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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE  
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

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## **Fourth Report submitted by Georgia**

**Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework  
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities –  
received on 31 July 2022**

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paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of  
National Minorities**

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<b>Abbreviations</b>
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<b>AoG</b>	<b>Administration of the Government of Georgia</b>
<b>BfD</b>	Broadband for Development
<b>CC</b>	Community Centre
<b>CCG</b>	Criminal Code of Georgia
<b>CEC</b>	Central Election Commission
<b>Clil</b>	Content and Language Integrated Learning
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>CoE</b>	The Council of Europe
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>EA</b>	Election Administration
<b>ECRML</b>	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)
<b>GeoStat</b>	National Statistics Office of Georgia
<b>GOG</b>	The Government of Georgia
<b>HEIs</b>	Higher Education Institutions
<b>LAS</b>	Legal Aid Service
<b>LEPL</b>	Legal Entity of Public Law
<b>LSGs</b>	Local self-governments
<b>MDPOTLHS</b>	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice of Georgia
<b>MRDI</b>	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisations
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PDO</b>	Public Defender's Office of Georgia
<b>PSDA</b>	Public Service Development Agency
<b>PSG</b>	Prosecution Service of Georgia
<b>PSH</b>	Public Service Halls
<b>SARI</b>	State Agency for Religious Affairs
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SES</b>	Low Social Economic Status
<b>SESA</b>	State Employment Support Agency
<b>SIS</b>	Special Investigation Service of Georgia
<b>SMRCE</b>	Office of the Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

## Introduction

1. Georgia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multicultural country. 13.1% (488,136 persons) of the total population of Georgia (3,713.8 mln.) excluding Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia, belongs to ethnic minorities. The major part is ethnic Azerbaijanis (6.27%) and ethnic Armenians (4.53%). At the same time, there are smaller ethnic groups, such as Kists, Udis, Avars, Assyrians, Ossetians, Yezidis, Kurds, Ukrainians, Russians, Greeks, Jews, Roma, etc.; these minorities make up about 2.4% of the population of Georgia. The Government of Georgia (GOG) is committed to providing equal rights to persons belonging to national minorities with living conditions and respect their fundamental rights.
2. The GoG considers continuous enhancement of the Policy for Civic Equality and Integration, as the top priority in terms of strengthening the country's multi-ethnic and culturally diverse society. From this perspective, the objectives of the authorities are oriented toward the consolidation of a unified, stable, rule of law and multicultural society, through the conduct of pluralistic and inclusive policy, the core value of which is a human being and their rights. The policy aims to further strengthen democratic society based on equality; create equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, for full participation in all spheres of public life; preserve cultural values and identities of ethnic minorities; further strengthen inter-ethnic relations.
3. Georgia has a positive and unique experience in maintaining centuries-old tradition of cultural diversity and friendly coexistence between ethno-cultural groups. These traditions are further developed and strengthened in the frames of the state policy.
4. Georgia ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereafter the "Framework Convention") on 22 December 2005. The Framework Convention entered into force for Georgia on 1 April 2006.
5. On 17 April 2007, Georgia submitted its first State Report on the implementation of the Framework Convention. The first monitoring cycle was concluded with the Committee of Ministers Resolution of 11 June 2014 [[CM/ResCMN \(2014\)7](#)]. On 30 May 2012, Georgia submitted its second State Report. The second monitoring cycle was concluded with the Committee of Ministers Resolution of 30 May 2018 [[CM/ResCMN \(2018\)7](#)] 008)10]. On 12 July 2017, Georgia submitted its Third State Report; the third monitoring cycle was concluded with the Committee of Ministers Resolution of 17 June 2020, [[CM/ResCMN \(2020\)5](#)].
6. Georgia's **Fourth State Report** is presented below. It was prepared in line with the [Outline for the state reports to be submitted under the fourth monitoring cycle, in conformity with article 25 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#) adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 30 April 2013. It includes information on measures already taken or being implemented to address the issues and challenges identified during the third monitoring cycle.
7. This report will summarise the progress made against those recommendations and any further progress against the Articles of the Framework Convention for the period 2017-2021 in Georgia.
8. The Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia remain under the occupation by the Russian Federation and outside the effective control of the Georgian authorities that hinders the implementation of the Framework Convention on the ground. Therefore, this report does not cover implementation of the Framework Convention in these regions.
9. The COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges for the country. Specific needs emerged and the GoG continued further protection and support to ethnic minorities through access to information on the COVID-19 related issues; healthcare and social services; education; subsistence items. The information on the relevant measures undertaken by the Government is specified below in section III, COVID -19 Response.
10. The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality (SMRCE) has prepared this report as the state agency responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Framework Convention in Georgia. SMRCE consulted central and local authorities and coordinated their contributions as follows: Council on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues; the Parliament of Georgia; Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Protection of Georgia; Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia; Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia; Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia; Ministry of Justice of Georgia; Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia; Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia; Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia; Ministry of Defence of Georgia; State Attorney in Samtskhe-Javakheti region, State Attorney in Kvemo Kartli region, State Attorney in Kakheti region.

11. The State report presented was shared with the Public Defender's Office and the Council of National Minorities under the Public Defender's Office (which serves as one of the key platforms of NGOs and experts working on national minorities' issues) as well as ethnic minority representatives; intensive consultations were run with the state agencies, and the local authorities.
12. The Georgian and English versions of the report will be uploaded on the website of the SMRCE.

## Part I. Practical arrangements made at the national level for raising awareness of the results of the third monitoring cycle and of the Framework Convention

### A. Dissemination of the results of the third monitoring cycle

13. The Third Opinion on Georgia adopted in English and French by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on 7 March 2019<sup>1</sup> was translated into Georgian. Comments of the Government of Georgia on the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted on 7 March 2019 were also translated into Georgian.

14. English and Georgian versions of these documents were published on the official website of the SMRCE. On September 10, 2019, the PDO published information on the publication of the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on its official website.<sup>2</sup>

15. On November–December 29-30, 2019, the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality convened the meeting of the Inter-Agency Commission on Civil Equality and Integration<sup>3</sup> to present conclusions and discuss the implementation of the recommendations of the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee. The findings and recommendations revealed in the Opinion were reflected in the new State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030, thus reiterating Georgia's adherence to its commitments under the FCNM.

### B. Follow-up activities

16. From 2018 onwards, SMRCE has organised the meetings on national minority issues (at least one meeting a year). These meetings are held under the auspices of the Civic Equality and Integration Government Commission or together with minority organisations and other CSOs/NGOs. The participants included various groups, such as civil society, youth, women, teachers, community leaders, and media representatives. The target of the meetings was to raise awareness of international standards on national minorities, with particular emphasis on the FCNM and conclusions and recommendations of the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee.

17. To some extent, the process was intensified in 2020-2021 with the purpose of launching preparation of the new State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration under the leadership and coordination of the SMRCE. The State Strategy for 2021-2030<sup>4</sup> is the second strategic document on civic equality and integration. Strategic planning was preceded by the National Concept on Tolerance and Civic Integration and 2009-2014 Action Plan and the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020" of the Government of Georgia, which serves as a foundation for the institutional development of a systemic management of civic equality and integration policy. The Strategy was based on the results achieved over the past years, and it takes into consideration the existing challenges identified in the aftermath of interim and final assessments of the 2015-2020 Strategy, as well as in the conclusions published by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe regarding Georgia and in the studies of local NGOs. The recommendations presented within the framework of those assessments have been reviewed and taken into consideration in the process of the development of the Strategy. During the final overall assessment of the 2015-2020 Strategy, five extended meetings were held with the CSOs, grassroots organisations, and the population of the regions densely populated by national minorities, experts, representatives of international organisations and academia. Furthermore, the SMRCE conducted meetings with the Council of National Minorities under the PDO. Notably, four independent experts were engaged in the preparation of the overall assessment.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/georgia>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ombudsman.ge/eng/190308042016siakhleebi/evrosabchos-erovnul-umtsiresobata-datsvis-sheesakheb-charcho-konventsii-mrchevelta-komiteti-sakhalkho-damtsvelis-mushaobas-dadebitad-afasebs>

<sup>3</sup> The Inter-Agency Commission was created to monitor and report on implementation of the goals and activities set out in the strategy. The SMRCE coordinated the Commission work. The Commission comprises all major public institutions that have assumed relevant responsibilities according to the strategy and action plan(s). Inter-Agency Commission on Civil Equality and Integration was transformed into the Government Commission on Civic Equality and Integration.

<https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4803678?publication=0>

<sup>4</sup> See the English version of the Strategy at:

[https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/Concept\\_ENG21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/Concept_ENG21.12.pdf)



18. The SMRCE ensured that the development of a new strategy was participatory, inclusive and open. During the first phase of the public consultations (July-September 2020), intensive meetings were held with the representatives of the public and non-governmental sectors (9 meetings). The second phase (October 2020 - March 2021) was conducted in interactive format through three working sessions. In the final phase of the public consultations, six concluding meetings were held with local self-governments, experts, and media representatives (April 2021). In total, the SMRCE organised 18 consultative meetings involving 216 persons (central and local administration, local and international organisations, academia, local media, experts, and stakeholders) to develop a new strategy. Both local and international organisations presented proposals and recommendations during this process (in total, 199 recommendations). The SMRCE and the working group discussed all recommendations; vast majority of them were reflected in the Strategy document. International expertise of the document was provided by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. (See more details on the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 below in section “Additional measures and policies adopted to implement all the detailed recommendations, various findings and conclusions contained in the Advisory Committee’s Third Opinion”).

### **C. Participation of minority organisations and other non-governmental organisations in the authorities’ implementation and monitoring of the Framework Convention, and their involvement in the preparation of the fourth report**

19. During the reporting period, the SMRCE actively cooperated with the Council of National Minorities under the PDO. The Office of the State Minister shared relevant information, reports, views, and approaches with the Council.

20. SMRCE has intensively conducted working meetings and consultations, seminars, roundtables with the local NGOs, experts, academic circles, international organisation representatives, media representatives, ethnic minority representatives in Tbilisi as well as with the local civil society actors and the population in the municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities.

21. Furthermore, the sessions and meetings in the frames of the Government Commission of the Civic Equality and Integration and the thematic working groups (which imply engagement of NGOs, experts, ethnic minority representatives and all interested actors) functioning under the Commission have been organized on regular basis.

22. The SMRCE annually shares the report on the implementation of the Action Plan of the Strategy and the one for the next year. The Council submitted recommendations and proposals to the SMRCE. Notably, the Council monitors the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plans and publishes relevant reports with recommendations.

### **D. Any other measures taken to promote awareness of the Framework Convention among national minorities, public officials and the general public.**

23. Goal 1.6 of the 2015-2020 State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration defines the commitment of Georgia to raise public awareness about ethnic minority rights, including the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Strategy envisages conducting information/awareness raising campaigns on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, targeting various groups, including the Offices of State Representatives in the regions, local administrations, law enforcement agencies, and other public institutions employees. Furthermore, the Strategy provides to monitor and report the fulfilment of the Framework Convention requirements. The Action Plans (APs) specify the 1.6 Goal of the Strategy through relevant tasks. Reports on the Status of AP Implementation and the Final Assessment of the 2015-2020 State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration underlined that the meetings on human rights, civic integration, protection of rights of national minorities, anti-discrimination regulations and international mechanisms on the protection of minority rights were regularly conducted. Specifically, in 2015-2020, the SMRCE conducted the meetings in Samtskhe-Javakheti region, (Ninotsminda, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe), Kvemo Kartli region (Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Tsalka, Gardabani), Kakheti region (Lagodekhi, Sagarejo, Telavi, Pankisi Gorge) and Tbilisi discussing the progress as well as challenges in the civic integration process. Around 50 meetings with approximately 1,500 participants were conducted during this period. SMRCE actively cooperated with the NGOs/CSOs in this process. For example, in 2019, the Mayor's Office of Batumi Municipality, Batumi City Council - “Sakrebulo” and “House of Friendship” organised an information meeting on the FCNM for NGOs, media

representatives and public schools. In 2020, the SMRCE conducted up to ten information meetings in the regions densely populated by national minorities.

24. Notably, the 2021-2030 Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration also prioritises raising public awareness on the issues of human rights, civic equality, integration policy, anti-discrimination, and gender equality under Goal 7, "Strengthening environment based on equality". The 2021-2022 AP of the Strategy, *inter alia*, provides conducting training about the protection of human rights and freedoms for ethnic minority representatives, and organising information meetings to raise awareness on human rights, civic equality, and integration policy. The relevant activities are planned for the second half of 2022.

## Part II. Measures taken to address core issues

25. At the end of the third monitoring cycle, the Committee of Ministers identified the following issues for immediate action included in its Resolution CM/ResCMN (2020)5 adopted on 17 June 2020:
- a. Reinforce the mandate of the Public Defender so that it can address obligatory requests for information to private persons and deal with complaints related to administrative proceedings; the burden of proof shift should be reinforced in discrimination cases, so that the Public Defender can contribute to effectively implementing the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination; further enhance measures aimed at raising awareness of the general public about anti-discrimination legislation and the relevant legal remedies available, with a particular focus on persons belonging to national minorities;
  - b. Ensure that persons belonging to national minorities enjoy their right to manifest their religion or belief as well as their right to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations; review the relevant legislative provisions and administrative practice in accordance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court of 3 July 2018; set up transparent and non-discriminatory procedures for building or allocation of places of worship in close and timely consultation with the representatives of the groups concerned; ensure that the process of restitution of property to religious communities is carried out in a non-discriminatory manner; systematically monitor cases of proselytism in schools;
  - c. Adapt the content of teaching materials so they contribute to the creation of a climate of tolerance and mutual understanding in Georgian society and step up efforts aimed at improving the quality of materials for minority and majority language learning; ensure high-level professional development for teachers from pre-schools, primary and secondary schools teaching in minority languages; identify a multilingual education model adapted to the Georgian context and implement it at pre-school, primary and secondary levels; monitor this implementation process to ensure that the model is indeed developed with and endorsed by teachers, school boards, parents and communities, implemented in all schools teaching in minority languages and evaluated in order to observe whether it does produce the expected effects.
26. Further recommendations of the Committee of Ministers were:
- d. adapt the census form in accordance with the right to self-identification and launch an information campaign, well ahead of the next census, targeting persons belonging to national minorities; adopt proper measures aimed at collecting data on discrimination in all relevant fields and to this end, develop adequate methods of disaggregated data collection while fully respecting the right to free self-identification and in accordance with international standards on personal data protection.
  - e. ensure that the cost for renting the premises of the Public Defender's headquarters does not significantly reduce the operational budget of the Public Defender. Resources allocated to its field offices should also be increased to give the Public Defender the means to implement the necessary awareness raising work with regard to the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.
  - f. condemn systematically and in a timely manner all instances of intolerance, in particular in public discourse, and ensure that the existing legislation related to racial discrimination is effectively implemented; provide the necessary training to law enforcement and judicial authorities to ensure that the implementation of the existing legislation related to racial discrimination is in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights with regard to freedom of expression.
  - g. ensure, given the digital strategy implemented by the Public Broadcaster, that persons belonging to national minorities have access to internet, in particular in remote areas, and report publicly on the internet coverage in Georgia.
  - h. guarantee effectively the right to use minority languages orally and in writing for persons belonging to national minorities, in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities, in areas traditionally inhabited by those persons or where they live in substantial numbers; envisage translating relevant pieces of legislation into minority languages.
  - i. formalise and make compulsory the existing practice of consulting the Council of National Minorities and the Council of Religions under the auspices of the Public Defender of Georgia on matters of potential concerns for the persons and communities they represent; effectively consult representatives

of national minorities before designing and launching important infrastructural projects that may affect them.

- j. step up efforts to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities benefit from the infrastructure projects carried out in areas traditionally inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities or where they live in substantial numbers and that their interests are taken into account when designing and implementing them, through effective consultations with the persons concerned.
- k. promote equal access to the labour market, medical and social services to persons belonging to national minorities, including numerically smaller ones living in remote areas.

27. This section will provide information concerning the measures related to the issues for immediate action. Implementation on other recommendations will be provided in Part III except the recommendation in subparagraph “e” above.

**Recommendation A:** Reinforce the mandate of the Public Defender so that it can address obligatory requests for information to private persons and deal with complaints related to administrative proceedings; the burden of proof shift should be reinforced in discrimination cases, so that the Public Defender can contribute to effectively implementing the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination; further enhance measures aimed at raising awareness of the general public about anti-discrimination legislation and the relevant legal remedies available, with a particular focus on persons belonging to national minorities.

28. In addition to Core Issues Recommendation “a”, this section also provides an answer to **Recommendation “e”** above: “ensure that the cost of renting the premises of the Public Defender’s headquarters does not significantly reduce the operational budget of the Public Defender. Resources allocated to its field offices should also be increased to give the Public Defender the means to implement the necessary awareness raising work concerning the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination”.

29. According to the Constitution of Georgia, the Public Defender of Georgia shall supervise the protection of human rights within the territory of Georgia. Hindering the activities of the Public Defender shall be punishable by law. The Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender of Georgia defines the mandate of the Public Defender. Furthermore, the Law of Georgia on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination specifies the mandate of the Public Defender about discrimination.

30. As Advisory Committee stated, “the 2014 Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination constitutes the cornerstone of the Georgian anti-discrimination legislative system. Its Article 1 lists in particular religion, national origin, and ethnic origin as prohibited grounds of discrimination. The State Report lists other relevant legislation containing anti-discrimination provisions, including Article 142 of the Criminal Code of Georgia that defines racial discrimination as a criminal offence. Discrimination is also considered as an aggravating factor for conviction according to Article 53 of the same Code, when a given crime is committed on any ground of discrimination.”

31. The Advisory Committee also mentioned that the adoption of the legislative amendments concerning “making obligatory the submission of information by private natural and legal persons to the Public Defender, extending from three months to one year the time for the Public Defender to apply to a court in discrimination cases, reinforcing the burden of proof shift, as well as allowing the Public Defender to deal with complaints related to administrative proceedings” was pending, and advised to approve relevant amendments to the legislation.

32. In 2017-2022, the Parliament adopted eight amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender of Georgia to strengthen the mandate of PDO and improve legislation.<sup>5</sup>

33. Amendments to the Organic Law from September 21, 2018,<sup>6</sup> brought the Law in line with the new version of the Constitution. The major changes were related to the term and selection procedure of the Public Defender: the previous wording of the Constitution and Organic Law provided that the Public Defender of Georgia should be elected for a five-year term by a majority of the total number of members of the parliament.

<sup>5</sup> Amendments adopted on December 14, 2018, align the Organic Law with the newly adopted Rules of Procedures of the Parliament. Amendments adopted on September 20, 2019, and July 15, 2020, increased the mandate of the Public Defender in line with the Code on the Rights of the Child. Amendments adopted on July 15, 2020, brought the Organic Law in line with the Local Self-Government Code.

<sup>6</sup> The Organic Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender of Georgia # 3371-Is

The Organic Law provided that the "same person may be elected as the Public Defender of Georgia for only two consecutive terms". According to the amendments, the "Public Defender of Georgia, who shall be elected for a term of 6 years by a majority of at least three-fifths of the total number of the Members of Parliament. The same person shall not be elected as a Public Defender consecutively."

34. Furthermore, the amendments changed the volume of inviolability of the Public Defender – the consent of the Parliament is no longer necessary for the prosecution of the Public Defender.

35. In 2020,<sup>7</sup> the mandate of the Public Defender was further increased to facilitate the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities. The Public Defender is entitled to supervise the activities of administrative, state authorities and local self-government bodies, public institutions, and officials, individuals, and legal entities, and monitor their fulfilment of obligations and responding under the rules established by the legislation of Georgia.

36. The Parliament adopted the most significant changes to the Organic Law on the Public Defender of Georgia on May 3, 2019.<sup>8</sup> The adopted novelties are as follows:

37. The power of the Public Defender to request and receive, immediately or not later than ten days, all certificates, documents, and materials necessary for conducting an inspection and request and receive written explanations to be examined by the Public Defender extended to physical persons, other organisational entity association of people that do not have legal status or an entrepreneur if the case is related to discrimination.

38. Legal guarantees for the implementation of the powers of the Public Defender of Georgia also expanded: the subjects, as mentioned earlier, shall be obligated to submit an explanation on the issue in question to the Public Defender of Georgia during the inspection of discrimination cases. They are also obligated to examine received recommendations or proposals and report in writing on the examination results to the Public Defender of Georgia within 20 days.

39. Furthermore, if the examination of a statement/appeal confirms the fact of discrimination, the Public Defender of Georgia is entitled to issue a recommendation based on the circumstances of the case, by which he/she offers physical persons, other organisational entity or association of people that do not have legal status or any entrepreneur to take measures to eliminate discrimination and restore the equality violated by the discrimination without impairing legitimate interests of third parties. Thus, the Public Defender can send proposals and recommendations to physical persons, other organisational entity or association of people that do not have legal status or any entrepreneur to restore violated human rights and freedoms. Information on the subjects that violated human rights and freedoms or ignored recommendations of the Public Defender of Georgia on measures to be taken to restore those rights in cases of discrimination shall be included in the report of the Public Defender.

40. The Public Defender is authorised to apply to the court as an applicant, according to the Civil Procedure Code of Georgia, if a legal person or other organisational entity, association of people that does not have legal status, or any entrepreneur does not respond or adopt his/her recommendation and there is sufficient evidence of discrimination.

41. Notably, to improve equality and fight against discrimination, significant changes were made to the anti-discrimination legislation - the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination - the denial of reasonable accommodation was defined as discrimination based on disability, and the Parliament adopted the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In the field of protection of the right to equality, labour legislation has undergone substantial changes. As a result of the amendments to the Labour Code, the employer was directly obliged to ensure equal pay for equal work to male and female employees. In addition, a non-exhaustive list of specific issues related to labour and pre-contractual relations (selection criteria, employment conditions, access to training, etc.) to which the principle of equal treatment applies has been identified.

42. In 2019, significant legislative changes were made to ban "harassment" and "sexual harassment" - prohibitive norms appeared in the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and the Organic Law of Georgia, the Labour Code. In addition, within the framework of the amendments to the labour legislation in 2020, the Labour Code obliges the employer to respond to sexual harassment. As a result of an

<sup>7</sup> The Organic Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender of Georgia #6849-რს.

<sup>8</sup> The Organic Law of Georgia on Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender of Georgia # 4550-ილს. Amended articles were: 14<sup>1</sup>, 18, 20<sup>1</sup>, 21, 22, 23 and 24.

active cooperation between Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and UN Women, throughout 2020-2021, ten state entities approved legal acts and established the sexual harassment response mechanisms.

43. The Organic Law provides guarantees for institutional and financial independence of the PDO: "The Public Defender's Office shall be financed from the State Budget of Georgia to the extent necessary for the adequate performance of its functions. It is not allowed to reduce the amount of labour remuneration without by prior consent of the Public Defender of Georgia.

44. The budget of the PDO permanently increases:

**Table 1. PDO budget in 2017-2022**

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>PDO Budget (mln GEL)</b>	4.8	5.5	6.4	7.0	8.5	8,87

45. Notably, PDO receives significant support from international partners through capacity building and expert support programmes.

46. In 2018, the Government Reserve Fund covered the cost of renting the PDO headquarters. In 2019-2022, the PDO budget covered this cost. In 2020, the rent cost for the headquarters was 1, 044, 479, 10 GEL and in 2021, – 406,887.35 GEL. The PDO budget increase compensates for the rent costs and ensures that the operational budget is not significantly decreased.

47. The PDO exercises its functions through headquarters in Tbilisi and ten regional bureaus. There are 13 departments and eight divisions in the headquarters of PDO. Furthermore, four consultative councils operate under the PDO. The number of allocated staff (123) has not increased since 2015; however, the number of employed people increased from 88 to 103 as of January 1, 2022. Furthermore, 32 persons were employed on a contractual basis to support the PDO activities.

48. As for the burden of proof, according to Article 363<sup>3</sup> of the Civil Procedure Code, "when filing a claim, a person shall present to the court those facts and evidence that provide grounds to assume that discriminatory action has been committed. After this, the burden of proof that that he/she has not committed the discriminative action shall be imposed on the defendant." Article 8, Clause 2 of the Law "On Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination" contains a similar clause. In addition, the following details should be included in this discussion: The Public Defender of Georgia actively uses the authority to act as a friend of the court in order to help the courts deliver decisions taking into consideration all relevant standards related to the principle of equality. In amicus curiae briefs submitted to the general courts, Public Defender usually dedicates a separated section to the issue of shifting the burden of proof.

