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NDI POLL: PERCEPTION OF DISINFORMATION HIGH; GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE MIXED WITH CITIZENS CONCERNED ABOUT CORRUPTION, CRIME

TBILISI – Poll results released today by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and CRRC Georgia show that Georgians are mixed about the country’s direction. Almost 40 percent believe the country is going in the wrong direction, with 29 percent stating “right direction” and 29 percent saying there is no change.

Perception of disinformation in Georgian media is high, with 68 percent believing that Georgian television stations spread disinformation, which is higher than the percentage (45) believing Russian stations do. Citizens also think that Russia (57 percent), the European Union (EU) (47 percent), and the United States (US) (45 percent) all spread information to promote a positive image of their countries. However, 48 percent of Georgians believe Russia uses lies and false information in these efforts, while 25 percent believe the EU and 26 percent believe the US engages in such disinformation.

“The high public distrust in Georgian media to provide accurate, truthful information should be a wake-up call for broadcasters and journalists,” says Laura Thornton, NDI senior country director. “With the problem of disinformation threatening to destabilize democratic practices and institutions around the globe, Georgia needs to tap into strategies to protect and enhance information integrity.”

Georgian approval for membership in the EU is at 75 percent and in NATO at 65 percent, and there has been a slight decrease in disapproval for both bodies since December 2017. However, only 43 percent of Georgians believe the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a “good thing,” while 42 percent feel it was bad.

Assessment of the government’s performance is divided, with 49 percent evaluating it badly and 44 percent well. Public service halls, army, and the church are viewed as the best performing national institutions, although the church’s favorability has significantly dropped to 56 percent from almost 80 percent in 2015. The lowest performing national institutions are the courts, with a 30 percent negative evaluation and only 14 percent positive, and parliament, which 35 percent of citizens assess negatively, up from only 10 percent in 2014. Support for political parties is low, with 26 percent saying Georgian Dream is closest to them, nine percent UNM, and four percent European Georgia.

Georgians believe there is a problem of corruption in government, with 44 percent identifying corruption in the central government, 35 percent in local government, and 29 percent in state institutions, such as schools, public registrars, and hospitals. A total of 63 percent perceive an increase in crime since October 2016.

“Georgians are divided about their government’s overall performance and still find themselves politically homeless, indicating a demand for better and more responsive policies,” said Thornton. “The perception of corruption and rising crime, coupled with external and internal disinformation efforts, threaten public confidence in Georgian institutions and present an urgent need to amplify democratic reforms and oversight initiatives.”

With regard to the job performance of national leaders, Prime Minister Kvirikashvili, President Margvelashvili, and Minority Leader Bakradze were assessed most positively. Tbilisi Mayor Kaladze earned 53 percent positive evaluation from Tbilisi respondents. When asked about individual politicians, 46 percent of Georgians have a favorable opinion of David Sergeenko, 34 percent of Davit Bakradze, and 31 percent of Thea Tsulukiani, the top three of those polled.

NDI surveys public opinion to help Georgian stakeholders diagnose and address issues of public concern by providing accurate, unbiased and statistically-sound data. This poll aims to capture the most relevant information to foster the development of responsive policies and governance. A wide range of leaders from across the political spectrum have reported that the polls are important to their work and encourage continued polling. The results reflect data collected from March 20 to April 4 through face-to-face interviews with a nationwide representative sample of Georgia’s adult population, excluding occupied territories, that included 2,194 completed interviews. The average margin of error is +/- 2.2 percent.

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This poll was carried out by CRRC Georgia.

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CRRC-Georgia is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization with a mission to promote evidence-based debates on policy issues by providing reliable, up-to-date and accessible data and analysis. More information is available at <http://www.crrc.ge>