Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) hosted one of the co-authors of the European Integration Index 2013 for the Eastern Partnership Countries, Iryna Solonenko on March 12.

Solonenko, who is a researcher at Frankfurt University, took part in the discussion about the Eastern Partnership perspectives in the backdrop of the ongoing problems in Ukraine.

Dmitry Shulga, Director of the European Program of The International Renaissance Foundation also took part in the discussion with Solonenko. The manager of the European Integration Fund, Vano Chkhikvadze moderated the session.

The discussion focused on the format in which the EU will continue to cooperate with the Eastern Partnership countries and what expectations the public sector has of the perspective the further integration of the six EaP countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus with the EU).

According to the research, Georgia is in second place, in its progress towards European standards, just behind Moldova.

"Georgia made good progress in 2012 and early 2013. The country improved its performance in most aspects of the Index, including deep and sustainable democracy, and received increased EU assistance in return for its progress. As in the 2012 Index, Georgia remains the second best performer after Moldova among the EaP countries. Still, numerous shortcomings were observed during the parliamentary election in October 2012. This led to a difficult “co-habitation” period between the two largest parties in the Parliament, which are headed by the country’s President and Prime Minister,” the index reads.

Shulga said that the decision about the signature of any relationship documents between the EaP countries and the EU is not only decided by two actors, as “Russia still has influence on the matter.”

Solonenko added that some tactic must be elaborated as “just one person or just one small circle of people“ were not able to make a decision like former President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovych has made just before the EaP summit in Vilnius in November 2013.

According to Solonenko, “one person should not be able to ruin the hard work of the whole nation.”

Shulga further added that, in his opinion, the EU has made the right decision, when they did not agree on any kind of changes in the document, because he thinks the EU must stay “solid” and not allow anyone or anything to humiliate its reputation.

Representatives of Georgian NGOs also attended the discussion including Tamar Pataaraia (the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development), Manana Kochladze (Green Alternative), Kakha Gogolashvili (Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies), Kakha Kozhoridze (Georgian Young Lawyers' Association), Tamar Khidasheli (Public Defender’s Office), and Mariam Gabedava, (Judicial Independence and Legal Empowerment Project).