49. The practice of the Georgian courts is not consistent with the interpretation and use of this provision. However, the Supreme Court strictly follows the approach that a defendant has a burden of proof in discrimination cases. For example, in its decision on September 29, 2017,<sup>9</sup> the Civil Law Chamber of the Supreme Court extensively discussed the burden of proof in discrimination cases based on the ECHR case law. It criticised the inability of the lower courts to interpret and use article 363<sup>3</sup> of the Civil Procedure Code to require the presentation of additional evidence against prima facie evidence from an applicant concerning discrimination and annulled the appealed decision of the Court of Appeal. In its decision from May 19, 2017 (case #295-279-2017), the same chamber supported the position of the Court of Appeal that a burden of proof rests with the employer in labour discrimination cases. The Supreme Court stated that "in this case the Court of Cassation considers that the burden of proof was distributed correctly ... considering the specific nature of labour relations".<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Case #36-247-235-2017 on discrimination in labour relations.

<sup>10</sup> More information on the interpretation of provisions on the burden of proof is available in the publication of the Supreme Court "Incorporation of international standards on the prohibition of discrimination into national judicial practice", 2017, available at: <https://www.supremecourt.ge/files/upload-file/pdf/diskriminaciis-akrzalvis-saertashoriso-standartebis-asaxva-erovnul-sasamartlo-praktikashi.pdf> and Decisions of the Supreme Court of Georgia on Civil Cases (in Georgian) 2018, #2 available at: <https://www.supremecourt.ge/files/upload-file/pdf/2018w-samogalago-krebuli2.pdf>. See also the decision of the Tbilisi Court of Appeal from March 24, 2016, available at: <http://library.court.ge/judgements/92962016-05-11.pdf>

50. The Supreme Court follows this practice. In its judgement #as-132-2020 from September 30, 2020, the Supreme Court reiterated its judgement concerning the burden of proof: "For the purpose of procedural analysis of the distribution of the burden of proof in a case of discrimination, the Chamber of Cassation is guided by the provisions of Section 73 of the Civil Procedural Code, namely Article 3633, which obliges the initiator of the restriction to present evidence to the court and indicate facts analysis of which creates a basis for assumption of unequal treatment of a person based on any ground. If this procedural standard is observed, the following obligations of a defendant's obligation arise a) to justify different treatment with objective and reasonable arguments that outweigh the different treatment and will be justified by democratic values; B) to prove the absence of differential treatment. According to the European Court of Human Rights, the burden of proof in this area is as follows: Once the applicant proves the existence of a differential treatment, it is the Government's obligation to prove that it was justified (Chassagnou and Others v. France [GC], #25088/94, #28331/95). As to what constitutes prima facie evidence that can shift the burden of proof to the respondent State, the court noted (Nachova & Other) that there were no procedural barriers to the admissibility of evidence or predefined formula for evaluating it. The court draws conclusions which it considers to be supported by a free assessment of all the evidence, including findings that may be based on facts and arguments of the parties."<sup>11</sup>

**Further enhance measures aimed at raising awareness of the general public about anti-discrimination legislation and the relevant legal remedies available, with a particular focus on persons belonging to national minorities**

51. The State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021-2030 defines raising awareness on ethnic minority rights as a priority. Specifically, Objective 1.6.2 aims at raising awareness on the rights of national minorities and anti-discrimination legislation amongst civil servants and national minority representatives. In 2018-2020, the SMRCE and local authorities organised information meetings in the municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities (Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions). The aim of these meetings was to inform representatives of national minorities (NGOs, community leaders, media representatives, youth, and teachers) about their rights and responsibilities. The meetings also targeted awareness raising on the international commitments of Georgia, including obligations undertaken within the framework of the Council of Europe, as well as women's rights, gender equality, including access to finance and resources, realization of the right to freedom of choice and development, early marriages, domestic violence.

52. In 2018-2022 the SMRCE has conducted a series of meetings on civic equality and integration policy, its priorities, objectives, and the activities implemented/planned with the local population in the villages of Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti regions. In 2021-2022 the meetings were held with the population of the villages of Kvemo Kartli region (Nazarlo, Kesalo, Vakhtangisi, Sadakhlo, Shulaveri, Imiri, Talaveri, Nakhuduri, Chapala, Zemo and Kvemo Orozmani, Mtisdziri) as well as of Samtskhe-Javakheti region (Didi Pamaji, Patara Pamaji, Orali, Kularisi, Bavra, Khulgumo, Kartikami, Khospio, Kumurdo, Kirovokani, Orojalari, Satkha) and Kakheti region (Omalo, Zinobiani, Kvareli, Duisi, Kabali, Uzuntala, Khornabuji, Choeti, Lambalo) to reveal their needs and consider the ways of addressing them.

53. According to the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the Public Defender has the mandate to organise events to raise public awareness of discrimination. Exercising its statutory obligation, the PDO played an instrumental role in raising awareness of anti-discrimination legislation. On May 2, 2018, to mark the fourth anniversary of the adoption of the Non-Discrimination Law, the Public Defender organised a conference on the Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Equality. This was the Public Defender's first initiative to engage private actors in combating discrimination. With the support of the UN Women, the Public Defender's representatives were also given an opportunity to conduct training sessions on gender equality issues for private companies' employees.

54. PDO conducted awareness-raising campaigns during Human Rights Weeks and Equality Weeks. In 2018 it also ran a media campaign on anti-discrimination. In 2019, PDO representatives held training on equality for Marneuli municipal bodies and public school teachers. Information meetings were also held for public servants in Lagodekhi, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki and Borjomi municipalities.

55. From January to December 2021, the PDO staff conducted over 100 information meetings and training throughout Georgia. During the educational meetings, the emphasis was placed, inter alia, on the incitement to

<sup>11</sup> Decisions of the Supreme Court of Georgia on Civil Cases (in Georgian) 2021, #5, p. 12, available at: <https://www.supremecourt.ge/files/upload-file/pdf/2021w-samoqalaqo-krebuli5.pdf>

discrimination and cases of discrimination related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary target audience included representatives of local self-government bodies, ethnic and religious minorities, schoolchildren, teachers, employees of private organisations, activists, students of higher education institutions and journalists. During face-to-face meetings with ethnic and religious minorities, representatives of the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia usually explain the mandate of the institution and instruct the participants on how and in which occasions they can apply to the Equality Body. Moreover, representatives of ethnic and religious minority groups are given the opportunity to highlight their problems and raise questions. In addition, they are provided with the information that the website of the Public Defender (where they can find important reports, decisions and other documents, among other things, on issues related to national minorities and discrimination) is available in minority languages (Azerbaijani and Armenian).

56. In 2021, the PDO representatives met with 691 representatives of local self-government bodies and other public agencies, 282 representatives of religious and ethnic, minorities, also 114 teachers, 350 young people and 212 employees of private companies. The total number of participants in the meetings was 1,560.

57. With the support of the Council of Europe, Equality Week is celebrated around the International Day for Tolerance (November 16). More than 1,700 participants attended various online and offline events providing information on the redress mechanisms against discrimination and hate crime and promoting tolerance, equality and cultural diversity in Tbilisi and regions of Georgia. Eighty-seven events were organised in Tbilisi and various regions, including Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli. The partners of Equality Week were the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Prosecutor's Office, Office of Resource Officers of Education institutions, Ministry of Justice, LEPL Training Centre of Justice, Public Defender's Office, Coalition for Equality, CinéDOC-Tbilisi, Equality Ambassadors, and other activists.

58. In November 2020, under the project - "Equality Week for Pupils", the Ministry of Justice and the LEPL Training Centre of Justice, with the partnership of the Council of Europe Office in Tbilisi, organised a one-week training course for 58 schoolchildren from Tbilisi and five regions of Georgia. The purpose of the project was to raise awareness of the schoolchildren about discrimination, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and international mechanisms for the protection of human rights. All participants of the training received certificates and symbolic gifts.

59. In November 2021, under the EU project – "Discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Georgia", the MOJ, together with LEPL Training Centre of Justice with the partnership of the Council of Europe Office in Tbilisi, organised a one-week training course for 71 participants from Tbilisi and regions of Georgia. The schoolchildren and the Public Service Hall staff members were involved in the training course. Training modules included the following topics: – fight against discrimination; the international and regional human rights mechanisms; anti-discrimination legislation; freedom of expression; psychological aspects of discrimination. During the online events, participants experienced practical exercises. The discussion took place among the schoolchildren on "the forms of discrimination in schools"; "Preventing bullying in schools and promoting a cultural tolerance".

60. In 2018 LEPL Training Centre of Justice conducted free-of-charge training on anti-discrimination in big cities and the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities (Marneuli, Rustavi, Sagarejo, Gardabani, Bolnisi, Tetrtskaro, Lagodekhi, Batumi, Poti, Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Telavi, Kvareltskali). 5-hour trainings were conducted for 15 groups with 203 participants (169 women/ 34 men). In cities (Marneuli, Gardabani, Akhalkalaki, Tetrtskaro) inhabited by ethnic minorities, the trainings on anti-discrimination law were conducted by the representatives of ethnic minorities (Armenians and Azerbaijanis). Training materials were provided in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

61. The Ministry of Justice of Georgia prepared and distributed various information brochures on the state-run services, domestic violence and violence against women, anti-discrimination legislation, EU visa-free travel, human trafficking, etc. Information brochures and leaflets in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages which were distributed through the Community Centres of the LEPL Public Service Hall of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia in the regions densely populated by minorities.

62. In 2019, the Prosecutor's Office participated in a campaign, "I choose equality", organised within the framework of the CoE project "Fight against discrimination, hate crimes, and hate speech in Georgia". Different events, inter alia, meetings with the representatives of society, students, and schoolchildren were organised within the campaign. The representatives of the Prosecutors Office held seven sessions in 7 towns of Georgia, attended by 400 beneficiaries-representatives of ethnic minorities. The campaign



aimed at raising awareness on crimes motivated by discrimination, hate crimes, and hate speech, including racial discrimination and racist-motivated crimes.

63. In 2019 the Prosecutor's Office joined the Government campaign against gender-based violence. The Prosecutor's Office organised 24 information meetings in different towns of Georgia. The objective of the campaign was to raise awareness of committed crimes related to gender-based violence, crimes motivated by discrimination, hate speech, and hate crimes, including racial discrimination cases, as well as the response of the state to these crimes. In total, 1,170 persons attended the meetings.

64. In 2019, the Human Rights Protection Division of the Prosecutor's Office organised a conference on hate crimes. The conference participants reviewed the report of the Prosecutor's Office on combatting hate crime. The Prosecutor's Office presented an analysis of the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes, including crimes committed with racial discrimination motive, during 2016-2018.

65. Since 2018, the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), within its competence, ensures timely response and monitoring of investigations on cases committed based on discrimination with the motive of intolerance, including crimes based on nationality and ethnicity. The information/awareness raising campaigns on the issues of discrimination with the motive of intolerance are conducted, also for the representatives of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the employees of the MIA are annually involved in the activities organised by the Council of Europe within the framework of "Equality Week".

66. To increase tolerance and social inclusion in the society, the State Agency for Religious Issues conducted a series of training in almost every university in the capital and in the regions. More than 1,000 students attended the lectures. The Agency conducted training series for representatives of nearly all TV and radio stations and printed media to increase awareness of tolerance, equality, and religious neutrality. In 2022 the Agency conducted training sessions on secularism and religious neutrality up to 100 public servants of Tbilisi City Council ("Sakrebulo").

67. The Agency conducted training courses to increase awareness of freedom of religion, human rights, and fundamental freedoms and promote a culture of religious tolerance countrywide. Up to 800 representatives of religious organisations registered in Georgia participated in the training.

68. High-level dialogue platform between the State and the religious denominations is practicing in the format of a series of inter-religious conferences "Inter-religious Dialogue for Peace" established by the LEPL State Agency for Religious Issues. The representatives of all confessions have a possibility to participate in the conferences and express their views; the members of the Parliament, the Government, as well as the representatives of the academic circles and the diplomatic corps attend the conferences. Four conferences were held: "Inter-religious Dialogue for Peace" (2016), "Inter-religious Dialogue for Peace" - "Religious Tolerance in Georgia" (2017), "Inter-religious Dialogue for Peace" - "The Role of Religions in Georgia 1918-2018" (2018), "Inter-religious Dialogue for Peace" - "Religions on Georgia's Way to the European Integration" (2019). In 2020-2021 the conferences were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2022 the fifth Inter-religious conference "Religions for the Protection of Rights of Child" will be held by the State Agency for Religious Issues and the UNICEF. The Agency prepares publications on the freedom of religion on regular basis. The Agency published "Religions in Georgia", "Freedom of Religion in accordance with the Georgian and International Legislation", also "Functioning Cult Buildings in Tbilisi as of 2020", which reflected sacred buildings of all confessions. Furthermore, the Agency published an album, "Occupied Heritage," reflecting churches, synagogues, and mosques in the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region.

69. With the purpose to increase awareness with regard to the rights of ethnic minorities, the authorities facilitate knowledge sharing on the respective legal mechanisms that are available. The Legal Aid Service (LAS) (an independent state body providing free legal aid <sup>12</sup>) aims to provide legal support and deliver information on legal instruments to ethnic minority representatives to exercise their rights better. To achieve this goal, the Service regularly conducts outreach consultations in various regions of Georgia. From 2017 to 2021, LAS conducted more than 450 outreach consultations/meetings, including in the regions densely populated by ethnic and religious minorities. Informational presentations were

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<sup>12</sup> Information on LAS is available at: <http://www.legalaid.ge/ka>

held for the population on important and acute topics, such as the role and services of LAS; non-discrimination and the right to equality; the rights of asylum seekers; the rights of ethnic and religious minorities; violence against women and domestic violence; family and inheritance issues; labour rights; children's rights; registration of land plots; agricultural development support programmes; business support projects in Georgia. During these meetings information brochures in Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian languages were distributed. Furthermore, these brochures were disseminated through Public Service Halls and Community Centres.

70. In 2021, the SMRCE and LAS jointly organised an awareness raising campaign "Access to free legal aid services for ethnic minorities". The national minority youth attended the training of trainers (in four sessions) and facilitated the awareness raising campaign. Fourteen meetings were organised in the municipalities of Sagarejo, Gardabani, Tsalka, Ninotsminda, Akhalkalaki, Dmanisi, Bolnisi and Tetrtskaro. Approximately 500 representatives of national minorities attended the online and face-to-face meetings. The closing ceremony was conducted on May 21, 2021, where the Minister of Reconciliation and Civic Integration and Chair of LAS presented awards to the trainers who facilitated the meetings during the campaign.<sup>13</sup>

71. Notably, the website of the LAS is available in Georgian, English, and Russian languages. In addition, information on the mandate of the LAS and information brochures on frequently asked questions are available in Abkhazian, Ossetian, Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.

72. To increase access to public services for ethnic minorities, in 2019, 7,000 information leaflets (triplets) in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages were distributed in the villages densely populated by ethnic minorities (Kumurdo, Poka, Baraleti, Sadakhlo, Kazreti, Iormughanlo, Kabali, Martkopi, Sartichala) on New Electronic Services of the Business Registry of the National Agency of Public Registry.

73. In 2019, Inter-Agency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence joined the Global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence for the second time and coordinated engagement with Commission Member State Agencies. It is noteworthy that in 2019, 22 state institutions participated in the campaign.

74. The campaign was implemented in line with the National Communication Strategy and Action Plan on Elimination of Gender-based Violence. The campaign's core message was "Sexual harassment is human rights violation and is punished under the law".

75. In recent years, the Administration of the Government of Georgia (AoG) was actively involved in the events planned within the framework of the „Equality Week“, organized by the Council of Europe Tbilisi Office. "Equality Week" is an annual event that aims to raise awareness of the importance of diversity and equality, as well as to inform society about the human rights protection mechanisms. It should be noted that in 2021, Government Administration together with the Council of Europe, developed a quiz on tolerance, which aims to conduct an information campaign regarding several aspects of gender equality; an equality calendar was also created, which aims to increase the sensitivity of society in the direction of gender equality.

76. Within the framework of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, over 60 training courses and informational meetings were held, attended by 2,500 participants. The participating agencies distributed informational and visual materials prepared for the campaign and a detailed information brochure on sexual harassment. The target groups of the campaign included schoolchildren and students.

77. Information/awareness raising campaigns and meetings on state programmes and services, educational programmes, acute issues, including Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes, disinformation and propaganda, gender equality, etc., have been conducted in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, also in their native languages.

78. As a result of the implementation of the project "Young European Envoys" (initiated by the SMRCE and supported by the USAID) in 2017-2021, 390 meetings were conducted by bilingual volunteer educators in 305 villages, attended by 8,085 beneficiaries. The project implied the delivery of information on Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration perspectives, including the Association

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.legalaid.ge/en/p/5/2086/certificates-were-awarded-to-the-participants-of-t>

Agreement, DCFTA, and visa-free travel regulations to the ethnic minority population by volunteer educators. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the meetings were held in distant format.

79. In February 2019, a study visit for a group of principals/teachers (15 women) from Pankisi Gorge was organized in Brussels, where they held meetings with the EU and NATO officials and got information on European values and principles, history and structure of the EU, EU-Georgian and NATO-Georgian partnerships. Afterwards, information, knowledge and experience obtained were shared with the schoolchildren and youth of Pankisi Gorge. The participants were provided with the relevant information materials as well.

80. In 2020 the SMRCE initiated training to raise awareness of disinformation and anti-western propaganda for 30 young people from the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. Also, in 2021 a training/seminar aimed at raising awareness of disinformation and anti-western propaganda was conducted for 24 teachers at non-Georgian schools; afterwards, the participants delivered the information obtained among schoolchildren. UNDP/OHCHR Georgia supported the training/seminar.

81. From 2017 to 2019, the SMRCE with the UN Association of Georgia implemented a project, "Youth for Gender Equality", which aimed at preparing volunteers – educators on gender equality issues. As a result of the program, the prepared volunteers held about 200 meetings on domestic violence and early marriage issues in the 66 villages of five regions.

**Recommendation B:** Ensure that persons belonging to national minorities enjoy their right to manifest their religion or belief as well as their right to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations; review the relevant legislative provisions and administrative practice in accordance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court of 3 July 2018; set up transparent and non-discriminatory procedures for building or allocation of places of worship in close and timely consultation with the representatives of the groups concerned; ensure that the process of restitution of property to religious communities is carried out in a non-discriminatory manner; systematically monitor cases of proselytism in schools;

82. As mentioned in previous reports of Georgia, freedom of religion and belief is recognised and protected by the Constitution, international treaties of Georgia and the Law of Georgia on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination. Creation and registration of religious associations are free in Georgia. They can be registered as legal entities under private or public law or operate as unregistered unions (articles 1509 and 1509<sup>1</sup> of the Civil Code<sup>14</sup>). There are no reported problems related to the registration of religious associations.

83. As of the end of 2020, there were 56 religious organisations registered as a legal entity of public law in Georgia. Information on religious organisations registered as legal entities of private law is not available. Their registration procedures are similar to those of other organisations, and the registering authority does not identify the religious organisations. Notably, the registration procedure does not require the existence of a parish or duration of activities; therefore, there might be religious organisations with 2-3 members.

84. There is an Inter-Religious Council with the State Agency for Religious Issues (SARI), a deliberative body based on the principles of a round table; within the SARI important proposals for religious associations are prepared/discussed. The SARI, as the mediating link between the state and the religious associations, provides maximum support for issues raised during discussions. Currently, the Inter-Religious Council unites 12 religious organisations:

- Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church
- Administration of Muslims of All Georgia
- Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Holy Church in Georgia
- Apostolic Administration of the Caucasus
- Union of Georgian Jews (Jewish Union of Georgia)

<sup>14</sup> See the English version of the Civil Code of Georgia here:  
<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/31702?publication=115>

- Union of Evangelical Christian Baptist Church of Georgia
- International Baptist Church of Tbilisi
- Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Georgia
- Evangelical-Protestant Church in Georgia
- Spiritual Council of Yazidis in Georgia
- International Society for Krishna Consciousness
- Evangelical Faith Church of Georgia.

85. The State Agency for Religious Issues cooperates closely with all religious organisations existing in Georgia and promotes their dialogue, implementing different projects and campaigns to prevent discrimination and foster tolerance.

86. Considering the scale of these religious organizations (for example, the Georgian Orthodox Church represents approximately 84% of the population of Georgia; Administration of All Muslims of Georgia represents approximately 95% of the Muslim community living in Georgia; the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church of Georgia represents 100% of the followers of the Armenian Church, Apostolic Administration of the Caucasus unites 3 association of Catholic denominations and represents 100% of the Catholic community in Georgia, etc.) the Inter-Religious Council along with the Agency represents almost the full majority of the religious spectrum in Georgia. Also, the membership of the Inter-Religious Council is free and in case of desire any religious association can join the activities of the Council.

87. The judgement N1/1/81 of the Constitutional Court of Georgia <sup>15</sup> reiterated equality of all religious associations. Concerning the enjoyment of freedom of religion, the court underlines: “The Constitutional Court of Georgia has repeatedly stated that the main essence, purpose and challenge of a democratic and legal state is to guarantee the possibility of free self-realisation through the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms. At the same time, the state must guarantee the society as a whole, for each individual, because “the idea of freedom will be devalued if it does not have the same essence, the same content for all and is not equally accessible to all. Recognition of any right would be meaningless without the guaranteed possibility of equal access to it. It is vital for people to feel that they are being treated fairly” It further reiterated that all religious associations are equal and should have similar treatment. Accordingly, the Constitutional Court considered the contested norm of the Law of Georgia on State Property (Article 63), which provided the possibility of transfer of state property free of charge only to the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia, unconstitutional. The court also stated that the Constitutional Court was only authorised to recognise a disputed norm in its entire ty and/or any part of it/normative content; the Constitutional Court could not establish a new order. Thus, the decision of the Constitutional Court can be expressed only in declaring a norm unconstitutional.

88. According to the Organic Law on the Constitutional Court of Georgia and the judgement N1/1/81, preferential treatment concerning property transfer to the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia was cancelled from December 31, 2018. Accordingly, all registered religious organisations could receive property from the state free of charge. However, on May 29, 2020, the Law of Georgia on State Property was amended, and only displaced persons from the occupied territories of Georgia are entitled to receive property from the state free of charge based on the GOG decision. Accordingly, no religious organisation can receive property under the disputed law. Thus, no preferential treatment is allowed.

89. The Constitutional Court also issued the judgement N1/2/671<sup>16</sup> on the case, which disputed the constitutionality of the wording of subparagraph “B” of section 2 of Article 168 of the Tax Code of Georgia. Under the disputed provisions, construction, restoration and painting of cathedrals and churches commissioned by the Patriarchate of Georgia were exempted from VAT without the right of deduction. The Court established

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<sup>15</sup> LEPL "Evangelical-Baptist Church of Georgia", LEPL "Evangelical Lutheran Church of Georgia", LEPL "The Highest Administration of all Muslims in Georgia", LEPL "The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Georgia", and LEPL "Pentecostal Church of Georgia" v. the Parliament of Georgia, July 3, 2018. Available at: <https://constcourt.ge/en/judicial-acts?legal=1178>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

that disputed provisions do not comply with the requirements of the right to equality recognised by the Constitution of Georgia. This decision also entered into force on December 31, 2018.

90. As a result of the amendments to the Tax Code of Georgia, the tax benefit is introduced in Article 170.1 (Privileges in the fields of medicine, education, culture, sport and social services). According to this article, restoration and/or painting of temples or church buildings is exempt from VAT without the right of deduction: Accordingly, the restoration and/or painting of any religious building, regardless of their religious affiliation, is exempt from VAT without the right to deduct and non-discriminatory treatment is guaranteed.

91. Furthermore, according to the Tax Code of Georgia, religious activity is not an economic activity (Article 9.2.c). The Code defines a religious activity as follows:

“1. Religious activity shall be the activity of duly registered religious organisations (associations) aimed at disseminating religion and belief, including by means of:

a) organising and holding religious rites, ceremonies, prayers, and other religious acts.

b) allowing believers to have or use buildings of worship or ceremonial structures to satisfy religious needs, both jointly and individually.

c) organising reception and departure of religious delegations, pilgrims, and representatives of different confessions, organising national and international religious conferences, congresses, and seminars, providing hotel (or other) accommodation, transport, food, and cultural services to the participants during such events.

d) maintaining monasteries, ministers, theological educational institutions; teaching students and listeners of those theological educational institutions; maintaining charitable organisations (hospitals, shelters, nursing homes for the elderly and disabled), as well as other similar statutory activities under canonical rules.

2. The activity of the enterprises of those religious organisations (associations) that publish religious (religious service) literature or produce objects of religious significance shall be treated as religious activity; the activity of these organisations (associations) or their enterprises that is related to the sale (dissemination) of religious (religious service) literature or objects of religious significance; as well as the use of funds derived from such activity to perform a religious activity.” (Article 11, Tax Code of Georgia).

92. National Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2020 provided specific activities to enhance freedom of religion and to ensure that everybody enjoys the right to manifest religion or belief as well as the right to establish religious institutions, organisations, and associations, namely:

- Strengthen religious freedom, tolerance, equality, and neutrality.
- Conduct qualified analyse by international and local organisations concerning the situation of human rights protection and possible actions incited by religious intolerance.
- Strengthen principles of religious neutrality at public schools.
- More effective detection and criminal prosecution of discriminatory and hate crimes.
- Raise public awareness of incidents of discrimination and hate crimes.
- Eradicate discriminatory notes existing in legislation.
- Ensure opportunity that religious organisations can carry out activities without restrictions.

