of the course, they will be granted a certificate by the High School of Justice.

In 2014-2015, special training course for court officials was conducted by the High School of Justice for two different groups. A total of 81 listeners underwent the course and 46 out of them successfully completed it. In addition, 29 participants expressed willingness to further undergo 2-month internship at Tbilisi City Court.

Public Lectures

In order to enhance legal awareness and practical knowledge of law students, the High School of Justice has laid the foundation for public lectures initiative. 14 higher education institutions have joined the initiative by the Memorandum on Mutual Cooperation.

High School of Justice offers law students regular free public lectures on topical issues in the field of law. Public lectures are delivered by trainers of the High School of Justice – sitting judges.

Throughout 2015, the High School of Justice delivered 5 public lectures for students. Two lectures were delivered in the countryside and three lectures were delivered in Tbilisi. Public lectures were dedicated to such topical issues as: jury trial; court management, electronic records management program; third stage of judicial reform/juvenile justice. Public lectures were broadcast live via the website and social pages of the School.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Creation of an Online School Library Directory

The High School of Justice is constantly concerned about the enrichment of legal book collection available at the School library and digitalization of the existing book fund.

In 2015, with the support of USAID/JILEP, a new webpage was created along with the web portal incorporating an online directory of the School library. Currently, 1463 entries are integrated in the directory. It is noteworthy that users of the web portal have access to electronic copies of the most of the book fund.

Grant Allocated from the Reserve Fund of the President of Georgia

In 2015, the High School of Justice with the support of the Reserve Fund of the President of Georgia implemented the Project – “Strengthening the Capacities of the LEPL High School of Justice“. The Project was aimed at improving the quality of justice achieved through the effective training of judicial candidates, sitting judges and judicial officers. The following four tasks were performed in the framework of the Project:

1. A courtroom for mock trials has been created at the High School of Justice. Consequently, practical training of School listeners can now be conducted in the environment that is close to their future activities to the maximum extent possible.
2. The book fund of the legal library of the High School of Justice has been enriched particularly with the literature relating to the field of human rights. Furthermore, a great part of the books purchased was digitalized under the Project. Consequently, School listeners and court staff can familiarize themselves with the modern domestic and foreign literature inter alia in electronic format using the online library and web portals.
3. Seminar rooms of the High School of Justice have been equipped with a video conferencing system, which enables the School to deliver distance seminars with the participation of Georgian and foreign experts.
4. Online broadcasting system has been introduced through which public lectures are to be broadcast online thereby contributing to the increase of the level of understanding of court-related issues and legal culture in the society.

Strengthening Cooperation with Donor Organizations

The continuation and further deepening of cooperation with partner donor organizations is one of the top priorities of the High School of Justice. This year, as in the previous year, intensive cooperation will be carried out in this regard. In order to ensure quality education at School and further develop the School capacities, the High School of Justice is currently working on TWINNING Project with EU support and at the same time, commencement of the Project submitted to the Council of Europe is scheduled for the year 2016.

It is worth noting that in the previous year of 2015, the High School of Justice with the support of the U.S. Department of Commerce Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) deepened its relationship with the US Federal Judicial Center, the representative of which paid a working visit to the High School of Justice. The visit was aimed at the determination of further types of cooperation and delivering training for the School staff on developing training programs.

Building the Capacity of Human Resources

The organizational development component within the scope of the Strategic Development Plan of the High School of Justice includes, among other tasks, building human resource capacity. Important activities were carried out in 2015 in this connection, in particular:

Individual interviews of employees and managers were conducted using specially designed questionnaires in order to make a plan for the professional development of the School staff. On the basis of the analysis of survey results, staff retraining plan has been developed.

Where required, a certain number of employees (9 employees) underwent training on the following topics: business communication, stress management, effective time management and service plus. 17 School employees underwent training on orthography, and 3 employees underwent training on records management and archiving.

Staff evaluation system has also been developed, which includes evaluation in the following three respects:

1. Evaluation of the work performed in accordance with the duties and responsibilities (job description);
2. Evaluation of personal and professional skills, and
3. Discipline evaluation.

The first trial evaluation took place in December, 2015.

Development of Infrastructure

In 2015, important activities were carried out in terms of the development of the infrastructure of the High School of Justice. In Tskaltubo Regional Training Center, where training activities are being carried out on a regular basis, the façade, second floor including the conference hall have been renovated. The Center has also been equipped with modern furniture.

It is noteworthy that both Tskaltubo and Batumi Regional Training Centers are heavily loaded. Training activities are carried out on site with the participation of experts as well as remotely using the video conferencing system.

Digital Room of the Head Office of the High School of Justice has been equipped with the additional computer equipment, thereby allowing for simultaneous training activities for 20 listeners.

3. PUBLICITY AND TRANSPARENCY

One of the main goals of the Strategic Plan of the High School of Justice is to build School's reputation, which, in addition to the provision of high quality training, can be achieved through effective internal and external communication. This, in turn, includes strengthening of School's communication capacities as well as ensuring publicity and transparency.

Identification of Effective Channels of Communication with Internal and External Audiences

In 2015, the High School of Justice started to work on the development of its communication strategy. At the initial stage, for the purpose of identification of effective channels of communication with internal and external audiences, a quantitative survey was conducted. Prior to the commencement of the quantitative survey, The High School of Justice had developed a comprehensive questionnaire to be sent to those participating in the survey, determined target groups and compiled a list of the names of the group members.

Furthermore, a qualitative survey was conducted among two target groups: School listeners of the 12th group and School trainers. Additional information has been obtained on focus group based on survey objectives.

Report on the "Evaluation of the Relationship of Parties Associated with the High School of Justice to the Activities of the School" was developed on the basis of the information obtained through the quantitative and qualitative surveys.

After the completion of the research part, at the end of 2015, the final version of the communication strategy of the School was developed, which shall be submitted to the Independent Council of the High School of Justice for approval.

Availability of Information for the Public and Stakeholders

In 2015, new webpage of the High School of Justice, which was developed with USAID/JILEP support, was launched. The webpage was put into operation in both Georgian and English languages. The webpage is informative and focused on the interests of users to the maximum extent possible. The webpage also provides for the electronic request of public information.

Website and social pages are continuously being updated and provide prompt and complete information to users. The webpage of the School runs in both Georgian and English languages. Information published thereon fully satisfies the interest of both internal and external audiences.

Main Priorities in 2016

Priority actions are scheduled to be taken in 2016 with the view of the enhancement of the performance of the High School of Justice. The priorities, on their part, are based on the four-year Action Plan developed with the support of the Council of Europe.

Priority actions to be taken by the High School of Justice in 2016 are as follows:

1. Continue the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the High School of Justice;
2. Institutional Capacity Building of the School including further professional development of the personnel;
3. Elaborating and implementing curricula/training programs on important and topical issues;
4. Working on the extension of the duration of Initial Training Program.