**Set up transparent and non-discriminatory procedures for building or allocation of places of worship in close and timely consultation with the representatives of the groups concerned.**

93. The local self-government bodies are responsible to issue a construction permit in Georgia. Meanwhile, the regulations regarding construction permits are common to all, and the legislation does not provide different rules for constructing a religious building. Even more so, a term religious building in construction regulations is not defined. Obtaining a construction permit is transparent, prescribed by law, and non-discriminatory.

94. In 2018, local authorities of Ninotsminda municipality issued a permit to construct St. Gabriel, Seer, and Builder Temple. In 2019, the local authorities of Akhalkalaki municipality issued a permit for expanding the religious building in the village of Vachiani. In 2021 a permit to reconstruct a religious building on the land plot owned by the Administration of Muslims of All Georgia was issued in Adigeni municipality.

95. Non-discriminatory approach to the construction of religious buildings is proved by the existing statistics:

**Table 2. The ratio of various religious communities vis-à-vis worship places**

Religious Organisation	Followers	Places of Worship	The ratio of followers per places of worship
<b>Orthodox Church</b>	3,097,573	2,001	1,548
<b>Muslim Community</b>	398,677	277	1,439
<b>Armenian Apostolic Church</b>	109,041	58	1,880
<b>Roman Catholic Church</b>	19,195	31	619
<b>Witnesses of Jehovah</b>	12,395	89	139
<b>Yezidi Community</b>	8,591	1	8,591
<b>Jewish Community</b>	1,417	19	74
<b>Others*</b>	66,915	42**	N/A

**\* Category "Other" covers people who did not indicate their religion or belong to smaller religious groups**

**\*\* Number of places of warship of smaller religious groups**

96. As for the specific cases, according to the Government decree and with the help of the SARI, in 2018, the Caucasian Apostolic Administration of Latin Catholics received a 1,200 square meters land plot instead of their 500 square meters plot in Rustavi. The local municipality granted a construction permit for the Catholic Church named after the "Merciful Jesus" in Rustavi. The church was opened in 2018.<sup>17</sup>

97. Despite the disputed mosque (the process is under judicial review), there are four mosques operating in Batumi, including the main mosque, which was reconstructed/renovated with the state support in 2021. In particular, the commercial spaces around the mosque were purchased and transferred to the mosque; the roof was repaired; the façade and interior walls were repaired and painted; the floor was replaced and the heating system was installed; the first and the second floors were expanded; large spaces were added and renovated, in particular, the hall, the rooms for guests and pilgrims; the yard was also arranged, the lawns were painted and planted. Therefore, on religious holidays, the mosque can fully accommodate the congregation and there is no need any more to pray outside the mosque. Construction of a new mosque in Batumi has been requested by "New Mosque Construction Fund" which purchased a plot of land with the purpose to build the mosque. The authorised body for issuing the construction permit - Batumi City Hall- did not meet their request and suggested to submit the construction request by the LEPL "Administration of All Muslims of Georgia". There is no consensus over the issue among them, thus the "New Mosque Construction Fund" applied to the court; the judicial process is in progress.

**Ensure that the process of restitution of property to religious communities is carried out in a non-discriminatory manner.**

98. The cornerstone in the discussion of the restitution of property confiscated by the Soviet totalitarian regime is that independent Georgia is not the legal successor of the Soviet regime. Consequently, independent Georgia has no legal obligation to restore property confiscated by the Soviet regime and compensate for the damage caused. Based on goodwill and the rule of law principles, the state returns to the relevant religious associations the cult buildings that became state property after the restoration of independence. Another cornerstone is that none of the existing religious associations (except the Georgian Orthodox Church) is the legal successor of the religious association operating in the Soviet period and has no legal or hereditary ties. All of them are newly registered. Due to the high

<sup>17</sup> <https://religion.gov.ge/en/siaxleebi/the-catholic-church-was-opened-in-rustavi>

standards of freedom of registration of religious associations in Georgia, more than one religious association of almost all religious denominations is registered.

99. Consequently, the state returns the cult buildings under its ownership to the relevant religious associations with the right of perpetual use, which, in practice, differs from the property right only in the right of alienation of these buildings. Many such cult buildings have already been returned to the respective religious associations; the process is ongoing. Also, there are several instances where two or more religious denominations claim historical ownership of a single religious building. The issues of such controversial religious buildings are considered individually. There is also the practice of resolving disputes through the courts.

100. According to the #117 Ordinance of the Government of Georgia adopted on January 27, 2014, four religious confessions – Muslim, Jewish, Roman-Catholic, and Armenian Apostolic communities – shall receive symbolic and partial compensation for the damage caused during the Soviet regime. The compensation will contribute to the development, unity, and peaceful coexistence of religious communities. In 2022, the GOG, based on the consultations with the SARI and religious unions, increased annual allocations to these four religious confession by 1 mln GEL from its reserve fund. This additional allocation was distributed as follows: the Muslim community will receive 600 thousand GEL, Armenian Apostolic Church – 200,000 GEL, Jewish and Roman-Catholic communities- 100 thousand GEL each.

Table 3. Funding of various confessions

Year	2014 (GEL)	2015 (GEL)	2016 (GEL)	2017 (GEL)	2018 (GEL)	2019 (GEL)	2020 (GEL)	2021 (GEL)	2022 (GEL)	Total (GEL)
Muslim Community	1100000	2200000	2750000	2750000	2750000	2750000	2750000	2750000	3350000	23 150 000
Roman-Catholic Community	200 000	400 000	550 000	550 000	550 000	550 000	550 000	550 000	650 000	4 550 000
Community of Armenian Apostolic Church	300 000	600 000	800 000	800 000	800 000	800 000	800 000	800 000	1000000	6 700 000
Jewish Community	150 000	300 000	400 000	400 000	400 000	400 000	400 000	400 000	500 000	3 350 000
Orthodox Church	25000000	25000000	25000000	25000000	25000000	25000000	25000000	25000000	25000000	225 000 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>26750000</b>	<b>28500000</b>	<b>29500000</b>	<b>29500000</b>	<b>29500000</b>	<b>29500000</b>	<b>29500000</b>	<b>29500000</b>	<b>30500000</b>	<b>262 750 000</b>



101. From 2014 until today, 228 Mosques were returned to the Muslim community; furthermore, 1,300 square meters land plot in Tbilisi was given to the Muslim community for the construction of central offices.

102. 22 Synagogues were transferred to the Jewish community. Evangelical Protestant Church of Georgia was supported, and 2 churches were constructed in Gori and Rustavi. 5,500 square meters land plot in Tbilisi along with the buildings located there were handed over to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church. The Union of Baptist Churches of Georgia through the support of the Agency for Religious Issues was given a possibility to construct their church which was opened in 2017. Also, the International Baptist Church obtained a permit for a construction of a new church in Tbilisi, therefore the church building was constructed.

103. The community of Armenian Apostolic Church was granted a St Mary Church together with the land plot in the village of Didi Khanchali in Ninotsminda municipality. Furthermore, they acquired construction permit to conduct construction and rehabilitation works therein.

104. The land with the right to use was transferred to the Yezidi community, where they built a cult building and cultural centre. The process of returning cult buildings continues.

#### **Systematically monitor cases of proselytism in schools**

105. The Law of Georgia on General Education provides for neutrality and non-discrimination. It prohibits the use of the education process in general education institutions for religious indoctrination, proselytism or forced assimilation.

106. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoES) strictly adheres to the principles of ensuring an educational environment free from indoctrination, proselytism, and religious discrimination. There is also an immediate response to cases of intolerance and proselytism in public schools. Last year, the Ministry of Education and Science reviewed the cases of teaching irrelevant content in several public schools and took appropriate disciplinary actions/measures. Also, MoES issued recommendations to regional resource centres to focus on identifying similar facts promptly. If the Ministry has specific information about the sale of religious items in any public school (especially by the teacher) or forced collective prayer, the issue is investigated immediately, and appropriate measures are taken.

**Recommendation C. Adapt the content of teaching materials so they contribute to the creation of a climate of tolerance and mutual understanding in Georgian society and step up efforts aimed at improving the quality of materials for minority and majority language learning; ensure high-level professional development for teachers from pre-schools, primary and secondary schools teaching in minority languages; identify a multilingual education model adapted to the Georgian context and implement it at pre-school, primary and secondary levels; monitor this implementation process to ensure that the model is indeed developed with and endorsed by teachers, school boards, parents and communities, implemented in all schools teaching in minority languages and evaluated in order to observe whether it does produce the expected effects.**

107. In 2017, the GOG approved the Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021, which was in line with the requirements of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, recommendations of the EU Parliament and the Council of Europe and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. The Strategy aims at ensuring accessible and quality education for all.

108. Strategic objective 3, “Improvement of the educational environment” of the Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021 implies to implement “measures aimed at ensuring inclusive, safe, equal, non-violent, having high culture, healthy, motivating environment for all students and teachers. The schools will support the development of collaborative relationships and the best practice of sharing teachers’ experiences to ensure better academic achievements of the students... The schools will be oriented at holistic upbringing and the development of a full-fledged value system for each student”. The existing training resources need development and updating.

109. The Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021 notes that “the textbooks certified in 2012 still contain sensitive information on culture, religion, gender and ethnicity, the content and structure of textbooks is unsatisfactory”.

110. The State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2015-2020 as well as the strategic priority 2, Access to Quality Education, of the 2021-2030 Strategy reiterated: "it is important that textbooks reflect the diversity existing in Georgia and do not contain stereotypical or discriminatory elements". The Strategy explicitly refers to the Third Opinion on Georgia. Furthermore, under the same Strategic priority, the Goal 4 aims at "promoting tolerant and inclusive educational environment and has two objectives, including Objective 4.2 "supporting civic equality and cultural diversity in formal and informal education." The outcome indicator of the Objective 4.2 is "civic equality and cultural diversity issues are reflected in National Curriculum, textbooks and the education policy document by 2024".

111. The Ministry of Education and Science continuously works on promoting a tolerant environment and eliminating discrimination at schools by improving the human rights culture by introducing new courses and upgrading school materials.

112. Social science course – "I and the Society" promoting humanistic values (non-violent behaviour, tolerance, equality) among schoolchildren, understanding, and rethinking of the cultural diversity of the country, knowledge of child's rights and obligations, and responsibility before the family and the society, promoting tolerance towards different culture, nationality, persons with different abilities, peaceful settlement of conflicts.

113. The teaching objectives of another social science course "Our Georgia", highlight the importance of understanding by the schoolchildren that ethnographic, natural, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity is the country's wealth. Basic questions, activities, and homework comply with the objectives and principles of equality and non-discriminations.

114. Resource officers of the educational institutions, psychologists and social workers have been trained to raise awareness and put their knowledge into practice as part of a Council of Europe-supported project on combating discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Georgia. Trained trainers conducted training on human rights for the resource officer of the educational institution.

115. The LEPL Office of Resource Officers of the Educational Institution under the MoES within the Council of Europe backed campaign "I choose equality" regularly holds informational meetings with schoolchildren, teachers, and other representatives of schools in Tbilisi and the regions about equality and tolerance and non-discriminatory approaches.

116. In the 2018-2019 academic year, the teaching courses "I and the Society" and "Our Georgia" were introduced at schools. The textbooks are ready and translated into Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian languages.

117. In 2018, the National Curriculum for the basic stage (VII-IX grades) was adopted. It improved the civic education component. A new course, "Citizenship", was developed that fully complies with the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This course was introduced in the VII grade in autumn 2019.

118. Review and upgrade of textbooks are a continuous process. Every book is subject to approval based on approved criteria. The Ministry cooperates with the PDO that nominates persons as "other specialists" to evaluate all textbooks. The experts conduct evaluations based on subject-related criteria (except citizenship course). The evaluation criteria explicitly address the elimination of discriminatory language and promotion of a tolerant environment in education institutions.

119. The MoES adopted the criteria for approval of textbooks of general education that provide:

"Criteria 6.1. Protection of equality, prohibition of discrimination and discretisation:

A textbook shall not include stereotypical, incorrect, discriminatory and/or discrediting elements based on language, nationality, religion, gender, social affiliation, and other marks.

Considering the characteristics of a discipline, texts and illustrations shall respect equality based on nationality, religion, sex, social status, and other grounds.

Criterion 6.2. Adherence to ethical norms

6.2.1. A textbook shall not include obscene and inaccurate expressions; if an original text includes such expressions, the appropriate place shall be provided in an adapted form or banknotes.

Criterion 6.3. Prohibition of inciting violence or hatred

6.3.1. Illustrations and contents shall not include any form of violence, including inciting vandalism and harmful acts against the living and non-living nature, and texts and illustrations provoking national, regional, religious, or social hatred”.

120. Notably, the MoES publishes textbooks under review on the website without indicating authors. Any interested organisation or person can present comments on the textbook. The Ministry prepares recommendations based on these comments, including recommendations on eliminating discriminatory language and promoting a tolerant environment, and submits them to an author who should incorporate the suggestions into the textbook. Textbooks are created by private publishers or individuals and are evaluated by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, particularly a group of evaluators staffed by specialists in various fields. This group includes subject curriculum experts, schoolteachers, field scientists, psychologists, philologists, and specialists proposed by the PDO. The specialists examine the subject from a legal point of view: whether the textbook is free from discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender, discrediting, the balance is maintained in this regard, etc.

121. In addition, the MoES publishes textbooks on its website. Any interested person can comment on it. The evaluators' group will consider all such opinions and include them in its recommendations in case of proper justification.

122. The MoES cooperates with the civil society to review approved textbooks. For example, in 2020 NGO Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI) analysed books on Georgian language and literature, history, geography, and citizenship for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The Ministry, TDI and the authors jointly discussed the recommendations. Subsequently, the agreed recommendations were reflected in the textbooks. The Ministry continues the cooperation with TDI to review the same textbooks for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

123. Furthermore, in 2021, the Ministry of Education approved a national curriculum for middle-level education and finalised the evaluation of textbooks for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The issues of civic integration and cultural diversity are fully reflected in the national curriculum, one of the primary documents for general education policy. Consequently, civic integration and cultural diversity issues are also reflected in the textbooks.

124. Upgrading the textbooks will continue to ensure full compliance of education resources with human rights and equality principles and values.

**Ensure high-level professional development for teachers from pre-schools, primary and secondary schools teaching in minority languages.**

125. The Strategy for 2015-2020 underlined the importance of increasing access to pre-school education. In this regard, special attention was given to "professional qualification trainings for teachers and staff".

126. Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education creates legal grounds for ensuring universal access to, and the development and quality assurance of, early and pre-school education in Georgia, and the organisational structure of early and pre-school education institutions, and defines the rules for their foundation, operation, and accountability, as well as the binding nature of their authorisation. This Law also defines the powers, obligations, functions and responsibilities of state bodies, municipalities, and other legal and/or natural persons related to early and pre-school education and the principles for the financing thereof. The Law guarantees that children from language minority communities can receive native and/or non-official language education. Education institutions use programmes and resources that comply with the national education standards established by the Law.

127. Notably, the functioning and operation of pre-school education institutions are the responsibility of LSGs.

128. The national standards related to pre-school education reflect the national, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the society and values of tolerance and respect towards others. They also facilitate professional qualification training for teachers working in the regions densely populated by national minorities. The professional standards for pre-school teachers (caregiver-pedagogue) provide provisions on a professional standard for caregiver-pedagogue of Georgian as a second language.<sup>18</sup> The professional standard also regulates

<sup>18</sup>Professional standard for caregiver-pedagogue article 8; Georgian version is available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3837404?publication=0>

multilingual education in pre-school education institutions and requires teachers' skills, such as managing diverse environments and creating an inclusive environment.

129. The National Centre for Teachers' Professional Development trained 27 coordinators/Methodists in Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Ninotsminda, Akhmeta, Lagodekhi, Sagarejo, Bolnisi, Gardabani, Tsalka and Dmanisi based on new training module to ensure that the participants were able to implement newly adopted regulatory framework on pre-school education.

130. In 2021, 143 educators from Ninotsminda, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Marneuli, Gardabani, Dmanisi, Tsalka, and Akhmeta passed the professional development training for educators; training module "Teaching Social-Emotional Skills" – Methodist.

131. Despite the aforementioned positive steps, the final assessment of the 2015-2020 Strategy revealed remaining challenges that pre-school and early education in the regions densely populated by national minorities faced. Therefore, the 2021-2030 Strategy reflects the importance of pre-school and early education under Objective 3.1. "Increasing access to pre-school education and ensure quality. The Strategy states: "Enhancement of opportunities and access to pre-school education in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities require relevant infrastructure, adequate conditions for quality pre-school education and mobilisation of the resources. Preschool education contributes to the development of adolescents' cognitive, social, and linguistic skills and competencies and, to a greater extent, determines their readiness for school. Therefore, to ensure pre-school education, complex measures are needed to introduce supporting activities at a pre-school level to shift from pre-school care approach to early years care and education approach, and to introduce mandatory school readiness programmes in all pre-school institutions."

132. Activity 3.1.1.2 of 2021-2022 Acton Plan requires the professional training of teachers/educators for pre-school bilingual education programme. In 2021, the National Centre for Teachers' Professional Development conducted training for native speaking and bilingual caregiver-pedagogues of nine non-Georgian pre-school education institutions; approximately 50 pedagogues and administration employees at non-Georgian pre-school education institutions participated.

133. Ethnic minorities in Georgia **have access to all levels of education**: pre-school, general, vocational, and higher. The state provides the opportunity for ethnic minority representatives to receive the pre-school and school education in their mother tongue. There are more than 100 non-Georgian pre-schools and up to 300 non-Georgian general education institutions (schools and sectors), constituting 13.9% of public schools across the country, with 53 658 non-Georgian students (approximately 8% of the total number of students)<sup>19</sup>.

134. Additionally, continuous improvement of education quality remains the most important strategic priority. When working on the 2021-2030 Strategy, the trends in this direction were analysed, and objective 3.2 of the Strategy considers professional training-retraining of teachers as the precondition for ensuring access to quality general education.

135. According to data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia and Education Management Information System, for the 2021-2022 academic year, there are 63,780 teachers in Georgia, out of which the total amount of teachers in public schools is 55,946, and 6,715 (6,599 in public and 116 in private schools) are employed in Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian-language schools of Georgia. Students and teachers at non-Georgian schools represent a significant segment of the education system, and it is crucial to pursue teachers' training and professional development programme.

136. 43.4% of the total number of non-Georgian schools are teachers at Azerbaijani language schools, 39.7% are Armenian language schoolteachers, and 16.9% are teachers at Russian-language schools.

**Table 4. Number of teachers according to the language of instruction**

Language	Number of Teachers
Azerbaijani	2,914
Armenian	2,668
Russian	1,133
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,715</b>

<sup>19</sup> Education Management Information System (EMIS)

137. According to 2022 Spring semester data, most non-Georgian schools are located in the regions densely populated by national minorities - Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe- Javakheti and Kakheti. In total, 5,956 teachers are employed in non-Georgian schools in these three regions, while 759 teachers are employed in Tbilisi and other cities and regions. The distribution of teachers according to the region is as follows:

**Table 5. Teachers at non-Georgian language schools according to the regions**

Region	Quantity
<b>Kvemo Kartli</b>	3,308
<b>Samtskhe- Javakheti</b>	2,317
<b>Kakheti</b>	331
<b>Tbilisi, other regions and cities</b>	759
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,715</b>

138. As mentioned in the State report by Georgia within the third monitoring cycle, the Ministry of Education and Science carried out two significant reforms:

- Teacher professional development and career advancement scheme.
- Ensuring retirement bonus for teachers in retirement age and creating opportunities for young staff to enter the system.

139. From 2016 to 2019, LEPL National Centre for Teacher Professional Development implemented a project called "Professional Development of Teachers and School Principals" with the financial support of the Millennium Challenge Account – Georgia. The project aimed to improve students' academic achievement in Natural Sciences, Geography and English through a long-term professional development programme for teachers and school principals. The project envisaged the training of 213 non-Georgian language school/sector principals and 2,177 teachers and their involvement in the professional development program. For this purpose, training materials were prepared in Azerbaijani, Russian, and Armenian languages; the trainers were selected and trained. Trainings were conducted in Azerbaijani, Russian, and Armenian languages. The following activities were carried out within the Program:

- **Principals' training materials were translated into Azerbaijani, Russian, and Armenian languages:**
  - Three modules of Leadership Academy 1
  - Characteristics of the 21st Century School.
  - Effective Principal: From Theory to Practice
  - Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Time Management and Legislative Issues
- **Five modules of Leadership Academy 2:**
  - Shared Leadership and Adult Education
  - Teaching Mentoring
  - Leadership and Management
  - Development of a Learning Community
  - 21st Century Class Characteristics Part II
- **Two modules of Leadership Academy 3:**
  - Promoting Student Autonomy through Assessment and Technology
  - Leadership and Group Dynamics.

140. 213 principals of non-Georgian language schools were trained using the mentioned modules, including 85 principals of Azerbaijani language instruction, 11 – of Russian language instruction and 117 – of Armenian language instruction.

141. The professional development of teachers was a priority during the reporting period. Implementing modern teaching methods and strategies in schools will help to create a student-oriented learning environment, thus stimulating students' interest towards Natural Sciences. The professional development of non-Georgian schools' teachers implies the following two directions:

- **General Vocational Skills Training - Student-Oriented Training Approaches (three modules, 36 contact hours in total):**
  - Module 1: Characteristics of a Student-Oriented Learning Environment.

- Module 2: Student-Oriented Learning Environment, Teaching and Assessment Strategies.
- Module 3: Student-Oriented Teaching Approaches: Positive Management of the Learning Process and Readiness for Professional Development.
- **Subject Methodology Training Course - Active Teaching in Subjects (six training modules, each 24 contact hours):**
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Active Teaching in Physics.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Active Teaching in Biology.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Active Teaching in Chemistry.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Active Teaching in Mathematics.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Active Teaching in Geography.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Active Teaching in English.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Using a School Laboratory in Teaching Physics.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Using a School Laboratory in teaching Chemistry.
  - Student-oriented teaching approaches module: Using a School Laboratory in Teaching Biology.

142. In the modules mentioned above, 2,177 non-Georgian language schools'/sectors' teachers, specifically, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Geography, and English teachers, were trained: 912 teachers of Azerbaijani language instruction; 361 – of Russian language instruction; 904 - Armenian language instruction.

143. Upon successful completion of the training, the teachers received credit points and a certificate for completion of the training course, which were submitted to get credit points for compulsory or additional activities to start a teaching career, professional development, and a career advancement scheme.

144. In addition to the training, the long-term professional development course included post-training workshops during which teachers shared their training experiences and jointly planned classroom and extracurricular activities.

145. Within the project "Professional Development of Teachers and School Principals", a handbook for teachers - Developmental Assessment, Differentiated Learning - was also prepared by Mariana Khundzakishvili and Sarah Beaver. The manual discusses the importance of setting learning objectives in teaching and assessment. It introduces tools and strategies for developmental evaluation and differentiated teaching, as well as considers relevant examples, and analyses specific cases, making it easier for teachers to apply them in practice. All of this will help teachers to create a learning environment where students will be able to take responsibility for their learning and achieve set goals. This handbook is a guide for teachers to demonstrate that assistance to students to improve their achievements even with small changes is possible. The manual has been translated into Azerbaijani, Russian, and Armenian languages and distributed to all non-Georgian language schools.

146. An opportunity to pass the subject and skills exams in the native language first emerged in accordance with the 2017 order #46/ბ of the Minister of Education and Science "On approving the rules for conducting the subject examination, confirmation of subject and professional competencies", as well as with the order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport 193/ბ, dated of September 13, 2019, and according to the Para. 2, Article 3: "Testing in Mathematics, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Aesthetic Education subjects, Sports, and Information and Communication Technologies is also conducted in Armenian, Azerbaijani or Russian, only for applicants who teach/wish to teach at respective non-Georgian schools/sectors. This opportunity was a significant step forward as teachers at non-Georgian schools were given the opportunity for professional and career advancement; some of them have benefited and have been promoted within the professional development scheme.

147. The LEPL National Centre for Teacher Professional Development implements the programme "Support for Non-Georgian Language Schools" which aims to support teachers' professional development and the teaching process in non-Georgian language schools in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions. In 2017-2022, approximately 250 to 284 participants, consultants, and assistant teachers were employed within the Program.

148. Within the scopes of the programme "Non-Georgian Language Schools Support sub-program", the state language courses levels - A1, A2 and B1 are offered to local teachers at non-Georgian public schools (Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti regions):

- In March-July 2019, 306 teachers attended the course (A1 level - 150; A2 level - 89; A2 + level - 46; B1 level - 21).
- In October 2019-February 2020, 331 teachers attended the course (A1 level -87; A2 level 157; B1 level - 87).
- In July-November 2020 (online course), 118 teachers attended the course (A1-22; A2-50; B1-46).
- In April-July 2021 (online, face-to-face format), 1,071 teachers attended the course (A1-237; A2-396; B1-438).
- From November 2021 to February 2022 (online, face- to- face), 577 teachers attended the course (A1-18; A2-223; B1-336).

149. A methodology course was also organised within the "Non-Georgian Language Schools Support sub-programme" in 2019-2022:

- Methodology of teaching Georgian as a second language, reading direction. 303 teachers of Georgian as a second language participated.
- Methodology of teaching Georgian as a second language, listening and speaking direction. 227 teachers of Georgian as a second language participated.
- Methodology of teaching Georgian as a second language, writing direction. 299 teachers participated.
- Systematic course of Georgian language grammar (trainings were conducted online). 225 participants attended.
- Training module - "Methodology of teaching grammar in the process of learning Georgian as a second language" was completed by 530 teachers at non-Georgian language schools.
- Training module - "Joint planning and collaborative teaching (co-teaching). 198 local, non-Georgian language schools and programme assistant teachers participated.

150. Therefore, the intervention was conducted in four directions:

- Opportunity to pass the subject competence exams in a native language for promotion in the career scheme.
- Professional training programmes, focused on teachers at non-Georgian schools, which were not implemented during the previous years.
- State language learning courses for non-Georgian school teachers.
- Deployment of teachers that respond to staff shortage problems.

151. The statistical data reflects that in terms of teachers' professional development and career advancement, there are still remaining challenges in non-Georgian schools; however, in the context of the implementation of the Action Plan, it is noteworthy to mention that the situation has changed in the period from 2015 to 2022:

**Table 6. Change of status of teachers in non-Georgian schools**

Year	Practitioner	Senior	Leading	Mentor	Seeker and/or without status	Total
<b>2015</b>	7,559	437	6	0	52	8,054
<b>December 31, 2021</b>	3,599	2,265	232	9	816	6,921

152. A decrease in the number of teachers in non-Georgian schools resulted from the retirement bonus programme – the practitioner teachers have left the system. These measures carried out by LEPL National Centre for Teacher Professional Development, and the National Assessment and Examinations Centre of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport of Georgia<sup>20</sup> have facilitated the promotion of practitioner teachers and their promotion to higher categories. Compared to 2017 (574 teachers), in 2022 (2,265 teachers), the number of senior teachers increased by 1,691.

153. According to data as for January 1, 2022, 52% of teachers at non-Georgian schools are still in the category of practitioner teachers. Notwithstanding that this category is decreasing, it is expected that there will not be teachers of this category in the system from next year. According to 2021 data, the total number of

<sup>20</sup> Since March 2021 referred as the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

teachers in non-Georgian schools with senior, leading and mentor status is 2,506, 36,2% of the total number of teachers employed in the non-Georgian sector; in particular: 9 mentor- teachers (0,13%), 232 leading- teachers (3,4%); 2265 senior- teachers (32,7%).

154. In 2021, to overcome the staff shortage problem, three groups of teachers were deployed to non-Georgian schools of Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions: 121 consultant-teachers of the Georgian language as the second language, 125 assistant- teachers, including 61 bilingual assistant-teachers, who work together with local teachers in a variety of subject areas under National Curriculum.

155. Significant reform, carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, was the retirement bonus for practitioner teachers of retirement age in the form of two-year salaries, and because of this policy, an opportunity was created for young staff to enter the schools.

156. As a result of the mentioned reform, 1,411 teachers of retirement age have left non-Georgian schools, among them, 739 –Azerbaijani, 188 –Russian and 484 –Armenian schools. According to 2018 data, there were 7,885 teachers in non-Georgian schools and according to 2020 data, i.e., after the retirement bonus, the number of teachers decreased and reached 6,921 by the end of 2021. Meanwhile, the reform can be assessed as a positive development since the working hours of the teachers remained expanded and the new skilled staff entered the system.

**Table 7. Comparison of teachers at non-Georgian schools in 2018 and 2021**

Teaching language	2018	2021	Difference
<b>Azerbaijani</b>	3389	2976	413
<b>Armenian</b>	2979	2590	389
<b>Russian</b>	1517	1355	162
<b>Total:</b>	<b>7885</b>	<b>6921</b>	<b>964</b>

**Identify a multilingual education model adapted to the Georgian context and implement it at pre-school , primary and secondary levels.**

157. The 2015-2020 Strategy and Action Plan introduced several significant aspects of education policy, contributing to the long-term implementation of a multilingual education policy. Namely:

- Inclusion of multilingual education in funding system and linking the funding to the student involved in this programme.
- General or specific reflection of multilingual education programmes in curriculum.
- Addressing the issue of school textbooks in the context of bilingual teaching.
- Reflection of multilingual components in teacher standard and professional development scheme.
- Encouragement of higher educational institutions to implement a multilingual teachers' training programme.
- Ensuring funding to attract students for teacher education programmes in higher education institutions in the direction of multilingual teaching.

158. In 2017-2020, Tbilisi Ivane Javakishvili State University conducted a multilingual teacher education programme. Samtskhe-Javakheti University has added this programme as a module in the integrated undergraduate-postgraduate programme of primary education teacher training in 2018.

159. In 2017-2021, approximately 100 students enrolled in this programme at the Tbilisi Ivane Javakishvili State University were transferred under the mobility rule (25 students per year). In 2019, the programme had its first graduates, most of whom entered the non-Georgian schools. However, based on the data on the age structure of teachers, it becomes clear that this small flow of new graduates cannot replace teachers in non-Georgian schools, especially given the fact that these graduates are just elementary school teachers and the shortage of teachers at the primary and secondary levels is already evident nowadays. Primary and secondary school teachers are not trained for non-Georgian schools.

160. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, with the financial support of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Civic Integration and Inter-Ethnic Relations Centre piloted a bilingual project, implemented in 20 minority schools. The Content and Language Integrated Learning (Clil) approach was piloted in the subject of the natural science for III to VI grades



within the project's scope. Relevant learning resources were developed and used in pilot classes. Principals of the pilot schools, elementary school teachers and Georgian as Second Language teachers were trained. In 2020, the Ministry initiated the bilingual education pilot project based on existing recourses and experience. Many barriers have emerged during the implementation of the pilot project. Therefore, it is crucial to make fundamental changes in teaching content and its organisation and management to effectively implement similar experimental projects or multilingual education reform in general.

161. In 2020, under the initiative of the MoES, the programme "Implementing State Standards at Minority Pre-school and School Level" was launched. It aims to implement pre-school standards and National Curriculum in schools by introducing a bilingual education model.

162. Currently, the model is piloted in 9 pre-schools and 25 schools in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions. The schools and pre-schools are paired up to maintain the logical linkage between the levels. However, not every school has a pair. The model covers three main directions:

163. *Creating a bilingual communication platform* aims to ensure clear and relatively smooth communication with pre-school and school administration and pre-school teachers, and school society. The project hires bilingual coaches and assistant teachers, engaging them in a continuous coaching process with relevant experts to share experience and knowledge with local pre-school and school communities and implement the various interventions in kindergartens and schools.

164. The position of Bilingual Teaching Coordinator has been introduced in schools to strengthen and boost communication and create a bilingual environment in schools. The job's key responsibility is to support communication with non-Georgian speaking administration and teachers and help with the management and organisation of school projects and non-formal education on a school basis.

165. Building this platform requires the involvement of various stakeholders such as the Teachers Professional Development Centre, Educational Resource Centres, Municipalities, school administration and pre-school management, etc.

166. *Implementation of National pre-school standards in Minority Pre-schools: Creating bilingual pre-school resources*, including resources in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages. More specifically, Resources for 3-5 age groups are being created in Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian languages, including visual aids and guides for methodological support. Resources for school readiness are being created in Georgian, Azerbaijani and Armenian languages, including visual aids and guides for methodological support, coaching and training of bilingual assistant - teachers who lead the process in Georgian language at kindergartens. The programme implies to employ bilingual assistant teachers to work in pairs with local Azerbaijani or Armenian pre-school teachers. The bilingual resources enable both teachers to lead the process within the same methodological framework in different languages. The mentioned guide, with its accompanying working papers and resources, is based on the modern standard; however, given the specifics of the working group, it serves the implementation of bilingual pre-school education and, therefore, includes the Georgian language integration component. In order to implement the given resources in practice, 21 bilingual assistant caregiver-pedagogues are involved in the coaching process. Furthermore, in cooperation with the National Centre for Teachers' Professional Development, up to 60 assistant caregiver-pedagogues of 9 non-Georgian pre-school institutions have undergone retraining for caregiver-pedagogues. 50 pedagogues and administration staff of pre-school institutions were involved in various programmes and trainings in terms of retraining of pedagogues of pre-school institutions.

167. Implementation of National Curriculum at primary and secondary levels covers three main directions: 1. creating and/or translating relevant educational resources, 2. preparation of bilingual local teachers and teachers of non-Georgian language instruction on how to use classroom resources. 3. Creating the system of knowledge and experience sharing in native languages.

Creating and/or translating relevant educational resources for primary school level:

- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) resources are being created for subjects: Arts, Nature, Society and Me, and Maths (Grades 1-4). Resources for Sports is being translated into Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.
- Georgian as second language resources are being created based on the principles of the National Curriculum (Grades 1-4).

- A bilingual project bank has been created to boost the implementation of non-formal education activities and school projects. Also, resources for strengthening reading skills are developed in Georgian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian languages.

168. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a particular challenge was the professional development of teachers for the effective management of the remote learning process. During the 2020-2021 academic year, about 150 teachers and school directors of Armenian-language and Azerbaijani-language schools were involved in the training on the use of basic functions of the Microsoft Teams application; up to 60 assistant- bilingual teachers were retrained.

**Monitor this implementation process to ensure that the model is indeed developed with and endorsed by teachers, school boards, parents, and communities, implemented in all schools teaching in minority languages and evaluated to observe whether it produces the expected effects.**

169. Within the framework of the MoES project "Implementation of State Standards at Minority Pre-school and School Level", a special research group was created to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the bilingual model in target schools and pre-schools. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the face-to-face monitoring process has been highly limited as the project was launched in 2020. However, focus group meetings, and e-surveys were implemented with various target groups such as teachers, parents, and project implementers to assess the overall attitude towards bilingual education, barriers in the implementation process and capacity for further development. As mentioned above, it was impossible to conduct classroom observations; to monitor the teaching; therefore, bilingual teachers prepared reflection reports, which revealed the actual teaching-learning process. In addition, at the end of the academic year, a diagnostic assessment was planned to examine the dynamics of student achievement for fourth grade. By the end of 2022, a Monitoring and Evaluation Report will be launched, summarising the pilot results.

### Part III. Further measures taken to improve the implementation of the Framework Convention

#### Article 3 of the Framework Convention

##### Personal scope of application

170. During the reporting period, the personal scope of application of the FCNM in Georgia has not changed. As the present report demonstrates, the commitment under the Convention equally applies to the representatives of national minorities irrespective of their number and place of residence.

171. The terms “national minorities” and “ethnic minorities” are used with the same meaning in the present report.

##### Data Collection and Census

**29. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to adapt the census form in accordance with the right to self-identification and to launch an information campaign, well ahead of the next census, targeting persons belonging to national minorities. The campaign should aim at raising their awareness about their interests in participating in the census and about their respective rights, with a view to successfully combining the protection and promotion of minority rights with the collection of reliable information about the ethnic composition of the population.**

172. The Government of Georgia fully shares the opinion of the Advisory Committee concerning data collection and census. Therefore, the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021-2030 states:

“For comprehensive identification of the needs of ethnic minorities and for the implementation of the objectives envisaged in the Strategy, it is necessary to improve the quality of data collection and processing, access to statistical data on large and smaller ethnic groups. The state takes into consideration the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of Ethnic Minorities of the Council of Europe to provide a possibility of self-identification of ethnic minority representatives when establishing their belonging to a particular ethnic group, according to which the census forms should provide accurate and effective options for self-identification. In this regard, concrete steps will be taken to ensure the rights to free self-identification in the process of establishing the belonging to a particular ethnic group during general population census.

The quantitative or qualitative data collected on the basis of applicable personal data protection regulations, clearly indicated that the successes and challenges in the implementation of ethnic minority policies and gives a possibility to instantly reveal the problems and plan/revise/implement relevant activities; also, assess the efficiency of implemented activities/measures and update those identified in the Action Plan. Therefore, the state will pay due attention to collecting and processing quantitative and qualitative data on ethnic minorities in various spheres of social life, develop/implement/assess the needs and evidence-based approaches”.

173. Future detailed plans regarding the next population census are under discussion, including the method and methodology. At this stage, the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat) is drafting the design of the population census questionnaire in line with international recommendations and updating the Geographic Information System databases.

#### Article 4 of the Framework Convention

##### Anti-Discrimination legislative and institutional framework

**37. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to reinforce the mandate of the Public Defender so that it can address obligatory requests for information to private persons and deal with complaints related to administrative proceedings. The time during which the Public Defender is authorised to apply to a court in discrimination cases should also be extended to one year. The burden of proof shift should be reinforced in discrimination cases, so that the Public Defender can contribute to effectively implement the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.**

**38. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure that the cost for renting the premises of the Public Defender’s headquarters does not significantly reduce the operational budget of the Public Defender. Resources allocated to its field offices should also be increased to give the**

**Public Defender the means to implement the necessary awareness raising work with regard to the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.**

**39. The Advisory Committee urges the authorities at all levels to comply without delay with the findings and recommendations of the Public Defender in all cases affecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.**

174. Answers to the recommendations in paragraphs 37 and 38 are provided above. As for the recommendation under paragraph 39, it was partially answered above. Information concerning the recommendations issued by the Public Defender in an annual parliamentary report is as follows:

175. Under Article 163 of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament and Article 22 of the Law of Georgia on the Public Defender of Georgia, the Public Defender shall submit a report on the situation of human rights and freedoms protection in the country to the Parliament annually in March of the calendar year. Based on the consideration of this report, the Parliament adopts a resolution that includes its assessment, tasks of state agencies, including the Parliament, and the monitoring timeline.

176. The report presented by the Public Defender of Georgia is prepared by the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee for consideration at the Plenary Sitting of the Parliament of Georgia. The Committee analyses the report; simultaneously, it requests the written positions on the mentioned recommendations from the relevant state authorities.

177. After processing the report and information submitted by the authorities, the Committee shall hold a sitting (sittings), where the Public Defender of Georgia and Heads of the relevant authorities that are recipients of the recommendations participate. The Committee session is public. All interested stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations and other civil sector representatives, can participate and debate at the Committee sitting.

178. As a result of the detailed review and analysis of the PDO report and recommendations, the Committee prepares a conclusion assessing the document and identifies the recommendations with the relevant argumentation that are relevant and appropriate to share. The resolution also defines responsible state agencies for the implementation of the recommendations. At the same time, the Committee will develop a draft resolution reflecting the identified recommendations. The parliamentary plenary session will review the Committee's conclusion and the draft resolution.

179. After the end of the reporting year, the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee monitors the fulfilment of the tasks issued by the resolution of the Parliament of Georgia. It requests written information on the status of implementation of the recommendations. After studying and analysing the written communication, the Committee shall hold a public hearing/sitting (sessions), where the heads of the relevant authorities/institutions will directly present their reports. The Public Defender participates in the hearing. All interested stakeholders can unlimitedly join the debates.

180. After reviewing the submitted reports, the Committee assesses the implementation status of each task included in the Parliamentary resolution and develops a relevant conclusion that will be sent to the Bureau of the Parliament.

181. The practice of reviewing the reports submitted by the Public Defender of Georgia has been established since 2013. (Before 2013, the Parliament of Georgia had only received a PDO report as a notice, and no recommendation or assignment had been issued based on it). This practice is improved annually, and it becomes more efficient. Accordingly, the number of sharing the recommendations of the Public Defender is increasing every year; at the same time, the number of the implemented recommendations increases.

182. According to the Public Defender's report, proposals are also given to the Parliament of Georgia to carry out the relevant legislative initiatives in order to eliminate the challenges identified in the reports. In 2018, the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee created the first precedent and formed a working group aimed at exploring the advisability of sharing proposals issued towards the Parliament and setting the measures subject to implementation in accordance with the relevant proposals. The above-mentioned stakeholders are involved in the working group.

### Measures to promote full and effective equality and equality data

**45. The Advisory Committee recommends that the authorities adopt proper measures aimed at collecting data on discrimination in all relevant fields and to this end, develop adequate methods of disaggregated data collection while fully respecting the right to free self-identification and in accordance with international standards on personal data protection.**

183. On September 23, 2020, a Memorandum on Cooperation was signed between the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court and GeoStat to establish a unified data system on crimes of intolerance based on discriminative grounds. Data collection is based on a new unified methodology. Memorandum on Cooperation on the Production of Statistics on Crimes committed on the grounds of Intolerance and Discrimination and segregated statistical data are in line with international standards of personal data protection and are publicly available in Georgian and English on the National Statistics Office website.<sup>21</sup> A joint report of data on crimes committed on the grounds of intolerance with discrimination basis is published annually since 2021 according to the following procedure: Once a year, but no later than February 20, and for the issuance of a joint report, the Parties to the Memorandum are obliged to submit to GeoStat the data in English and Georgian languages on the crime of intolerance for the period from January 1 to December 31 of the previous year. GeoStat is obliged to prepare and publish a unified statistical report on crimes on the grounds of intolerance committed in the last year annually no later than March 1.

184. For statistical purposes, pursuant to the methodology developed by the "Memorandum of Cooperation on Collection of Data on Crimes Committed on the Grounds of Intolerance with Discrimination Basis and Publishing a Joint Report", the motive of intolerance based on race includes signs of race, skin colour, language, citizenship, national and ethnic affiliation should be identified.

185. 52 individuals were prosecuted for crimes motivated by intolerance on the basis of race in 2016-2021, including two individuals were prosecuted for intersectional discrimination based on race and gender. These number breaks down into the following annual data:

- 2016 – 18 defendants.
- 2018 - 5 defendants.
- 2019 - 12 defendants.
- 2020 - 6 defendants.
- 2021 – 11 defendants (2 for gender and racial motives - intersectional discrimination).

186. The Supreme Court of Georgia has begun working on a database on court cases.

187. The PDO records and analyses statistical data on discrimination cases, which are published once a year in a special report on combating and preventing discrimination and the state of equality.

**46. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to jointly launch a national awareness raising campaign in order to inform the general public about the anti-discrimination legislation and the relevant legal remedies available, but also, in consultation with representative organisations of persons belonging to national minorities, with the specific objective to reach out to persons belonging to national minorities.**

188. The Government of Georgia actively promoted awareness raising during the reporting period to inform the general public about anti-discrimination legislation and available legal remedies. The activities targeted the national minorities and the general public. The detailed information was provided above in response to Recommendation A under section II above.

189. Apart from actively visiting different regions of the country to carry out educational activities, Public Defender of Georgia carried out a cycle of thematic meetings with representative organisations and activists of specific groups, including national minorities in 2021. The aim of the meeting with representatives of ethnic minority groups was to exchange information regarding the practice, existing challenges and possible steps forward.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/680/hate-crimes-statistics>

190. Furthermore, the 2021-2030 Strategy underlines the importance of awareness raising to enhance civic equality. Strategic Priority 3, “Equality, Civic and Political Participation”, states that “for effective policy, it is important to raise awareness on the main principles of civic equality and integration among both majority and minority population, so that they realize the necessity of integration, its positive effects for the country and each of its citizens and become aware of its national and public importance. For that purpose, the Strategy defines the goals toward ensuring access to information and awareness-raising for both majority and ethnic minorities. All relevant areas and directions will be included in these activities, such as education, culture, media, etc. Accordingly, Goal 7, “Strengthening environment based on equality”, sets the following objectives:

“Objective 7.1 Raising public awareness on the issues of human rights, civic equality, and integration policy, anti-discrimination, and gender equality.

Objective 7.2 Improving access to the mechanisms of justice and law-enforcement, and quality legal assistance.”

Furthermore, Objective 9.2 aims to raise awareness on cultural diversity and supporting intercultural dialogue.

191. The objectives were translated into the specific actions of the Action Plan (AP). It is planned to launch relevant activities in the fourth quarter of 2022.<sup>22</sup> The AP sets specific targets for 2024, 2027 and 2030 for the awareness raising activities.

192. Thus, Georgia actively promoted awareness raising on anti-discrimination legislation and the relevant legal remedies available during the reporting period and committed upgrading its efforts in this direction.

**47. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to pursue their efforts aimed at providing registration and birth certificates to persons belonging to Roma, Lom and Dom communities and to ensure that the lack of identity documents does not constitute grounds for discrimination in accessing their rights, in particular to education.**

193. The GOG stands committed to identify all persons residing in the country and providing them with identity documents. According to paragraphs 1 and 2 of Article 3 of the Law of Georgia on the Procedure for Registering Citizens of Georgian and Aliens Residing in Georgia, for Issuing an Identity (*Residence*) Card and a Passport of a Citizen of Georgia, all citizens of Georgia shall be obliged to be registered according to their places of residence and obtain an identity document within six months after attaining the age of 14.<sup>23</sup>

194. As the GOG mentioned in comments submitted on September 5, 2019, “[t]he process of registration of Roma and granting appropriate legal status is in progress.”<sup>24</sup>

195. The Third Report submitted by Georgia pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities provided information on providing registration and birth certificates to persons belonging to Roma.<sup>25</sup> Georgia continued its efforts in these directions. According to the 2014 census, 604 Roma live in Georgia, as the third report mentioned.

196. Georgian identity documents and travel documents are issued by the Public Service Development Agency (PSDA) and can be collected at the territorial offices of the Agency, as well as at Public Service Halls (PSH) and Community Centres (CC) throughout the country. The issued documents can be sent to the customers by post. Currently, there are 13 PSDA territorial offices countrywide, 27 PSHs functioning in all major towns and 88 CCs (*the latter provides similar services as the PSH but in rural areas and small municipal centres of Georgia*). In addition, there are six mobile Public Service Halls (which cover 7 regions), providing services through the service centres placed in vehicles in exceptional locations, where there is no access to services. Applications for issuance of documents may be submitted via remote channels (*Remote Service Office of the Public Service Development*

<sup>22</sup> The Action Plan is available at: [https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/\\_ონტერვაგია/Action\\_Plan\\_Eng\\_FINAL21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/_ონტერვაგია/Action_Plan_Eng_FINAL21.12.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Law of Georgia on the Procedure for Registering Citizens of Georgian and Aliens Residing in Georgia, for Issuing an Identity (Residence) Card and a Passport of a Citizen of Georgia, Article 3(1), and Article 3(2). Available at the following link:

< <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/31504?publication=51> >.

<sup>24</sup> Comments of the Government of Georgia on the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted on March 7, 2019, p. 11. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/3rd-com-georgia-en/168096d739>

<sup>25</sup> The Third Report submitted by Georgia pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, pp. 12-13, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/third-state-report-georgia/168075fc5e>

*Agency and Citizen's Portal* [www.my.gov.ge](http://www.my.gov.ge)). Georgian citizens residing abroad may also obtain identity documents through the diplomatic missions of Georgia and consular posts.

197. During the reporting period, public bodies provided different beneficial services to the specific categories of citizens when issuing identity documents and passports, such as socially vulnerable persons, veterans of the World War II (WWII), and persons disabled as a result of participating in the armed activities for territorial integrity, freedom and sovereignty of Georgia, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, minors being under guardianship, and the persons under international protection.

198. If a person is not considered a citizen of Georgia, he/she is granted the status of a stateless person in Georgia, after which a residence card shall be issued to him/her. According to subparagraph "b" of Article 4 of the Order №50 of the Minister of Justice of Georgia of November 4, 2014, on Approval of the Procedure for Issuance of Temporary Identity Card, "a temporary identity card, as an identity document shall be issued to persons seeking to obtain the status of a stateless person in Georgia (a person, submitting an application for determination of the status of a stateless person in Georgia)".<sup>26</sup>

199. The LEPL Public Service Development Agency (PSDA) issues identification documents under a general rule. Equal conditions are guaranteed for all, irrespective of race, ethnic origin, gender, or other characteristics. It is noteworthy that PSDA does not register persons based on race or ethnic origin, and therefore, statistical data on this issue is not available.

200. The legislation regulating civil status acts, registration at the address and issuance of identity documents does not provide processing information about a person's ethnic origin. Thus, this information is not included in the civil status act record and identity documents. Within the cooperation of the GoG and NGO sector, between 2011 and 2018, undocumented persons had been registered, including Roma minorities.<sup>27</sup>

201. The Public Service Development Agency is currently engaged in identifying stateless /undocumented persons and providing them with documents as part of the "door-to-door" campaign. This campaign aims at resolving the issue of undocumented citizens. Although the number of stateless/undocumented persons in Georgia is low, the government shall take all necessary measures to register every person in Georgia and provide them with identity documents. As part of the campaign, undocumented persons are identified through the local municipalities and administrative authorities that provide respective services (*social and healthcare, education etc.*). Mobile teams of the PSDA collect the applications and biometric data. Identity documents are issued to beneficiaries free of charge. The campaign is implemented in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

202. The Public Service Development Agency identifies stateless /undocumented persons and later provides them with identity documents within the "door-to-door" campaign framework. Ethnicity is not a subject of processing for issuing an identity document for an individual. Therefore, resolving the matter of stateless /undocumented persons can include a person of any ethnic origin, including Roma person.

203. Currently, the majority of the Roma, Lom and Dom population have civil registration documents as a result of actions of the GoG to provide birth registration, granting citizenship and ID documents to them, in line with the 2015-2020 Strategy.

204. Under the Interagency Council on Combating Trafficking in Persons, a working group (created on November 14, 2014) drafted amendments to the regulatory framework to address legal issues of children who live and work on the street. These amendments aimed to improve documentation of homeless children and the child protection referral procedures to prevent violence.

205. The legislative amendments introduced the term "homeless child" – a minor living in the street and/or a minor working in the street who has been identified as such by an authorised social worker. After introducing

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<sup>26</sup> The Order №50 of November 4, 2014, on Approval of the Procedure for Issuance of Temporary Identity Card of the Minister of Justice of Georgia, Article 4(b).

Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2564951?publication=1>.

<sup>27</sup> Final Assessment on the Implementation of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020 (in Georgian), p. 10, [https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/Civic\\_Integration-Final\\_Assessment\\_GEO1-24.06\\_\(1\).pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/Civic_Integration-Final_Assessment_GEO1-24.06_(1).pdf)

the term, the State can issue identification documents to these children free of charge that enable them to access healthcare, education, social and other state programmes.

206. To address problems related to identification documents, the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance of (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking may request PSDA to issue identification documents free of charge for homeless children and children who are victims of violence. Before amendments, only a parent or a guardian could request it.

207. Measures aimed at integrating Roma, Lom and Dom population have brought some positive changes. They apply to medical institutions for child delivery, where all born children are registered. Furthermore, the Roma can establish the fact of birth without any fees. Granting identity documents facilitates access to various social services, including education and integration programmes.

208. Furthermore, Georgia takes active measures to reduce and prevent statelessness, including among Roma, Lom, and Dom population, as manifested by the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons in 2014.

209. The Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship does not provide a provision concerning a child who would otherwise be stateless. However, the Law offers different possibilities to acquire Georgian citizenship for a "child who would otherwise be stateless". During the drafting, children's statelessness risks were evaluated, and the following regulations were included in the Law based on the analysis of legislation and practice:

210. A child will acquire Georgian citizenship by birth if:

- s/he is born on the territory of Georgia through extracorporeal fertilisation (surrogacy), and the country of citizenship of neither of his/her parents recognises her/him as its citizen.
- a child is born in the territory of Georgia to persons having a status of stateless person in Georgia.
- a child is born on the territory of Georgia, one of her/his parents has a status of a stateless person in Georgia, and the other parent is unknown.
- a minor is living in Georgia, and both parents are unknown (the parents' identity or nationality are unknown).

211. The aforementioned provisions minimise the risks of rendering a child born on the territory of Georgia stateless. It is noteworthy that in practice, there were no cases when a person born in Georgia needed acquisition of Georgian citizenship as s/he would otherwise be stateless. Before 2014, some cases caused risks of child's stateless as a child was born through extracorporeal fertilisation (surrogacy) and the country of citizenship of neither of his/her parents recognises her/him as its citizen. New regulations were adopted to address this problem. There is a theoretical possibility for a child to become stateless if s/he is born in Georgia and their parents' citizenship is not applied to them due to jus soli or on the ground of gender discrimination. However, in this case, a child shall be granted a status of statelessness, and s/he may acquire Georgian citizenship after living in Georgia for five years upon her/his application for citizenship.

212. The Law allows stateless persons to acquire Georgian citizenship by naturalisation under regular, simplified and restoration procedures.

#### Education of Roma, Lom and Dom Children

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213. The policy efforts made by the MoES in recent years with respect to the inclusion of Roma children in education and their integration into the society have demonstrated a progress. The enrolment of Roma children in schools and the individual work of special teachers have contributed to their socialisation and the formation of positive attitudes towards educational activities.

214. According to the data of 2022, up to 50 Roma children are recipients of early and pre-school education services.

215. In 2020-2021, 323 Roma students were registered in public schools, however 29 of them suspended their studies. 10 Roma students are given additional lessons in Georgian language, math, and speech. As of the academic year 2020-2021, out of 24 Roma students (16 male - 67% and eight female - 33%) in the 9th grade, 16 male students (100%) and six female students (75%) completed their compulsory education and received a certificate. Concerning early prevention of dropping out from mandatory general education level, measures are



in place for all children. These measures envisage social workers getting involved in a case if a student is absent from school for 20 academic days consecutively.

216. With the “Inclusive Education Support Program”, the MoES works closely with Roma children and their families to involve Roma children in education and various non-formal education activities with their Georgian peers and thus encourage Roma children's integration into the community and society at large.

217. As of 2022, eight projects were funded within the program, aiming to plan and implement various non-formal education activities in the form of activity clubs, bringing together peers with common interests in several schools. Non-formal education activities and projects are essential in developing a positive attitude toward Roma children among Georgian peers and adults and facilitating integration into society.

218. Social workers of the Ministry, namely the LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions, have assessed the challenges related to the inclusion and academic performance of the Roma children in the school with a more significant number of Roma. As a result of the findings, awareness-raising meetings were organised for their parents. Working with the parents is ongoing. Currently, ten Roma students are given additional Georgian language, math, and speech lessons.

219. Authorisation standards of HEIs oblige the institutions to have mechanisms, including financial instruments, to support students who have low social-economic status (SES). An institution should consider students' socio-economic status and implement various support services. Information on these mechanisms must be public and accessible.

220. According to the Code on the Rights of the Child, from 2021, municipal bodies have established relevant structural units/services for child protection and support throughout the country. Their task is to protect and realise children's rights in the community.

221. The MOES, within the framework of the sub-programme "Second Chance of Education by Social Inclusion" under the programme "Inclusive Education Support Programme", has launched cooperation with public schools located in communities populated by ethnic minority groups, including Roma. The interests of the beneficiary Roma adolescents are identified, while the need to communicate with Roma peers is discussed with their classmates.

222. The MoES shares information about the project applications to the above-mentioned public schools to unite Roma and their peers in the common interests of the clubs established within the framework of non-formal education in schools. The commission established by the MOES is considering the expediency of financing the projects developed by public schools. In the case of funding, the clubs are focused on access to quality education for Roma adolescents, improving the knowledge of the state language, creating a welcoming environment in schools, and employing Roma representatives in funded projects. Preschool and General Education Development Department monitors the quality of the clubs, the involvement of Roma adolescents, and the increase of tolerant attitudes among peers. For five years, 11 Roma persons were employed as assistant coordinators.

#### Social support of Roma, Lom and Dom community

223. The sub-programme “Provision of Shelter for Homeless Children” of the state programme “Social Rehabilitation and Child Care” aims to ensure the psycho-social rehabilitation and integration of homeless children, including those living and working on the streets. The relevant services operated in Tbilisi, Rustavi, and Kutaisi. 4 mobile groups (Tbilisi and Kutaisi) work with children within this sub-program. The day-care centre services and mobile group in Batumi have been introduced within the sub-programme “Provision of Shelter for Homeless Children” of the state programme “Social Rehabilitation and Child Care”. Currently, six shelters and seven day-care centres function in the country (Tbilisi, Batumi, Rustavi, and Kutaisi). In 2021, 7 mobile groups worked with children in the above-mentioned cities. In 2022, the number of mobile groups increased up to 9. Since 2020, social workers' mandate has been enhanced with a focus on assessing and strengthening the family of a homeless child. Supporting social workers and strengthening the work with families will contribute to the return of children living and/or working on the streets to their families. Within the sub-programme “Provision of Shelter for Homeless Children ”:

- In 2016, services were provided to 214 beneficiaries, including 16 Roma beneficiaries.
- In 2017, services were provided to 270 minors, including 27 Roma beneficiaries.

- In 2018, services were provided to 188 children, including 19 Roma beneficiaries.
- In 2020, services were provided to 277 children, including 49 Roma beneficiaries.
- In 2021, services were provided to 275 children, including 57 Roma beneficiaries.
- In 2022, services were provided to 223 children, including 37 Roma beneficiaries.

224. According to the Law of Georgia on Health Care<sup>28</sup>, it shall be prohibited to discriminate against a patient due to his/her race, skin colour, language, sex, religion, political and other beliefs, national, ethnic, and social affiliation, origin, property status and title, place of residence, disease, sexual orientation, or a personal negative attitude. (*Article 6*). All residents of the country, including the Roma community, are beneficiaries of the State universal healthcare programme (*compulsory health insurance does not exist in the country*). The State universal healthcare programme covers planned and emergency outpatient, emergency inpatient, elective surgical, oncological services, childbirth and caesarean section, bone marrow and liver transplantation, medications for chronic diseases, etc. The State funded immunisation programme fully supplies vaccines free of charge to all children in Georgia, including Roma children.

225. Therefore, health services for the Roma population are just as accessible as for the other people in the country. The State Universal Healthcare Programme and other diseases state programmes ensure universal access to health services for the country's population. Suppose a person does not have the identification documents and is admitted to a medical facility; s/he will be registered with "unknown" status and provided with the necessary medical services.

226. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the representatives of the Roma community have been provided with information on COVID-19 related issues through displaying posters and other visual materials and the delivery of audio information in their native languages. Also, packages with food and hygienic items have been delivered to the 380 Roma families across the country.

#### **48. The Advisory Committee also calls on the authorities to pursue their efforts to facilitate the voluntary return of deported Meskhetians**

227. Georgia has put a comprehensive legal framework in place and established respective structures to fulfil all the components of Georgia's accession commitment to the Council of Europe concerning repatriation of Muslim Meskhetians.

228. The Law on "Repatriation of Persons involuntarily exiled by the Former USSR from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia in the 40s of the 20th Century"<sup>29</sup> was adopted and enforced on July 2007. The displaced people (*and their descendants*) could apply to the state and obtain repatriate status based on the documents submitted under the established rule.

229. The adoption of the law was followed by an active information campaign in all the countries where the descendants of displaced persons reside, aimed at informing the target group about repatriation opportunities and legal procedures.

230. A deadline for applying had been prolonged twice until 1 January 2010. Applicants had had a reasonable time and opportunity to apply for repatriate status to the state. 5841 adults applied to the state for the repatriate status. Most of the applications were submitted with flaws. Having considered the interests of those seeking repatriate status, a mechanism for confirming the displacement of repatriates – the Council of Elders - was established. Applications were reviewed adhering to the principle of family unity. 1998 applications (*citizens of Azerbaijan*) that met the requirements set by the law, were granted repatriate status (*the status was derivatively granted to the minors included in the applications and/or the minors born in a family after granting the status. Totally, about 2600 people with repatriate status*).

231. The persons with repatriate status have been provided for the possibility of granting Georgian citizenship in a simplified manner, implying, contrary to the requirements for other foreigners, to grant Georgian

<sup>28</sup> <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/29980?publication=37>

<sup>29</sup> The Law of Georgia "On Repatriation of Persons involuntarily exiled by the Former USSR from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia in the 40s of the 20th Century" <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/22558?publication=7>

(*conditional*) citizenship to a person with repatriate status on the basis of merely a birth certificate and repatriate status documents<sup>30</sup>.

232. The law and the respective by-law set a 2-year term after granting the repatriate status for persons to apply to a state for obtaining Georgian citizenship under a simplified procedure. After granting the Georgian (*conditional*) citizenship, a person has had to abandon the foreign citizenship within 5 years (*it should be noted, that initially defined 2 years-term was prolonged to 5*), which would automatically enforce the Georgian citizenship.

233. Only 494 persons with repatriate status applied for (*last in 2016*) and all of them were granted conditional citizenship by the state. No person has applied to the state for this purpose since then. Moreover, none of the 494 persons renounced the citizenship of another country (Azerbaijan) for Georgian citizenship to take effect.

234. The Government of Georgia, through establishing a legal framework for repatriation, has set up a well-functioning mechanism to facilitate obtaining Georgian citizenship and to make the process merely a technical procedure for a person with repatriate status. Acquisition of Georgian citizenship and renunciation of the citizenship of another country is an individual decision of a person.

## Article 5 of the Framework Convention

### Preservation and promotion of all national minority identities and cultures

**55. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to implement, monitor and evaluate, on a regular basis the Cultural Strategy 2025 and the State Strategy on Civic Equality and Integration, with regard to the preservation and promotion of all national minority identities and cultures, not only in terms of inputs but also in terms of impact in the middle to long-term, in consultation with persons belonging to national minorities.**

235. Executing obligations in the field of culture under the FCNM was defined as a separate priority within the "Culture Strategy 2025" document, which was developed by the Government of Georgia with broad public engagement and adopted in 2016. The Strategy document defined "access to culture and cultural diversity" as a priority, and the following were set as tasks:

- To support cultural initiatives and facilitate study of Georgian language to ensure participation and integration of minorities in country's cultural life.
- To organise relevant cultural and creative projects, initiatives, events, and campaigns and to support the accessibility of proper spaces to make minorities more active and engage them in cultural life.
- To support special, adapted media programmes to integrate minorities in the society.
- To protect and restore tangible and intangible cultural heritage (e.g., rehabilitation of monuments, maintain various traditional knowledge and performing arts etc.) of minorities living in Georgia in order to protect and develop the diversity of cultural self-expression.

236. While Georgia has adopted only one action plan for 2017-2018 to implement the 2025 Culture Strategy, the relevant agencies continued activities to achieve the strategic goals (see below answer on recommendation 56). It should also be noted that during the reporting period, the Ministry of Culture changed its status several times, which complicated the adoption of further action plans and the preparation of monitoring reports.

237. As the Advisory Committee mentioned, Goal 4 of the 2015-2020 Strategy focused on preserving the culture of ethnic minorities and establishing a tolerant environment.<sup>31</sup> The SMRCE prepared annual reports on the progress of strategy implementation. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the SMRCE also conducted a final

<sup>30</sup> Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship, Article 14 (2).

<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2342552?publication=6>

<sup>31</sup> Third Opinion on Georgia adopted on 7 March 2019, p. 15, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/3rd-op-georgia-en/1680969b56>

evaluation of the 2015-2020 Strategy through a participatory process, engaging representatives of national minorities.<sup>32</sup>

238. 2021-2030 Strategy stresses that “[e]thnic and cultural diversity is the country’s wealth and a significant asset for its democratic and sustainable development.”<sup>33</sup> Its strategic priority 5 “Inter-cultural Dialogue” states that preservation of cultural values and identities regardless of ethnic belonging, promotion and respect of cultural diversity are significant preconditions for effective civic integration, and providing support to the development of a diverse and pluralistic society, largely defines the quality of democracy and its strength.

239. The objectives within the framework of the intercultural dialogue direction were defined with the rationale that “supporting cultural traditions of ethnic minorities is not limited to their preservation but it will spur their development and rapprochement with modern cultural achievements”. Accordingly, the Strategy proposed Goal 9, “Supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue”, with the following objectives:

- Objective 9.1 Supporting and promoting the preservation of cultural heritage of ethnic minorities.
- Objective 9.2 Raising awareness on cultural diversity and supporting intercultural dialogue.
- Objective 9.3 Supporting intercultural sports and multiculturalism, developing relevant spaces/infrastructure.

240. 2021-2022 Action Plan specified two outcome indicators and four activities for promoting the preservation of the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. The monitoring system established under the 2021-2030 Strategy applies to Goal 9. In 2022, the SMRCE prepared the implementation report of the Strategy to monitor the implementation progress.<sup>34</sup>

**56. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that support procedures and policies for cultural activities, at central or local level, are designed in such a way as to enable access to funds to less experienced organisations and aim thus at promoting all national minority identities and cultures, including numerically smaller groups or communities.**

241. Under the Constitution of Georgia, in accordance with universally recognised principles and norms of international law and the legislation of Georgia, citizens of Georgia, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation or language, shall have the right to maintain and develop their culture and use their mother tongue in private and in public, without any discrimination; freedom of creativity shall be guaranteed; interference in the creative process and censorship in the field of creative activities shall be inadmissible; everyone has the right to take care of protecting cultural heritage.

242. According to the Law of Georgia “on Culture”, the right to participate in the cultural activity shall be an inalienable human right in Georgia. The citizens of Georgia shall be equal in cultural life, whatever their national or ethnic origin, religion, language, disability, or any other characteristic.

243. The competence of the state authorities in the sphere of culture is as follows: ensure the protection of human rights and freedoms in the sphere of culture; pursuant to the Law of Georgia on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, promote the creation of opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in cultural activities on an equal basis with others and promote the development of appropriate mechanisms for the use and development by persons with disabilities of their creative potential; access to cultural activities and cultural values.

244. During the reporting period, the policy of promotion of cultural self-expression of national minorities by the Ministry of Culture of Georgia has developed in several directions: advancement of minorities’ LEPL organisations (theatres and museums), protection and promotion of non-tangible and tangible cultural heritage, implementation of concrete measures with the support of various non-governmental organisations operating in the field of culture. For years, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia remained the agency defining

<sup>32</sup> Georgian version of the report is available at: [https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/\\_ონტეგრაცია/Civic\\_Integration-Final\\_Assessment\\_GEO1-24.06\\_\(1\).pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/_ონტეგრაცია/Civic_Integration-Final_Assessment_GEO1-24.06_(1).pdf)

<sup>33</sup> State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030, p.11, available at: [https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/\\_ონტეგრაცია/Concept\\_ENG21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/_ონტეგრაცია/Concept_ENG21.12.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> The Georgian version of the report is available at: [https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/\\_ონტეგრაცია/Concept\\_ENG21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/_ონტეგრაცია/Concept_ENG21.12.pdf)

unified state strategy and coordinating all legal entities engaged in culture. Significant changes have been made since 2007 in terms of the decentralisation of cultural sphere management. The majority of the state organisations/entities working in this sphere were handed over to the local self-governments for more effective management (local libraries, non-professional (amateur) theatres, clubs (Houses of Culture), museums and out-of-school arts and sports-educational establishments and creative teams. About 80 organisations remain under the Ministry (professional theatres, museums, academic ensembles, musical centres, art schools etc.), among them: LEPL David Baazov Museum of History of the Jews of Georgia and Georgian-Jewish Relations, LEPL Mirza Phatali Akhundov Museum of Azerbaijan Culture, LEPL Tbilisi Petros Adamyan Armenian Professional State Drama Theatre, LEPL Azerbaijan State Drama Theatre named after Heydar Aliyev and LEPL Alexander Griboyedov State Russian Drama Theatre, where creative activities take place in national minority languages. The Ministry subsidises them.

245. The budget of organisations under the Ministry is increasing. Notably, the budget increase resulted in more active creative activities.

246. From 2015 to 2020, state funding significantly increased in the direction of preservation/maintaining/promoting the ethnic minorities' culture. The main accent was made on financing and supporting cultural institutions of ethnic minorities. The practice of funding was as follows:

**Table 8. Funding of national minority cultural institutions**

Institution	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>LEPL David Baazov Museum of History of the Jews of Georgia and Georgian-Jewish Relations</b>	120,000	115,000	115,000	115,000	142,000
<b>LEPL Mirza Phatali Akhundov Museum of Azerbaijan Culture</b>	35,000	35,000	47,000	47,000	62,000
<b>LEPL Smirnov Museum</b>	65,000	60,000	59,000	60,000	
<b>LEPL Tbilisi Petros Adamyan Armenian Professional State Drama Theatre</b>	396,000	400,000	400,000	518,800	519,000
<b>LEPL Azerbaijan State Drama Theatre named after Heydar Aliyev</b>	220,881	215,000	175,000	182,000	183,000
<b>LEPL Alexander Griboyedov State Russian Drama Theatre</b>	1,089,000	1,900,000	1,900,000	1,240,000	1,250,000

247. According to the 2015-2020 evaluation report, it should be praised that the practice in the sphere of culture, having turned into a tradition, further continued, which implied allocation of budget resources to support culture of larger minority groups as well as large organisations, which is a positive fact. However, in light of the abovementioned, more attention should be paid to the promotion of cultural heritage of smaller ethnic minority groups like Assyrians, Udi and Avar people. Furthermore, it is significant to continue active work in this area.

248. Within the framework of various projects, the museums have published books and publications, hosted evenings, exhibitions, and movie screenings, and hosted prominent cultural figures, which served both the popularisation of the culture of ethnic minorities as well as promotion of intercultural dialogue and strengthening tolerance. An inventory of David Baazov and the Smirnov museums was carried out during the reporting period.

249. Notably, three LEPL theatres indicated in the list constantly held the performances and carried out creative activities. The annual number of performances and premieres of the theatres is high.

250. During the reporting period, special attention was paid to promoting the culture of smaller ethnic groups. In particular, to promote Vainakh culture and strengthen cultural dialogue, "Pankisoba", "Vainakh Cultural Week" were implemented in 2016-2020, with the engagement of the SMRCE; it included various programmes, such as concerts, public lectures, an exhibition of Kist folklore and art, presentation of books on Vainakh culture, presentation of videos on Pankisi Valley and Kist women in Pankisi, the introduction of Kist poets' works of Kist, the performance of children's theatre, sports activities etc. Performances were staged in the Ossetian language, translations were prepared, and publications were published.

251. Since 2019, in accordance with the "Cultural Strategy", the Ministry has introduced a new funding model of cultural sphere, which implies the promotion of cultural-creative activities in thematic and sectoral areas through competitions. The policy creates a transparent process, more possibilities for participation and equal conditions for each participant. Furthermore, competitions are held to promote the development of various cultural directions. On the other hand, the competitions facilitate the engagement of different social groups in cultural-creative activities. During the reporting period, the following initiatives were supported: promotion of traditional folk holidays and jubilee events of ethnic minorities; promotion of publications (catalogue/book-album) reflecting the identity of ethnic minorities in Georgia; promotion of publication of literary periodicals; Promotion of creative activities of professional theatres; development and stimulation of professional music art; promotion of exhibitions in Tbilisi and the regions; etc. During the evaluation of the candidates, the Ministry prioritised those projects that considered the needs of ethnic minority groups.

252. According to the general rule, when funding the projects through the competitions, the Ministry of Culture gives particular importance to the sustainability and qualitative and quantitative indicators in the applications; therefore, less experienced organisations are also funded through the competition. One of the most visible examples is funding through the competition of the newly established children's theatre studio "Bizi" in 2021. Within the project's scope, the studio "Bizi" translated into Azerbaijani language and then staged a play "Forest Comedy" of Vazha-Pshavela. The play with 12 child actors was staged in Gardabani and performed in Rustavi, Marneuli and Bolnisi. The Ministry allocated 14,000 GEL for this project.

253. In 2016-2020, the total budget of competitions held by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport was approximately 100,000 GEL, aiming to promote creative activities related to the identity of ethnic minorities. Therefore, six small organisations were funded within the scopes of competitions.

254. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly harmed cultural and creative spheres. However, the Ministry of Culture held competitions and, during 2020-2021, facilitated various events online; in particular, during 2020, six events were held in the villages inhabited by ethnic minorities, and from March 6 to September 25, 80 activities were carried out online.

255. Notably, within the scopes of the 2021-2022 Action Plan for Civic Equality and Integration, the State continued to facilitate events and organisations supporting the culture of national minorities. In 2021 the amount allocated for relevant theatres from the state budget was 1,952,000 GEL, and for museums- 204,000 GEL. The support to theatres and museums will continue steadily, which serves the preservation and popularisation of the cultural heritage of national minorities.

256. Local municipalities also supported the cultural rights of national minorities. From 2017 to 2021, the LSGs of Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti municipalities densely inhabited by national minorities allocated approximately half a million GEL for the cultural events and activities with regard to national minorities. The funding was spent on traditional and applied art education, celebrating national and religious festivities, rehabilitating cultural centres, financing youth initiatives to participate in various events at the regional and national level, funding theatre performances in national minority languages, etc.

257. For example, Bolnisi municipality supported celebrating the 178th anniversary of the children's writer Ghazaros Aghayan who was born in the village of Khachini, Bolnisi. In 2018, the Bolnisi Municipality also supported the joint project Armenian-Georgian Education Bridge: the public school of the village of Chibati, Future's School of Batumi and Mkhitar Sebastatsi School of Yerevan Armenia participated in the project. Within the project framework, week-long activities were conducted in Bolnisi.

258. Lagodekhi Municipality financed the celebration of the Kostaoba - Ossetian cultural event, and Gardabani Municipality supported the Assyrian celebration of Khab-Nisan. Dedpolistskaro Municipality began supporting celebrations related to the International Day of Roma.

**Table 9. Financing cultural events by LSGs**

Region	Kakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Samtskhe-Javakheti
<b>Cultural activities budget (GEL)</b>	110,978	290,079	57,488
<b>Total</b>			458 545,98

## Article 6 of the Framework Convention

### Tolerance and intercultural dialogue

**60. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to implement, monitor and evaluate on a regular basis the State Strategy on Civic Equality and Integration, with regard to tolerance and intercultural dialogue, not only in terms of inputs but also in terms of impact on middle or long-term outcomes. Such implementation monitoring and evaluation should be done in consultation with persons belonging to national minorities, but also with the active engagement of the majority. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to promote tolerance and intercultural dialogue in the education sector as well as interreligious dialogue within the society as a whole.**

259. As mentioned above, the 2015-2020 Strategy provided an annual reporting procedure for monitoring and evaluating the Strategy implementation. Furthermore, the final assessment of the Strategy assessed the impact of the implemented activities, including initiatives related to the development of the intercultural dialogue (task 4.3.1 of the Strategy) with respect to the beneficiaries and target groups. The final assessment stated that focusing on the development of intercultural dialogue and reinforcement of a tolerant environment should be strengthened through educational mechanisms.

260. The 2021-2030 Strategy (III. Situation Analysis) reflected the findings of the final assessment of the 2015-2020 Strategy, namely:

"Tolerance and respect for different cultures and backgrounds are of great importance in a multi-ethnic society permanently undergoing transformation. For establishing democratic values oriented to human rights and equality significant steps have been undertaken; however, the studies show that 37.36% of the Georgian citizens do not have positive attitudes toward ethnic diversity due to lack of relevant information. Consequently, awareness-raising is important both in the capital and in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.

For the purpose of creating equal and tolerant environment, it is necessary to support intercultural dialogue, bring closer ethnic groups living in Georgia and raise civic self-consciousness. Protection and support of the identities and distinctive character of ethnic minorities are an important component in the process of the implementation of the Civic Equality Strategy, since the values determining socio-cultural identities of different ethnic groups, the monuments of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, traditions, create the country's unique cultural diversity, and its promotion largely defines the strengthening of tolerant attitudes and mutual respect in our multi-ethnic society. For this purpose, the state provides financial support to the theatres, museums, cultural centres, implements such projects as: publishing albums and translations, organizing literary and cultural events, festivals "Diverse Georgia", "Multi-ethnic Art-Festival under One Sky – Intercultural Dialogue", "All Cultures are Different, but Equal" and many others, directed toward promotion and support of ethnic cultures.

For the purpose of protecting the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, the state undertakes inventory and rehabilitation activities and grants cultural heritage status to monuments. The state provides financial support to the museums, theatres, libraries, and cultural centres of ethnic minorities.

Nevertheless, to encourage intercultural dialogue, it is necessary to intensify activities and ensure joint participation of the representatives of various ethnicities."

261. Goal 9, "Supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue" of the 2021-2030 Strategy, responds to the impact assessment evaluation of intercultural dialogue. This goal has three objectives translated into specific activities (four activities under Objective 9.1, 10 activities - under Objective 9.2 and 5 activities - under Objective 9.3) in the 2021-2022 Action Plan. A robust monitoring mechanism based on impact, outcome and output indicators ensures that GOG can implement, monitor, and regularly evaluate the Strategy concerning tolerance and intercultural dialogue, not only in terms of inputs but also in terms of impact on middle or long-term outcomes.

262. Within the 2015-2020 Strategy framework, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports carried out dozens of large and small-scale projects to develop cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. In addition, within the scopes of the "Culture Promotion Programme" through competitions announced by the Ministry, various projects were funded, among them: publication of book-albums about the lives and works of public

figures of different ethnicities living in Georgia, arrangement of various exhibitions, concerts, jubilee events, and performances. The number of projects implemented and financed through competitions has been increased.

263. Among the funded projects was the "Diverse Georgia". It aimed at carrying out cultural-educational events to promote integration in the cultural life of ethnic minorities living in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities (Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti (Pankisi Gorge)), to raise awareness of youth, to raise the quality of education in arts and to develop creative skills. In 2016-2020, more than 200 activities were held annually (more than 20 000 beneficiaries).

264. Notably, the multi-ethnic art festival "Under One Sky" was held until 2019, which was established under the initiative of the SMRCE, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, the United Nations Association of Georgia and financial support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The festival was held twice a year in various cities of Georgia (Gori, Batumi, Akhaltsikhe, Rustavi, Telavi, Tbilisi, Marneuli, and Lagodekhi); in total, ten concerts were held from 2015 to 2019, with the participation of more than 2,000 young people. The festival is of great significance in developing intercultural dialogue; it contributed to the popularization of culture of ethnic minorities and further strengthening of a tolerant environment.

265. In addition to the SMRCE, various agencies (Administrations of the State Attorneys in the Regions, self-governing bodies, National Library of the Parliament of Georgia) actively participated in cultural events. To strengthen intercultural dialogue and facilitate the integration process, these agencies, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the SMRCE, carried out various projects to present and develop cultural diversity. Due to close cooperation with the partner organisations, up to 30 events were held in the National Library, including photo exhibitions, concerts, and presentation of publications.

266. In 2015-2019 within the framework of the week dedicated to the International Day of Tolerance, the SMRCE implemented various programmes: lectures/seminars with participation of students and schoolchildren; the photo and media competitions; video clips prepared within the scopes of project "Meet Diverse Georgia", aimed at introducing successful representatives of ethnic minorities living in Georgia.

267. In 2018 under the initiative and organisation of the SMRCE, the memorial of Pari-Khanum Sofieva, the first Muslim woman elected through democratic elections, was opened in Karajala village of Gardabani municipality.

#### Protection against hate crime and hate speech

**67. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to condemn systematically and in a timely manner all instances of intolerance, in particular in public discourse, to ensure that the existing legislation related to racial discrimination is effectively implemented, and to provide the necessary training to law enforcement and judicial authorities to ensure that its implementation is in line with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights with regard to freedom of expression.**

268. As mentioned in the previous report of Georgia, in 2014, the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and other significant legislative amendments were adopted. Namely, on May 4, 2017, the amendment to the Criminal Code of Georgia (further – CCG) was approved that introduced new aggravating factors for punishment in a new Article 53<sup>1</sup>. Racial discrimination and other bases of discrimination became aggravating factors for punishment under the mentioned Article. This amendment entered into force on June 1, 2017.

269. Another amendment to this Article dated November 30, 2018, defined: when imposing fixed-term imprisonment for a crime committed with the aforementioned aggravating factor, the term of a sentence shall exceed at least by one year the minimum term of punishment provided for the committed crime. According to the amendment, a judge does not have the discretion to define a sanction for committing a crime based on race, skin colour, ethnic or national origin. S/he is bound by the law to aggravate a punishment by at least one year when imposing fixed-term imprisonment. Furthermore, according to the 2017 and 2018 amendments to the CCG, committing intentional killing under aggravating circumstances (Article 109), intentional infliction of grave injury (Article 117), violence (Article 126), violation of human equality (Article 142), racial discrimination (Article 142<sup>1</sup>), torture (Article 144<sup>1</sup>), humiliation or inhuman treatment (Article 144<sup>3</sup>), disrespect to the deceased (Article 258) with racial, religious, national or ethnic intolerance entails increased sanction.

270. The National Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2020 (AP) (approved on April 17, 2018) specified measures that the state authorities would implement to prevent and fight against discrimination. The AP



included the following activities: more effective detection and criminal prosecution of discriminatory and hate crimes; raise public awareness and proactively inform the public of incidents of discrimination and hate crimes; eradicate discriminatory notes existing in legislation, etc.

271. Notably, the 2021-2030 Strategy highlights the importance of eliminating hate speech and hate crime. Its Goal 7, "Strengthening environment based on equality", calls on to improve access to the mechanisms of justice and law-enforcement, and quality legal assistance, improve the qualification of law-enforcement officers on crimes committed on the grounds of intolerance and discrimination, improve the conditions of victims/witnesses of such crimes through active involvement of the coordinator of the witness and victim in criminal and administrative cases where crime is committed on ethnic grounds. Furthermore, the Strategy strives to improve the knowledge of media representatives to diminish the hate crime in media discourse and encourage a tolerant environment.

272. On April 20, 2020, GOG Resolution #200 approved the Rules of Ethics and Code of Conduct at Public Institutions. The Code of Ethics prohibits hate speech and sexual harassment and specifies issues related to prohibition, identification, and prevention of harassment.

273. To prevent and respond to the use of hate speech by state officials/politicians, on February 22, 2019, the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Code of Ethics for the Members of the Parliament. Article 2 of the Code specifies the principle of prohibition of hate speech based on race, skin colour, sex, religion, or another basis. According to the Article 3 of the Code, Members of the Parliament, in their official capacity, are prohibited from behaving or making speeches and statements that diminish dignity, is offensive, sexist, discriminatory or otherwise use hate speech.

274. The Ethics Council was created to ensure the effective implementation of the Code. It reviews and monitors violations of provisions, inter alia, on the prohibition of hate speech. If a Member of the Parliament violates the Code, the Council has the power to issue a recommendation. To ensure transparency and accountability to the public, the Council shall prepare an annual report and publish it on the website of the Parliament.

275. In January 2018 Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality monitoring Department was created in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA). The Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department has a particular task to provide timely response and effective investigation of specific crimes, such as domestic violence; violence against women; offences committed on the grounds of discrimination; hate crime; trafficking of human beings; crimes committed by/towards minors. This Department's main objective is to introduce entirely new standards for human rights protection within the Ministry and beyond and address significant shortcomings in the human rights field identified over the years by relevant local and international organisations.

276. As mentioned in the Third Report of the Advisory Committee<sup>35</sup>, the mandate of the Human Rights Protection Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) also includes ensuring timely response to and effective investigation of crimes committed with discriminating and intolerance motive. In 2019, the effective work undertaken by the Department led to its enlargement and transformation into Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department.

277. On March 15, 2018, MIA approved Order #1/119 on Submitting information on notifications related to domestic violence, violence against women, crimes committed with discrimination and intolerance motive, and crimes against or committed by a juvenile. According to this Order, all territorial units of MIA must submit information to the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department concerning any case related to the mandate of the Department, including crimes committed with discrimination and intolerance motive. In 2019, the effective work undertaken by the Department led to its enlargement and transformation into Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department, ensuring high-level protection of human rights and improved quality of investigation.

278. The Department is now composed of around 40 employees. In comparison, initially, it started with 14 employees. It operates based on the following four divisions: Human Rights Protection Division, Tbilisi and

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<sup>35</sup> The Third Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Georgia adopted on March 7, 2019, p. 62

Regional Divisions of Investigation Quality Monitoring and the Division of Quality Analysis and Evaluation of Investigations. (Previously Department was composed of the head, deputy head and employees). To eliminate existing gaps and improve the quality of investigation, the Department provides investigators with relevant recommendations, drafts methodology for investigation, and monitors its implementation in practice.

279. The Department monitors the crimes committed with discrimination and intolerance motive from the beginning of the investigation via submitted notifications and electronic review of the criminal law cases. Besides, the Department created an email [adamianisuflebebi@mia.gov.ge](mailto:adamianisuflebebi@mia.gov.ge) and its Facebook page. The latter facilitates awareness-raising on available legal remedies and effective communication between the citizens and the Department. In addition to electronic communication, the representatives of the Department often meet the citizens to receive information concerning specific cases.

280. The Department developed a table for registration and analysis of relevant criteria of the discrimination crimes motivated by intolerance. As a result, the quality of response improved and the identification of discriminatory motives in such cases.

281. It is noteworthy that the Department prepared a recommendation for identification and effective investigations of the discrimination crimes motivated by intolerance. This recommendation is a helpful tool for investigators in identifying and investigating crimes committed based on discrimination. In 2021, the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department of the MIA initiated a recommendation on the effective involvement of persons with disabilities in the investigation phase. A recommendation on the effective participation of juveniles with disabilities in the investigation phase was also prepared.

282. With this Department, the MIA has started changing the attitudes of police officers toward "sensitive" groups and specific crimes. The Department develops recommendations, monitors the investigation process of the abovementioned crimes, recommends disciplinary sanctions, and cooperates with relevant agencies and the non-governmental organisations working in the field of human rights protection.

283. 1465 individuals have been prosecuted for crimes motivated by intolerance on the grounds of discrimination in 2017-2022. 1,388 persons, including ten legal and 1,378 natural persons, were granted a victim status for crimes motivated by intolerance on the grounds of discrimination in 2019-2021. These numbers break down into the following annual data:

### **2017**

In 2017, there were 44 defendants in total, in particular:

- Four individuals were charged with the crime motivated by sexual orientation.
- Four individuals were charged with the crime motivated by gender identity.
- Two individuals were charged with the crime motivated by religion.
- 25 individuals were charged with the crime motivated by gender.
- Nine individuals were charged for the crimes committed with other motives (presumably, gender identity – 6 individuals, sexual orientation – 1 person, religion - 2 individuals).

### **2018**

In 2018, there were 151 defendants in total, in particular:

- 15 individuals were charged with crimes motivated by sexual orientation.
- 12 individuals were charged with crimes motivated by gender identity.
- Five individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by race (including ethnicity and nationality).
- Two individuals were charged with crimes motivated by religion.
- 111 individuals were charged with crimes motivated by gender.
- Three individuals were charged with the crimes motivated by the political view.
- Two individuals were charged with crimes motivated by disability.
- One individual was charged for the crime motivated by another hate element – not enlisted in Article 53<sup>1</sup> of the CCG.

### **2019**

In 2019, there were 183 defendants in total, in particular:

- 119 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by gender.
- 19 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by sexual orientation.
- 13 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by religion.
- 12 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by gender identity.
- Three individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by disability.
- 12 individuals were charged for the crime motivated by racial discrimination (including nationality and ethnicity).
- One individual was charged with a crime motivated by gender and religion.
- One individual was charged with the crime motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity.
- One individual was charged with the crime motivated by political views.
- Two individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by other elements of discrimination – not enlisted in Article 53<sup>1</sup> of the CCG.

221 victims, including 217 natural persons and four legal persons.

## **2020**

In 2020, there were 253 defendants in total, in particular:

- 207 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by gender.
- 11 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by sexual orientation.
- 11 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by gender identity.
- Five individuals were charged with crimes motivated by disability.
- Four individuals were charged with crimes motivated by religion.
- Four individuals were charged with crimes motivated by other elements of discrimination – not enlisted in the Article 53<sup>1</sup> of the CCG.
- Six individuals were charged with crimes motivated by race (including nationality).
- Two individuals were charged with crimes motivated by age.
- One individual was charged with a crime motivated by political view.
- One individual was charged with a crime motivated by social affiliation.
- One individual was charged with a crime motivated by gender and race.
- 272 victims, including 268 natural persons and four legal persons.

## **2021**

In 2021, there were 834 defendants in total, in particular:

- 724 individuals were charged with crimes motivated by gender.
- 12 individuals were charged with crimes motivated by sexual orientation.
- 24 individuals were charged with crimes motivated by gender identity.
- Three individuals were charged with crimes motivated by religion.
- Seven individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by disability.
- Nine individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by race.
- Nine individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by political views.
- One individual was charged with the crime motivated by social affiliation.
- One individual was charged for the crime motivated by another view.
- Five individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by other elements of discrimination - not enlisted in the Article 53<sup>1</sup> of the CCG.
- 31 individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Two individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by gender and race.
- Two individuals were charged for the crimes motivated by gender and sexual orientation.
- Two individuals were charged with crimes motivated by gender and disability.
- Two individuals were charged with crimes motivated by gender and religion.
- 895 victims, including 893 natural persons and two legal persons.

284. Within the Council of Europe (CoE) project "Fight against discrimination, hate crimes, and hate speech in Georgia", work on improvement of data collection mechanism for racial discrimination cases has been ongoing since 2018. This initiative introduces a unified data collection mechanism by all law-enforcement bodies.

285. As mentioned above, on September 23, 2020, with the support of the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Office of the General Prosecutor, the Supreme Court, and the GeoStat signed a Memorandum on Cooperation to create a joint data system for crimes committed on the grounds of intolerance. Within the memorandum framework, to collect statistical data, the parties to the Memorandum defined a single definition of hate crime, relevant criteria, and accounting units for the data collection. This memorandum enables the collection and publication of improved statistical information for such categories of crimes. In 2022, for the first time, statistical information for the whole year of 2021 was published.<sup>36</sup> On December 23, 2014, Order #47 of the Minister of Internal Affairs on Prevention of Discrimination and Implementation of Effective Response to Discriminatory Crimes by the Divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was adopted. According to the Order, investigative bodies should specify the motive of a crime if the alleged motive was identified at the initial stage of the investigation. This information should be specified in the "crime plot" column of the commencement of investigation registration card (form #1). This measure will improve the collection of statistical data on crimes committed with a discrimination motive. The 2017-2021 Strategy and Action Plan on the Prosecutor's Office also prioritized the fight against crimes committed with a discrimination motive: develop unified approaches for the fight against crimes committed based on discrimination and hate crimes and specialization and training of prosecutors; raise the public awareness. In 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Prosecution Service of Georgia (PSG) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Within the framework of the MoU, a training programme, and materials on the topic of hate crimes tailored to the current challenges in Georgia were prepared. In cooperation with the OSCE Office, the representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Public Defender, and NGOs were also involved in the preparatory phase. As per the priority set by the PSG Strategy, training for trainers was conducted in 2017, a team of in-office trainers was trained, and a two-day specialized training programme was introduced.

286. In 2017, the team of trainers started implementing the specialized training and specialization of prosecutors and PSG investigators. In 2020, the specialized training programme was modified with the support of the Council of Europe (CoE) project on "Fighting discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech in Georgia", and the four-day specialized training programme was introduced accordingly. Together with the international and domestic legislation, the programme includes the psychological aspects of hate crimes. During the reporting period, raising awareness of law-enforcement staff on tolerance and prohibition of racial discrimination was a priority. In 2018, the guiding principles for investigating crimes committed based on the discrimination motive were developed; the guiding principles aim at supporting personnel to identify and duly prosecute relevant cases. A guideline for investigators was developed that specified instruction on the interview/examination of alleged victims, accused, and witnesses. The specialization of investigators was also launched. In 2017 the module on the prohibition of discrimination and gender equality was introduced to the special professional programme for district police officers. This module is also an integral part of a mandatory training course for career development. The Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia provides training courses on human rights, which cover important issues such as the prohibition of discrimination, gender equality and other basic human rights, which are guaranteed by international and national law and prescribed by the positive commitments of the state on human rights. Training programmes comprise human rights related topics such as:

- Prohibition of discrimination, essence, core international documents on direct and indirect discrimination, positive obligations of the state.
- Prohibition of discrimination and Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination.
- Prohibition of discrimination and various grounds of the crime (sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and other grounds).
- Definition of hate crime and related concepts, peculiarities of hate crime investigation.

**68. The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to pursue their efforts in efficiently combating hate crimes by systematically investigating in a timely manner all crimes committed with discriminatory intent. It also calls on the authorities to step up their efforts to more efficiently prosecute and sanction such crimes.**

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/680/diskriminatsiis-nishnit-sheutsqnaresblobis-motivit-chadenili-danashaulis-statistika>

287. It is noteworthy that essential issues of the training module on hate crime, developed with the support of the Council of Europe and the OSCE, were reflected in the human rights training materials of the MIA Academy. As a result of the abovementioned, the following number of the MIA representatives were trained:

**Table 10. MIA Academy- training related to hate crime**

Training	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Special Professional Training Programme for Neighbourhood Police	105	36	32		
Special Professional Training Programme for Detective Investigators	99	75			
Training Programme for the Representatives of the Special Tasks Department-	59				
Training-Retraining Course for Officers of Temporary Detention Isolators	36	104	46	20	
Special Professional Training Programme for the Border Police of the Land Border Defence Department	28	75	88	53	17
Training Programme for Border Control Officers	12				
Special Professional Training Programme for Patrol Police	70	62	50		
Special Professional Training Programme for the Basic Training of the Infantry Patrol Police Officers for Tourist Safety of the Patrol Police Department		123			
Special Basic Training Programme for BCP Officers		73	30	18	93
Training Course for the Community Officers of the Criminal Police Department Regional Bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia		66	61		
Special Promotional Training Programme for the Employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia		68	95	53	
Special Basic Training Programme for Police			256	175	222
Special Basic Training Programme for Investigators			19		
Special Training Promotion Course for the Central Criminal Police Department and the regional bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia			97		
Special Promotional Training Programme for the Patrol Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia			34		
Special Professional Re-Training Programme for obtaining the position of Patrol Police inspector within the Ministry of Internal Affairs			138		
Qualification Raising Course for Investigators			108	36	
Qualification Raising Course for BCP Officers				32	
Special Electronic Training Programme to Earn the Rank of Police Junior Lieutenant and Special Training Programme for Conscripts					1325
Special Electronic Training Programme for Recruits to be hired and hired within Police					180
<b>Sum</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>682</b>	<b>1054</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>1837</b>
<b>Total</b>					<b>4,369</b>

288. Since 2018, managerial and lower-level employees have attended the training on preventive measures for crimes committed based on the discrimination motive and hate speech. Investigators attended the 3-day training course on discriminatory crimes (developed in 2018), covering various psychological and legal issues, such as a psychological portrait of minorities, forms of discrimination, terms, and indicators defining discrimination motive. Immediate response and communication with alleged victims, work with victims and witnesses, investigation measures to identify discrimination motive, available state services for victims, cooperation with NGOs, and prevention.

289. On February 19, 2019, MIA and the OSCE concluded a memorandum of understanding (Further - the MOU). According to the MOU, Training Against Hate Crime for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE) was introduced in MIA. The TAHCLE was developed with ODHIR, MIA, the Prosecutor's Office, the PDO, and NGOs. Within the framework of cooperation, experts invited by the OSCE conducted training of trainers for 30 MIA employees.<sup>37</sup>

290. In cooperation with the CoE, the training of trainers on the fight against discrimination, hate crimes, and hate speech in Georgia was conducted for the MIA personnel responsible for teaching cascade training courses for other staff.

291. The training module covered the following issues:

- concepts of discrimination and intolerance
- the definition of discrimination crimes committed with intolerance motivation
- interpretation of general standards set by the European Court of Human Rights
- international practice on crimes based on discrimination (including racial and nationality basis)

292. During 2020-2021, based on combining training materials developed by the OSCE ODIHR and the Council of Europe, cascade trainings on effective identification and investigation of hate crimes were launched for the MIA staff. Psychologists, as well as the representatives of local non-governmental organisations, were involved in the training process. As part of a series of cascading trainings, 23 training activities were conducted (including four activities in online format), and more than 400 MIA employees, staff members, and employees holding managerial positions of the territorial and structural units attended the training.

293. In 2020, based on materials provided by the experts of the Council of Europe and about the discrimination, hate speech and intolerance on the grounds of discrimination (including on the bases of religion), a cascading training module and curriculum have been developed for the investigators. Based on the mentioned curriculum, five trainings were conducted, and representatives of various territorial bodies of the MIA were trained.

294. In addition, in 2021, the staff of the Patrol Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs received training on "Hate Motivated Incidents and the Specifics of Working with a Witness / Victim". During the training, 125 employees of the Patrol Police Department received information on hate speech, hate-related incidents and related concepts, signs of discrimination, common stereotypes, specifics related to the communication with the witnesses/victims of such crimes and other important issues.

295. In 2022, a training of trainers on the rights and communication standards concerning persons with disabilities was organized for the representatives of the MIA by the UNDP and the OHCHR. From March 2022 until present, about 500 patrol police officers attended the training, and the process continues.

296. In addition, at the initiative of the Human Rights Protection and Quality of Investigation Monitoring Department of the MIA, a recommendation on effective involvement of persons with disabilities during the investigation and effective participation of juveniles with disabilities in the investigative phase were prepared. The abovementioned recommendations were sent for introduction to the relevant units of the MIA. In accordance with the Action Plan for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the System of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, trainings on the rights of persons with disabilities and the standard of communication with them were conducted on February 25-28, 2022, which involved providing information on the mentioned recommendations. Recommendations on effective involvement of minors with disabilities. As a result, 40 employees holding managerial positions at patrol police and territorial police bodies of the MIA participated in the training course.

297. In 2017, a 2-day specialized training programme for prosecutors and the PSG investigators was introduced in cooperation with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. In line with the identified needs, with the support of the CoE, the programme was improved, and the 4-day specialized training regarding the fight against hate crimes was developed. In 2017-2021, 14 activities were conducted additionally, with 231 PSG employees (prosecutors, investigators, managers, witness and victim coordinators, and interns).

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<sup>37</sup> Notably, in 2016 the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) concluded a memorandum of understanding concerning the implementation of Training Against Hate Crime for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE).

298. In 2017, 13 training courses on combating discrimination were conducted for 257 representatives of all territorial bodies and structural units, including prosecutors and investigators. All prosecutors and investigators of the Prosecutor's Office shall attend this training. In 2017-2021 the cascade trainings were carried out for prosecutors and the PSG investigators. During the reporting period, 18 trainings were held, and 374 prosecutors and the PSG investigators were re-trained.

299. In 2017, the State Agency for Religious Issues conducted training courses for the MIA personnel concerning the following issues: secularism and religious neutrality, freedom of religion under national and international law, the prohibition of discrimination and the specific nature of the investigation of crimes committed with religious motive, review of ECHR decisions, positive and negative obligations of the state. More than 200 employees of MIA attended ten training courses.

300. The e-course "Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Georgia" is ongoing in the MIA Academy. The distance learning course was piloted at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. As of March 2022, 300 people attended the course.

301. The e-course "Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Georgia" was prepared by the MIA Academy of Georgia with the involvement of academy instructors and experts in the specific field. The course is designed for the police units operating in regions densely populated by ethnic and religious minorities: Personnel of the territorial bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia; Personnel of the subunits of the Patrol Police Department; Personnel of the subordinate agency- Border Police of Georgia. Objectives of the training course include:

- Raising awareness about the culture, religion, customs, and history of ethnic minorities living in Georgia.
- Providing information on human rights and freedoms enshrined in legal acts.
- Providing information on stereotypes and superstitions, the effects of negative influences of stereotypes and ways to overcome them.
- Raising awareness on the role of the police in a diverse society, effective practices in establishing communication and gaining trust with ethnic and religious minorities.

302. In 2018-2019, within the framework of the EU funded project, in cooperation with the NGOs and PDO, the following training courses were conducted: discrimination based on gender and sex (for 21 prosecutors and investigators of the Prosecutor's Office) and hate crimes and hate speech (for TV, radio and social media journalists, 22 speaker prosecutors and the representatives of the Public and Media Relations Department of the Office of the Prosecutor General). Furthermore, one training course on the freedom of religion and international standards was conducted jointly for the representatives of the Prosecutor's Office and the MIA.

303. In 2017-2021, specialization was conducted in the Prosecution Service of Georgia (PSG). Selected prosecutors/PSG investigators attended intensive courses and worked on hate crimes. 76 prosecutors, 36 managers, and four PSG investigators are specialized. It is noteworthy that specialized prosecutors conduct procedural supervision over relevant criminal cases.

304. A training module on the prohibition of all forms of discrimination was developed. In 2018, four training courses were conducted with this module for 102 PSG representatives (prosecutors, investigators, and middle-level managers), and in 2019, 38 employees attended the same course.

305. In 2019-2021, in cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE), the representatives of the MIA, the Prosecution Service, and the judiciary participated in the practical pilot course of HELP, "combatting hate crimes: effective investigation, prosecution and adjudication of hate crimes".

306. After entry into force of the investigation mandate of the Special Investigation Service of Georgia (SIS) on November 1, 2019, the training on the effective investigation of hate crimes for 20 employees of the Investigation Department was held.

**Table 11. Training of law enforcement officers on anti-discrimination topics (number of participants)**

The topic of the training	MIA	Prosecutor's Office	Corrections System
<b>Human Rights</b>	8,597	4,051	382

<b>Non-discrimination (Sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and other grounds)</b>	4,368	670	219
<b>Gender equality</b>	2,963	628	44
<b>Freedom of religion</b>	221	414	44
<b>Fight against discrimination/ rights of sexual minorities/ freedom of religion</b>	4,368	519	-
<b>Hate crime</b>	8,597	405	67
<b>Domestic violence and violence against women</b>	13,219	721	227

307. Professional training programme for judges includes education on international and European standards on human rights. In 2017-2021, the High School of Justice conducted trainings for over 500 judges and over 150 court clerks.<sup>38</sup> The training curriculum specifically targeted adjudication standards for discrimination and hate speech cases, namely: prohibition of discrimination, freedom of expression, ECHR standards, effective review of cases related to hate crime, sexual harassment, and international and European standards on human rights.

308. Segregate data for 2021 on hate crime, broken down according to bias motivations, defendants' and victims' sex, age, territorial distribution, social relationships, etc., is available in the Joint Report of Data on Crimes Committed on the grounds of Intolerance with Discrimination Basis.<sup>39</sup>

309. Alongside the improvement of the investigation quality, MIA focuses on investigation oriented on the interests of victims. Therefore, on February 6, 2019, the Minister of Internal Affairs adopted Order #1/43 on the creation of the Service of Coordinator of a Witness and Victim Protection.

310. The objective of the Service is to facilitate the participation of victims/witnesses in the criminal proceedings, handle stress caused by the crime, prevent their revictimization, and provide information to them during the investigation stage.

311. The priority of coordinators is victims and witnesses of discriminatory crimes, domestic violence, domestic crime, trafficking, sexual abuse, and juveniles and persons with disabilities.

312. The witness and victim protection coordinator is engaged and communicates with an alleged victim or witness based on the investigator's decision. The purpose is to assess and stabilize a person's emotional status, identify his/her needs, and facilitate access to services.

313. Coordinator of a Witness and Victim Protection explains the importance of participation in the proceedings to witnesses and victims. S/he does not interfere in the investigation and does not give instructions to investigators.

314. To support a witness or a victim emotionally, the coordinator of a witness and victim Protection is entitled to:

- a) Communicate with a victim/witness before or at the stage of the interview, during a break.
- b) during the investigation, be present at an investigative action and a procedural action involving a witness and a victim based on his/her consent.
- c) during the court hearing, be present at the interrogation of a witness and a victim in the courtroom, and during the examination of evidence involving them, based on his/her consent.

315. Service of Coordinator of a Witness and Victim Protection was piloted in Tbilisi and Kvemo Kartli Police Departments and Patrol Police Department. 6 coordinators, selected through a competitive process, work at different locations, and visit various police units to provide relevant services if needed.

316. The Service of Coordinator of a Witness and Victim Protection was enlarged in 2020 and covered all police units of the MIA.

<sup>38</sup> The numbers are not statistically processed, meaning that the total numbers may include the same judge and clerk more than once if s/he attended more than one training course.

<sup>39</sup> See at: <https://www.geostat.ge/media/43559/Hate-crimes-2021.pdf>



317. Moreover, in 2021, MIA prepared the package of legislative changes. As a result, on June 22, 2021, amendments were made to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia and the Juvenile Justice Code of Georgia. According to the pre-amended version of these legislations, the involvement of the witness and victim coordinator in the criminal case was possible only by the prosecutor's decision. Consequently, the mandate of the Service expanded, and the coordinator's involvement in the criminal process became possible by the decision of both the prosecutor and the investigator. In addition, the law regulates the powers of the Witness and Victim Coordinator service of the PSG and the powers of the Witness and Victim Coordinator service of the MIA.

318. The Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department is responsible for the overall oversight of the Service of Coordinator of a Witness and Victim Protection.

#### Effective investigation of police abuse

**72. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that investigations of all cases of alleged abuse by law enforcement units concerning persons belonging to national minorities are conducted in an effective and independent manner and respect the applicable European standards. It calls on the authorities to effectively set up the institution of the State Inspector in the delays foreseen by the law on the State Inspector Services itself and to ensure it has the relevant resources to fulfil its mandate.**

319. The General Inspection is in charge of internal oversight within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It is responsible for revealing human rights violations and other wrongdoings by police and adequate response. Within the General Inspection, for individual complaints against law enforcement officers, there is a hotline – 126 available. General Inspection actively cooperates with the civilians, different governmental and non-governmental organisations, and the Public Defender's Office.

320. Segregated data for 2021 on hate crime, broken down according to bias motivations, defendants' and victims' sex, age, territorial distribution, social relationships, etc., is available in the Joint Report of Data on Crimes Committed on the Grounds of Intolerance with Discrimination Basis.<sup>40</sup>

321. Furthermore, an independent investigation mechanism had existed in Georgia since 2018, when the Office of State Inspector was created as a result of institutional reform of the Personal Data Protection Inspector's Office. The mandate of the newly established organisation was an impartial and effective investigation of the following crimes: the crimes provided for by Articles 144<sup>1</sup>–144<sup>3</sup>, Article 332(3)(b) and (c), Article 333(3)(b) and (c), Article 335 and/or Article 378(2) of the Criminal Code of Georgia if the representatives of law enforcement body commit them, officers or persons equal to them; other crimes committed by the representatives of a law enforcement body, officers or persons equal to them which caused the death of a person and when committing it, this person was in the temporary detention isolator or penitentiary institution or in any other place, where he/she was forbidden to leave the place against his/her will by a representative of a law enforcement body, an officer or a person equal to him/her, and/or this person was otherwise under the effective control of the state.

322. The State Inspector was granted independence in exercising his/her powers and shall not be subordinate to any official or body. Any type of influence on the servants and investigators of the State Inspector Service, or illegal interference with the activities of the State Inspector, was prohibited and punishable by law.

323. In December 2021, the Parliament of Georgia initiated amendments to the legislation to divide the Office of State Inspector and create two independent services – the Special Investigation Service and Personal Data Protection Service. The amendments entered into force on March 1, 2022. Notably, the investigation mandate of the Special Investigation Service covers the aforementioned crimes, as well as newly added crimes, namely: the crimes provided for by Articles 108, 109, 111, 113-118, 120-124, 126, 126<sup>1</sup>, 137-139, 143-144 and 150–151<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Code of Georgia if they are committed by the representatives of a law enforcement body (except a prosecutor); the crimes provided for by Articles 153-159, 162-163 and 164<sup>4</sup> of the Criminal Code of Georgia.

324. Paragraph 64 of the Third Opinion referred to the killing in the street of Tbilisi, in September 2018, of a human rights defender with a national minority background. The Advisory Committee noted that no court judgment had been taken in this case, and it would continue to monitor it with great attention. Concerning this case, please consider the following information: The investigation found that on September 30, 2018, in the

<sup>40</sup> See at: <https://www.geostat.ge/media/43559/Hate-crimes-2021.pdf>

vicinity of Alexander Dumas Street in Tbilisi, Giorgi Sokhadze, Avtandil Kandelakishvili, and Vitali Sapharov picked up a quarrel when Giorgi Sokhadze and Avtandil Kandelakishvili learnt that Vitali Sapharov was Jewish and defender of national and ethnic minority members. As a result of the above mentioned, they got deeply irritated, and Avtandil Kandelakishvili stabbed Vitali Sapharov several times in different parts of the body with a knife, intending to kill him due to the hate arising on the grounds of national origin. When Vitali Sapharov tried to escape, Giorgi Sokhadze grabbed him from behind to intentionally kill him and started severely beating him with brass knuckles. At the same time, Avtandil Kandelakishvili continued stabbing Vitali Sapharov with a knife.

325. Vitali Sapharov died before he was hospitalized due to the received injuries. The PSG charged two individuals, Giorgi Sokhadze and Avtandil Kandelakishvili, with premeditated murder under aggravating circumstances due to national intolerance committed by a group. The said crime is punishable under Article 109.2(d) and (e) of the Criminal Code of Georgia (CCG).

326. By the Judgment of Tbilisi City Court, both defendants were found guilty of premeditated murder under aggravating circumstances, committed by a group, a crime punishable under Article 109.2.e of the CCG, and sentenced each of them to imprisonment for a term of 15 years.

327. The Court found that evidence presented by the prosecution was not sufficient to establish the motive of national intolerance, as prescribed under Article 109.2.d of the CCG. The PSG appealed the judgement and suggested recognizing the motive of national intolerance and assigning the punishment close to the maximum term of imprisonment prescribed by Article 109.2 (d) and (e) of the CCG. Currently, the case is pending appeal at the Tbilisi Court of Appeals.

328. The Public Defender also submitted an amicus curiae in the appeals court, emphasizing the standards for identifying the motive (<https://rb.gy/8a1m3g>).

## Article 7 of the Framework Convention

### Prohibition of political parties at regional level

#### 75. The Advisory Committee recommends that the authorities consider reviewing Article 23.3 of the Constitution of Georgia and to consider less intrusive measures to the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish political parties advancing their citizens' rights.

329. Article 23 of the Constitution of Georgia defines two topics: on the one side, the Article prohibits the establishment and activity of a political party that aims to overthrow or forcibly change the constitutional order of Georgia, infringe on the independence, or violate the territorial integrity of the country, or that propagates war or violence or incites national, ethnic, provincial, religious, or social strife. This Constitutional provision shares the experience of the European constitutions and represents a characteristic of defence-oriented democracies.

330. The second Constitutional indictment is the prohibition of establishing a political party on a territorial principle. The 2017 amendments to the Constitution introduced this provision; however, the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens included a similar provision since 1997. This provision's legitimate goal is to neutralise separatist threats that should be evaluated through a national prism and context.

331. There is no evidence that provisions of Article 23.3 of the Constitution of Georgia hinder the national minorities from creating their political party and defining its activity directions independently. Even more so, the legislation of Georgia safeguards the freedom of political parties and provides for the following guarantees: (a) Public authorities and officials may not interfere with a party's activities, except for the cases provided for by law. (b) Any citizen of Georgia shall have the constitutional right to create a party and participate in its activities according to the Constitution of Georgia. Membership of a party may not be restricted based on race, colour, language, sex, religion, national, ethnic, or social belonging, origin, property or birth status, or place of residence. (c) A party may establish structural units that can carry out its activities on the territory of the whole country or within the territory of a specific administrative unit.

## Article 8 of the Framework Convention

### Right to manifest one's religion and establish institutions, organisations and associations

**85. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities enjoy their right to manifest their religion or belief as well as their right to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations.**

332. See response above.

**86. The Advisory Committee calls upon the authorities to review the relevant legislative provisions and administrative practice in accordance with the decisions of the Constitutional Court of 3 July 2018.**

333. See response above.

**87. The Advisory Committee invites the authorities to take further steps to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities and practising minority religions have adequate access to places of worship. Decisions on the building or allocation of new places of worship should be taken in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner, in close consultation with representatives of the groups concerned.**

334. See response above.

**88. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that the process of restitution of property to religious communities is carried out in a non-discriminatory manner and to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities, and practising minority religions, are not at a disadvantage.**

335. See response above.

**89. The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to systematically monitor cases of proselytism in schools and to ensure that students belonging to national minorities benefit from the provisions of Article 13 of the Law on General Education.**

336. See response above.

#### **Article 9 of the Framework Convention**

##### **Access to printed and broadcast media in minority languages and representation of national minorities in the media**

**97. The Advisory Committee calls on the Georgia Public Broadcaster to pursue the efforts undertaken to provide persons belonging to national minorities with access to programmes and information in minority languages and to continuously monitor and assess this project on a regular basis.**

337. The 2015-2020 Strategy highlighted the importance of media in facilitating the engagement of national minorities in the political and social life of the country. The Strategy called on media actors to create content concerning national minorities' popularization of various national groups to facilitate tolerance and cultural pluralism.

338. The role of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) is crucial while ensuring access to information and media as there is no available legal mechanism to ensure that private media TV stations proactively facilitate awareness-raising on national minorities and access to information in their native language.

339. The Law of Georgia on Broadcasting obliges the Public Broadcaster to "reflect ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, age and gender diversity of the society within programmes" (Article 16.1h) and "broadcast a number of programmes in certain proportions prepared in the languages of minorities, about minority groups and programmes prepared by minorities". (Article 16.1.l). According to the Article 33.1<sup>1</sup> of the Law, the Public Broadcaster shall create one or more regular programme products in at least four languages annually, including in the Abkhazian and Ossetian languages. Community broadcasting shall cover the opinions of minorities living within the respective service area (the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, Article 46.1.c).

340. To support access of ethnic minorities to media, in 2017, the Public Broadcaster developed a media strategy to provide ethnic minorities with information in the languages they understand and promote the culture and traditions of ethnic minorities among the Georgian-speaking population stressing the significance of their role and engagement.

341. Notably, the vision of the GPB is in line with its statutory obligations and states that the GPB pays particular attention to the diversity of Georgia, unites people, and strives to improve understanding amongst

them. The GPB prioritized engagement of various groups of diverse Georgia, including national and religious minorities, in the preparation of the GPB shows.<sup>41</sup>

342. Since 2017, the Georgian Public Broadcaster has carried out the “Diverse Georgia” project. The project aims to raise awareness of representatives of ethnic minorities, raise awareness of citizens, promote a dialogue of diverse cultures, and facilitate the integration process. During the reporting period, materials were prepared in various languages within the project’s scope regarding the ethnic minorities living in Georgia.

343. In 2021 The Georgian Public Broadcaster signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the regional TV channels (ATV12, Parvana TV, Marneuli TV) in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities; it implies the provision of regional televisions with the news programmes in minority languages as well as other media programmes (upon request) prepared by the Public Broadcaster.

344. Since 2016, live broadcasting of news program with simultaneous translation in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages through regional TV channels is also operational on a daily basis, which is a step forward in improving the provision of information to ethnic minorities. The initiative is implemented within the project’s scope and supported by the Embassy of the US.<sup>42</sup> 5-minutes news collages in minority languages had been broadcasted in (non-prime) time, therefore since 2017 with the purpose of improving access of ethnic minorities to information, a special platform was created where the information prepared in minority languages was aired.

345. In the beginning of 2018, the format of broadcasting news in minority languages was changed. Within the framework of the project “Diverse Georgia,” Azerbaijani and Armenian-language internet televisions started broadcasting – Birinci Kanal (First Channel) and Առաջին Ալիք (First Channel). Both channels aired a collage news programme once every hour, and a conclusive “Moambe” was broadcasted at 7 pm, every day except Sunday. From the second quarter of 2020, the format was changed again, and currently, 15-minute “Moambe” which is prepared by ethnic minority representatives is broadcasted at 12, 3, 6 and 8 pm. At the same time, the 21-hour edition of “Moambe” is aired at 9 pm with simultaneous translation in Armenian and Azeri languages.

346. In 2018, Azerbaijani and Armenian-language internet televisions launched the “Weekly Reporting” project. Within the program’s framework, journalists of “Diverse Georgia” prepared topics on successful people and current events. The Weekly Reporting is aired on internet channels every Sunday at 8 pm. Furthermore, the chronometry of the programme is 10 minutes. The Weekly Reporting is aired in live mode on 1TV.ge and the Facebook page.

347. Armenian internet television Առաջին Ալիք (First Channel) launched a weekly program, “Shabat Ereko” (Saturday Evening). The chronometry of the cultural-educational programme is 15 minutes. The programme is aired at 8 pm every Saturday on the webpage 1Tv.ge and the Facebook page.

348. Birinci Kanal launched the project “ƏNƏNƏÇƏLƏNG” (“Bouquet of Tradition), which is aired every Tuesday at 8 pm. The programme speaks about the traditions and everyday life of ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Georgia. The Azerbaijani-language editorial staff launched the programme for children, “Colourful World” (Rəngli Dünya), broadcasted every Thursday at 8 pm. The chronometry of the programme is 20 minutes. Ethnic Azeris living in Georgia participate in the program.

349. Both channels mentioned above started the project “Position” (MÖVQE and Դիրքորոշում) which are aired at 8 pm every Friday. During the program, the Azerbaijani and Armenian populations are interviewed about significant events in Georgia during the week.

350. From April 2019 Armenian and Azerbaijani versions of topics within the programme “New Week” are published on the webpage. The “Diverse Georgia” staff also started to disseminate news in the Azerbaijani language via the WhatsApp application, which creates the opportunity to receive the information daily and timely.<sup>43</sup>

351. According to the 2019 report, the audience of the First Channel has increased. In 2020 by the order of the GPB, the company “Sonar” winner in the bidding, conducted the survey of TV viewers in the regions of Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti densely populated by ethnic minorities. The survey revealed that 50.5% of persons interviewed in Samtskhe-Javakheti region and 37% of those interviewed in Kvemo Kartli region are

<sup>41</sup> <https://1tv.ge/strategy/>

<sup>42</sup> First Channel of Georgia, report -2019, <https://bit.ly/33FxoTo>

<sup>43</sup> First Channel of Georgia, report -2019, <https://bit.ly/33FxoTo>

the viewers of the First Channel of the Public Broadcaster. 67% of TV viewers in Kvemo Kartli and 57% of TV viewers in Samtskhe-Javakheti noted that they use social networks for entertainment and educational purposes. (More than 60 % of the interviewed people use Facebook).<sup>44</sup>

352. From September 2017, the web portal – [www.1tv.ge](http://www.1tv.ge) was launched in seven languages (Georgian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, English and Russian). The information on the webpage about events in Georgia and abroad is updated in all seven languages. The quarterly reports of the First Channel of Georgia provide information about the total number of online users (webpage and YouTube channel); however, there is no information about statistics of visitors of non-Georgian online pages.<sup>45</sup>

353. Besides the multilingual webpage, there is a page on the social network in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

354. “Our Georgian Language” (“Chveni Kartuli Ena”) is a project of First Channel of Georgia, implemented by the team of “Diverse Georgia” which aims at the promotion of the Georgian language in the municipalities populated by ethnic minorities. The target group of the project are the schoolchildren of non-Georgian schools. Within the program an Olympiad in the Georgian language was held for the seventh graders of the Azerbaijani and Armenian schools. To prevent the spread of the new Coronavirus, the Olympiad was held online; forty-four seventh graders participated in the final stage.<sup>46</sup>

355. The project prepared by the Public Broadcaster - “Tele-school” can be assessed as a positive step amid the new Coronavirus.<sup>47</sup> As a result of the pandemic, the general education schools moved to online teaching in March 2020. Since part of the schools could not continue teaching online, to ensure the maximum accessibility of distance learning, the Ministry of Education and First Channel prepared the project “Tele-school”. The Ministry developed a syllabus, which covered the subjects approved by the national curriculum by grades. From March 30, “Second Channel” was changed as the platform – “First Channel – Tele-school” and started the TV classes for schoolchildren in the relevant language. At the initial stage, the daily tele lessons of Georgian as a second language,<sup>48</sup> also the lessons in Azerbaijani<sup>49</sup> and Armenian<sup>50</sup> languages and on various subjects in Armenian language have been conducted.<sup>51</sup>

**98. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities, given the digital strategy implemented by the Public Broadcaster, to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities have access to the Internet, in particular in remote areas, and to report publicly on Internet coverage in Georgia.**

356. The State launched the Programme on Broadband Infrastructure Development in Georgia. Its objective is to increase access to affordable high-speed internet throughout the whole Georgia. The development of the fibre-optic backbone infrastructure will help private operators to build retail networks and to getting the internet to the end users. As a result, the population will have opportunity to access such programmes and services as: e-Health, e-Education, e-Governance, e-Commerce, and other modern-day services, in the settlements where such services did not exist before. MOESD established non-profit entity OpenNet responsible for the implementation of the programme.<sup>52</sup>

357. In 2020, the GOG approved the National Broadband Network Development Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025.<sup>53</sup> Its target indicators include to provide most of the population with high-speed, high-quality internet access by 2025. The strategy also aims at upgrading knowledge and skills, leading to employment growth.

<sup>44</sup> <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/document/survey-of-tv-viewers-of-kvemo-kartli-and-samtskhe-javakheti-regions-densely-populated-with-ethnic-minorities/>

<sup>45</sup> First Channel of Georgia, report of the second quarter - 2020, <https://bit.ly/3hGCPGW>

<sup>46</sup> First Channel, report of the second quarter - 2020, <https://bit.ly/3hGCPGW>

<sup>47</sup> Tele-school address: <https://bit.ly/33AgJ3K>

<sup>48</sup> Video lessons available at: <https://bit.ly/3hBcPwp>

<sup>49</sup> Video lessons available at: <https://bit.ly/2HefXSJ>

<sup>50</sup> Video lessons are available at: <https://bit.ly/32GIUQg>

<sup>51</sup> First Channel, report of the second quarter - 2020, <https://bit.ly/3hGCPGW>

<sup>52</sup> More information on the programme is available at: <https://opennet.ge/eng>

<sup>53</sup> Georgian version of the strategy is available at: [https://www.gov.ge/files/545\\_74851\\_576141\\_60.pdf](https://www.gov.ge/files/545_74851_576141_60.pdf)

358. In order to implement the main directions of the Georgian National Broadband Network Development Strategy 2020 - 2025, the “Log-in Georgia” project was launched in cooperation with the World Bank. On August 31, 2020, an agreement was signed with the World Bank to increase high-speed Internet access throughout the country. The project "Log-in Georgia" consists of three components: 1. Increased broadband internet access; 2. Promoting the use of digital services related to high-speed Internet 3. Supporting the implementation of the project. By increasing the coverage of villages with high-speed internet, as well as through training and capacity building programmes across the country, the project will facilitate the use of digital services. The project will promote digital financial services and e-commerce, as well as government e-services. In addition, the project will support the development of distance learning and telemedicine. Furthermore, the project envisages improving policies and regulatory frameworks to facilitate access to broadband services so that telecom operators can provide high-quality Internet service to residents at a low cost. At the same time, special activities will be implemented in the target settlements to promote the use of the Internet and digital services by women, ethnic and social minorities, and people with disabilities.<sup>54</sup>

359. After the implementation of the State programme on Broadband fibre-optic Infrastructure Development population living in the regions of Georgia will benefit from high-speed internet, which will further increase the involvement of citizens in country's socio-economic life.

360. The State Programme on Broadband Infrastructure Development was not implemented in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities in 2017-2021. Under the state programme, building broadband infrastructure is planned in these regions in the coming years. Even though number of internet subscribers in the regions densely populated by national minorities increased during the reporting period, access to internet is still low: in Kakheti region, 19,3% of the population have access to internet, in Samtskhe- Javakheti region – 25,4% and Kvemo Kartli region – 21,3%. The list of internet providers is available in Annex 1.

**Table 12. Access to Internet in Kakheti, Samtskhe- Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions (number of residents)**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Kakheti</b>	<b>36363</b>	<b>48641</b>	<b>55444</b>	<b>60545</b>	<b>61752</b>
<b>Fibre</b>	25 697	32 403	43 501	48 996	53 705
<b>LTE</b>		3 504	3 030	2 386	1 902
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	5 742	10 254	7 677	8 281	5 475
<b>xDSL</b>	4 924	2 480	1 236	882	670
<b>Samtskhe Javakheti</b>	<b>23298</b>	<b>30545</b>	<b>35277</b>	<b>40023</b>	<b>40802</b>
<b>Fibre</b>	5 894	13 184	19 901	26 503	27 519
<b>LTE</b>		1 662	1 222	669	504
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	9 684	11 053	11 954	11 928	12 078
<b>xDSL</b>	7 720	4 646	2 200	923	701
<b>Kvemo Kartli</b>	<b>60877</b>	<b>73267</b>	<b>84544</b>	<b>87365</b>	<b>90168</b>
<b>Fibre</b>	46 029	54 093	66 684	69 939	74 666
<b>LTE</b>		2 384	1 883	1 130	798
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	10 605	14 370	14 510	15 709	14 277
<b>xDSL</b>	4 243	2 420	1 467	587	427
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>120538</b>	<b>152453</b>	<b>175265</b>	<b>187933</b>	<b>192722</b>

361. The LEPL Innovations and Technology Agency is implementing the programme “Broadband for Development” (BfD), the main purpose of which is to increase internet access in the regions of Georgia. The main objective of the BfD programme was to increase the use of broadband internet services and advanced information technology by eligible Households (HHs) and eligible SMEs, with a focus on rural areas, inter alia, by providing the BfD subsidies and related training. Training for HHs focused on basic digital literacy and for SMEs focused on engaging in electronic business, including e-commerce, social network, digital marketing, and e-services are conducted. In 2018-2021, LEPL Innovations and Technology Agency provided 130 vouchers (each of GEL 150) to the Households and 396 SMEs underwent e-literacy training (covering e-business, e-commerce,

<sup>54</sup> Consolidated Report on Implementation of 2018-2021 Regional Development Programme of Georgia for the year 2020, pp. 10-12, available at:

<https://www.mrdi.gov.ge/files/1/rdp/Consolidated%20Report%20on%20Implementation%20of%202018-2021%20Regional%20Development%20Programme%20of%20Georgia%20for%20the%20year%202020.pdf>

and e-government) in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions).

**99. The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to extend their support to newspapers and other media outlets in languages spoken by numerically smaller minorities.**

362. During the reporting period, the State continued to support the publication of Armenian- and Azerbaijani language newspapers “Vrastan” and “Gurjistan” (see table below). The newspapers were disseminated in Tbilisi and in the regions populated by national minorities, as well as penitentiary establishments.

363. While printed media is not in demand in the cities, they still represent an essential information source in rural areas. The number of copies per issue was increasing; this is especially true for the newspaper “Gurjistan” – in 2021, the number of copies increased by 2.5 times.

364. In 2017-2020 the annual state allocations for each newspaper were 60,000 GEL. In 2021 the financing increased by 20,000 GEL for each publication.

**Table 13. Publication of Armenian and Azerbaijani newspapers and state support**

Year	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Issues	copies	Issues	copies	Issues	copies	Issues	Copies	Issues	Copies
“Vrastan”	102	3,500	102	3,500	102	3,500	102	3,800-4,000	102	3,500
“Gurjistan”	93	2,000	93	2,000	98	2,000	56	2,000	50	7,000

365. Notably, according to a 2019 survey, Kists, Ossetians and other numerically smaller national minorities living in urban areas use Georgian media outlets to receive information.

366. The program in the Kurdish language has been broadcasted for many years. Since 2018 the program is broadcasted on weekly basis within the project “Diverse Georgia” in the form of digest.

**Article 10 of the Framework Convention**

**Use of minority languages with administrative authorities**

**108. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities, while promoting the use of the State language, to effectively guarantee the right to use minority languages orally and in writing for persons belonging to national minorities, in relations between those persons and the administrative or judicial authorities, in areas traditionally inhabited by those persons or where they live in substantial numbers. It also calls on the authorities to envisage translating relevant pieces of legislation into minority languages.**

367. The use of minority languages in the municipalities compactly populated by ethnic minorities is regulated by the Organic Law of Georgia “On State Language”. In particular:

- a. Chapter II, Article 9 Para. 3 of the Law states that “the State shall provide communication of persons belonging to national minorities, with public authorities and local self-government bodies in the language of that national minority with the help of an interpreter, in the municipalities of compact settlement of national minorities”.
- b. Chapter III, Article 11, Para. 4 states that “in the municipalities where representatives of national minorities are compactly settled, public authorities and local self-government bodies are entitled to establish procedures that are different from procedures provided for by the General Administrative Code of Georgia, in accordance with which, if necessary, translation of applications and complaints submitted to the local self-government bodies by persons belonging to the national minorities in the language of respective minority language, and translation of the responses. Hereby, only originals of appropriate texts shall be valid”.
- c. Chapter III, Article 12 Para. 2 states that “in a municipality where representatives of national minorities are compactly settled, local self-government bodies, if necessary, shall provide translation of normative acts adopted by them in the language of respective national minorities. Hereby, only originals of appropriate texts shall be valid”.

368. In Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions of Georgia, ethnic Armenians and ethnic Azerbaijanis have the right to use their native languages orally and in writing. They can use minority languages in

administrative or judicial bodies in these regions as protected by domestic and international law. Relevant parts of the legislation are translated into the state and minority languages and placed in the electronic media and on the websites of various ministries. All the normative acts of Georgia are published on the website [www.matsne.gov.ge](http://www.matsne.gov.ge) operated by the LEPL Legislative Herald of Georgia under the Ministry of Justice. All published legal acts are in Georgian language and most of them are translated into English, and ethnic minority languages. The following legislative acts have been translated and published on the website so far:

- The Constitution of Georgia – in the Abkhazian, Ossetian, Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.
- The Administrative Procedure Code of Georgia – in the Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.
- The Law of Georgia on General Education – in the Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.
- The Law of Georgia on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and/or Domestic Violence and the Protection and Support of Victims of such Violence – in the Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.
- The Law of Georgia on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination – in the Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.
- The Organic Law of Georgia on State Symbols of Georgia – in the Abkhazian and Armenian languages.
- The Law of Georgia on Symbols of State Importance – in the Abkhazian and Armenian languages.
- The Law of Georgia on the Procedure for Use of the State Symbols of Georgia – in the Abkhazian and Armenian languages.

369. The State Language Department, together with the SMRCE is planning a special study on the use of state and minority languages in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions in the third quarter of 2022. For the correct spelling of geographical names, the State Language Department has prepared the rules of transcription-transliteration of the phonetic system of Armenian and Azerbaijani languages into Georgian.

370. Notably, during the evaluation of the 2015-2020 National Strategy, the evaluation team concluded that the national minorities did not face linguistic challenges in relation with the Administration of the State Attorney and the municipalities in Samtskhe-Javakheti region. During 2015-2020, 4,986 citizens applied to the mentioned administration, out of them 699 i.e., 14.02% were representatives of national minorities. In Kakheti region, 30 out of 700 applications addressed to the respective administration were from national minorities.

371. The municipalities have started to develop their websites in languages accessible for national minorities e.g., the website of Akhalkalaki municipality<sup>55</sup> is available in Georgian and Armenian. This process will continue to ensure access to information at local level in national minority languages.

372. Currently, the issue of mobilization of additional resources for provision of translation is under consideration.

373. Ethnic minorities in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities have access to information on state healthcare programmes and social benefits, various disease, and their prevention; information materials are available in minority languages.

374. As Georgia informed the Committee in its Third report, in compliance with the Constitution of Georgia (Article 62(4)) the court proceedings take place in the state language. The person, who does not know the state language, will be provided with an interpreter. In accordance with the law “On Common Courts” (Article 10), the court proceedings take place in the state language. The person, who has no command of the state language, will be provided with an interpreter. The service cost of interpreter will be covered from the State budget of Georgia. Civil and criminal procedural legislation guarantee assignment of an interpreter to those who do not speak state language.<sup>56</sup>

375. The employees of LSGs who know national minority languages provide oral and written translation for citizens, if needed.

<sup>55</sup> <http://akhalkalaki.ge>

<sup>56</sup> See article 9.4 of the Civil Procedural Code of Georgia (available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/29962?publication=148>) and articles 11, 38, 49 and 53 of the Criminal Procedural Code of Georgia (available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/90034?impose=translateEn&publication=137>).



**109. The Advisory Committee encourages the Ministry of Interior to extend the translation of information documents on rights of detained persons to other minority languages spoken by numerically smaller groups in Georgia as well as to extend possibilities to use the services of an interpreter to speakers of those languages. The Advisory Committee therefore strongly encourages the Georgian authorities to extend translation of such documents to other minority languages, namely Abkhaz, Assyrian, Avar, Chechen, Kurmanji, Ossetian and Udi.**

376. As mentioned in the previous report submitted by Georgia and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Opinion of the Advisory Committee, the Georgian procedural legislation ensures translation services for linguistic minorities.

377. Comments of the Government of Georgia on the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted on 7 March 2019 further clarified that “according to the Additional Instruction Regulating Activities of the Temporary Detention Isolators of the MIA of Georgia approved in 2016, an interpreter is required to be attended when confining a person to the isolator, who does not understand the State language. The presence of an interpreter is also mandatory when performing the procedures of withdrawal of a detained person from the Temporary Detention Isolators as well as other necessary procedures. The list of rights and obligations, which is available to persons deprived of their liberty in the Temporary Detention Isolator for administrative purposes or criminal offenses, was translated into 8 different languages. Those are the mostly spoken languages in the country. However, the service of an interpreter is provided in any case, whether or not a person speaks the language into which the list of rights and obligations is translated, to ensure that she/he understands all the necessary information.”<sup>57</sup>

378. In order to raise the awareness of the defendants / convicts about their rights, brochures on the rights and obligations of defendants-convicts were published in Azerbaijani, Armenian, Turkish, Russian, and English languages and distributed to penitentiary institutions in 2015-2016. Also, in 2020 and 2021 brochures were printed in Georgian and foreign languages and were distributed to all penitentiary institutions. In addition to the above, from 2013 penitentiary institutions are served by a translation bureau and defendant/convicts of all nationalities are provided with both oral and written information. An explanatory dictionary of various legal terms in Georgian-English and Georgian-Russian languages is also available in penitentiary institutions. There are Georgian language courses for non-Georgian-speaking convicts in penitentiary institutions. Numerically smaller ethnic minority groups make up in total about 2.4% of the population of Georgia (Ossetians – 0.39%, Kurds -0.04%, Avars – 0.03%, Kists -0.15%, Assyrians – 0.06%, Udis -174, etc.) They use the State (Georgian) language widely (in family and public space). There is no need to extend the translation of documents and the possibilities to use the services of an interpreter in numerically smaller minority groups languages, however, the state ensures teaching of their native languages at public schools (which is a component of formal education), as well as at their place of residence. Furthermore, the state will provide preparation of necessary education resources, if needed (for example, in 2019 the textbook of Avar language was published).

379. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Legal Aid Service (LAS) and the Bureau of Translators to eliminate language barriers to national or ethnic minorities. If necessary, translators are actively involved in outreach events and other activities planned by the service.

380. The website of the LAS is available on Georgian, English, and Russian languages. In addition, information on the mandate of the LAS and information brochures on frequently asked questions are available in Abkhaz, Ossetian, Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.<sup>58</sup>

**110. The Advisory Committee invites the authorities to comply with their pre-accession commitment and to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**

381. As the Government of Georgia clarified “the state implements the standards defined by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Georgia protects and preserves the languages of ethnic minorities in the frames of different mechanisms, including the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020,”<sup>59</sup> currently, the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021-2030. Furthermore, the GoG remains committed to the standards covered by the European Charter for Regional or

<sup>57</sup> Comments of the Government of Georgia on the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted on 7 March 2019, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.legalaid.ge/ka>

<sup>59</sup> Comments of the Government of Georgia on the Third Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted on 7 March 2019, p. 28.

Minority Languages (ECRML). For many years, Georgia has fulfilled more than the required threshold (more than 35) of Charter commitments.

382. At current stage the languages of ethnic minorities are well preserved and supported. The SMRCE has prepared the matrix which reflects the implementation of the provisions defined by the Charter. The above-mentioned matrix is updated regularly, therefore, it will assist Georgia to stay in line with Charter standards (see Annex 2).

#### Article 11 of the Framework Convention

##### Personal names, topographical indications and other signs and inscriptions

**115. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to step up their efforts in areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to national minorities to display topographical signs also in minority languages.**

383. As mentioned above, the State Language Department has prepared the rules of transcription-transliteration of the phonetic system of Armenian and Azerbaijani languages into Georgian, for the correct spelling of geographical names.

384. The State Language Department cooperates with the Special Commission on Geographical Names under the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia in order to protect the hierarchy and rights of state and minority languages. This process has been started for several years at the initiative of local self-government bodies in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli. The State Language Department monitors the process of placing topographic inscriptions in minority languages in these regions; it is a step towards the protection of ethnic minority languages and intercultural dialogue. Display of topographical signs in minority languages is included in the State Language Strategy as a step towards the protection of ethnic minority languages and further strengthening of intercultural dialogue in Georgia.

#### Article 12 of the Framework Convention

##### Teaching materials, teachers training, intercultural education and equal opportunities for access to education

**121. The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to adapt the content of teaching materials, so they contribute to the creation of a climate of tolerance and understanding in Georgian society. It also calls on the authorities to develop long-term exchange programmes between schools teaching in minority languages and schools teaching in the Georgian language throughout the country.**

385. The information concerning adaptation of the content of teaching materials, so they contribute to the creation of a climate of tolerance and understanding in Georgian society, is provided above (please see the response to the recommendation C, in Part II).

386. The final assessment of the 2015-2020 Strategy identified the lack of exchange programmes between schools teaching in minority languages and schools in the Georgian language and recommended to develop them. Accordingly, the 2021-2030 Strategy reflected on this recommendation: “the efforts will be made to initiate and implement programmes that support popularization of the state language and its use in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities through implementation of targeted activities: competitions, summer/winter camps, exchange programmes and other events to enhance state language competence among non-Georgian speakers.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, impact indicator 2.1 and outcome indicator 9.2.2. of the Strategy also refer to the need of implementation of the exchange programmes for improving the knowledge of the state language and intercultural dialogue.

**122. The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to maintain their efforts to promote equal opportunities for access to higher education for persons belonging to national minorities.**

387. As a result of measures introduced for promoting equal opportunities for access to higher education for persons belonging to national minorities<sup>61</sup>, significant results were achieved - while previously young people belonging to national minorities were giving priority to getting higher education in neighbouring countries due

<sup>60</sup> The State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030, p. 31, available at:

[https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/\\_05ტეგერაცია/Concept\\_ENG21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/_05ტეგერაცია/Concept_ENG21.12.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> The detailed description of these measures was provided in the Third Report of Georgia.

to a lack of knowledge of Georgian language, nowadays the “4+1 Programme” has drastically changed their attitude to higher education, increased their motivation to acquire education and prioritize Georgian universities. Therefore, the number of students enrolled in the Programme compared to 2010 (247 entrants) has been increased to 1,332 in 2021.

**Table 14. Number of national minority students enrolled in HEIs within the “1+4 Programme”**

Year	# Of Students	# Of State Grant receivers
2017	1047	179
2018	1231	190
2019	1335	190
2020	1191	196
2021	1332	198

388. In regard to career choices, the most demanded professions amongst students using “1+4 Programme” are business administration (18.07%), medical education (16.79%), engineering (11.39%) and legal studies (11.15%). They also choose other professions, as follows: philology - 8.15%, economics - 7.95%, social sciences - 6.78%, humanitarian studies - 6.68%, natural sciences - 5.74%, education - 2.27%, finances - 2.10%, arts - 0.36%, other - 2.57%. The percentage of school graduates wishing to continue their studies has significantly increased and make up 21%. This is definitely a positive trend that creates opportunity for training future teachers for non-Georgian schools. Despite achieved success, the 2021-2030 Strategy foresees further support to national minorities to obtain higher education.<sup>62</sup> The supportive measures will continue, including provision of information on entrance exams for ethnic minority representatives (“Open Door” meetings) to increase access to higher education, organise information campaign about „1+4 Programme” in Tbilisi, as well as Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions and conducting training on the use of library resources for ethnic minority representatives, etc. For example, in 2021 meetings (online and face-to-face) on awareness raising of available state support programmes for higher education were conducted in 60 villages of 12 municipalities.

389. According to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, the “1+4 Programme” is a temporary measure and will be operational until 2024 year. The Ministry of Education and Science will continue to support effective access to higher education for the national minority youth and increase their financing based on the assessment of “1+4 Programme” (assessment ongoing now). Attention will be paid to the fact that only 21% of students enrolled through the programme has completed the higher education.

390. The Georgian Language training program is available at the LEPL David Agmashenebeli National Defense Academy that enables the ethnic minority representatives to acquire the state language skills and knowledge which is necessary to continue their studies on the undergraduate educational program. The Academy regularly conducts information meetings in distant format on its educational programs and opportunities for schoolchildren of non-Georgian schools. (In 2022, the information meetings were held for the schoolchildren of 69 non-Georgian schools).

## Article 14 of the Framework Convention

### Teaching in and of minority and majority languages

#### Teaching of Georgian language to adults

391. The lack of state language knowledge considerably impedes ethnic minorities’ full participation in the country’s political, economic and social life; to a certain extent, it also hinders sharing each other’s culture and traditions. According to the 2014 census, 44,5% of the ethnic Armenians and 73,9% of Azerbaijani citizens had poor competence of the state language.

392. The language policy for the ethnic minorities stems from the civic equality goals and implies the strengthening and promotion of the status of the state language in the regions densely populated by ethnic minority population on the one hand, and the improvement of teaching of minority languages, on the other one.

<sup>62</sup> Goal 3. Ensuring access to high quality education ethnic minority groups at every level of education, Objective 3.3 Supporting ethnic minorities to obtain vocational and higher education of the 2021-2030 Strategy.

393. Over the past years, the activities conducted with the aim of raising the level of state language competence have acquired complex and regular character both methodologically and in terms of actors' participation. The legal guarantees and opportunities of learning the Georgian language have been created at every level.

394. During the reporting period, the Georgian language learning programs and courses have been further developed and expanded in terms of methodology, social segment as well as geographic coverage. Nowadays, these programs are available for all interested persons (including schoolchildren, students, public servants, and clergy, in military service, at penitentiary establishments) for free through Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration and its 12 regional training centres and mobile groups, also in distant learning format due to COVID-19 pandemic. The School provides the interested persons with a state language teaching course as well as relevant language programs, taking into consideration communication and professional vocabulary.

395. In 2015 –2021, 23,688 beneficiaries participated in the programs and courses. The integration component is included in the state language programs in compliance with the age of the beneficiaries. (See the statistical data on the State language training and integration program participants in Annex 3).

396. The State language training programs provide for 4 levels of language proficiency, including the A1 to B2 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

397. Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration continued offering State Language Training Programs in Kutaisi, as well as in the regional training centres. During 2018, 11 regional centres of the school implemented the State Language Training Program. 3,400 representatives of ethnic minorities completed A1, A 2 and B1 levels; 246 groups were created out of them 171 mobile groups in 10 cities and 67 villages.

398. From September 2018, Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration started delivering the State Language Training Program in field training detachments of the military forces for the representatives of national minorities serving in compulsory military service.

399. In 2017-2018, on the initiative of the State Minister's Office, Georgian Language Learning Courses were launched in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities for the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church servants (upon their request), which had a great effect on the motivation of local population.

400. As for 2019, the following activities were conducted:

- A textbook "Georgian Communication Skills" was prepared within the framework of State Language Training Program.
- The school implemented the State Language Training Program in field training detachments of the military forces for the representatives of national minorities serving in compulsory military service. A1 level course was delivered to 541 ethnic minority recruits.
- Within the framework of Memorandum of Cooperation with LEPL- State Agency for Religious Issues, 7 training groups were formed with 84 ethnic minority church ministers in 4 regional training centres and in Tbilisi, who did A1 level course in State language;

401. In 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, implementation format of programs changed, and distant learning became a priority. 842 representatives (68 groups) enrolled in 2019 in the State Language Training Program in 12 regional training centres (Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti) and 504 (38 groups) ethnic minority representatives enrolled in 2020, completed the course.

402. The program was implemented in field training detachments of the military forces for the representatives of national minorities serving in compulsory military service, who had undergone the initial military training. 238 recruits belonging to ethnic minorities benefitted from A1 level program in military bases of Algeti, Vartsikhe, Orkhevi, Akhalkalaki and Krtsanis.

403. 159 training groups were formed, 44 out of them were conducted by mobile groups in 2 cities, 14 villages and 7 military bases and 13 centres. In addition, 102 distant learning groups were created. In total 2,059 representatives of ethnic minorities were enrolled in 2020.

404. With the aim of prevention of the spread of new COVID-19 in the country, the State Language Training Program used the distant teaching; consequently, part of groups, i.e., 890 beneficiaries of 79 groups continued studying online.

405. To enhance distant learning, the groups were formed on Microsoft Teams platform, additional resources were developed (quizzes, listening tasks, tests) and final tests were prepared electronically. TOT on distant learning was conducted for school administration and program trainers. Platform for electronic registration was set up; special staff was assigned to assist beneficiaries with registration and online learning from home.

406. In 2021, the Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration conducted meetings “Discussions on COVID-19” for 850 representatives of national minorities. In addition, the programme “Ambassadors of the State Language” was approved that provides training of trainers of the Georgian language and integration issues. The beneficiaries of the programme will participate in the various activities aimed at teaching the Georgian language and promoting integration of national minorities. 20 participants were chosen from Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Tbilisi through competition process; the training was held online.

407. In 2021 The Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration, with the support of the Good Governance Initiative (GGI) of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), implemented the project "Development of capacity and raising awareness about public administration reform in local self-governing units densely populated by national minorities". The project aims to support good governance at the local government level through human resource development.

408. Georgian-language (3) and thematic (4) teaching-training modules of sectoral terminology were developed within the project:

"Public administration" – Georgian-language and thematic module;

"Open governance" – Georgian-language and thematic module;

"Disinformation, NATO, European Union" – Georgian-language and thematic module;

"Transfer of knowledge" - thematic module.

40 civil servants representing the national minority were trained within the framework of the project.

409. During the reporting period, activities toward informal education also played an important role. Namely, integrated summer camps for majority and ethnic minority representatives were organized with the aim to intensify the level of Georgian language competence; non-Georgian school pupils and consultant-teachers of the program took part in the camps. After the completion of the program the interest remained high. Population expressed the interest to renew and expand the programme.

410. Despite the achieved results, the knowledge of the Georgian language still remains a challenge for the population in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. For the purpose to address this issue, the Strategic Priority 1 of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration specifically refers to state language as a tool to support integration and defines concrete objectives towards teaching the state language to national minorities:

- Goal 1. Strengthening the state language teaching for the representatives of ethnic minorities
  - Objective 1.1 Strengthening and popularization of the state language in formal education (preschool, general, vocational and higher education).
  - Objective 1.2 Strengthening of the state language knowledge in adults and informal education
- Goal 2. Popularization of the state language in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities
  - Objective 2.1. Popularization of the state language, supporting its functioning and monitoring its application in the regions densely populated by the representatives of ethnic minorities.

**129. The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to identify a multilingual education model adapted to the Georgian context and to implement it at pre-school, primary and secondary levels. The Advisory Committee also calls on the authorities to monitor this implementation process to ensure that the model is indeed developed with and endorsed by teachers, school boards, parents and communities, implemented to all schools teaching in minority languages and evaluated in order to see if it does produce the expected effects.**

411. See above.

**130. The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to step up their efforts aimed at improving the quality of materials for minority and majority language learning as well as at ensuring high-level professional development for teachers from pre-schools, primary and secondary schools teaching in minority languages.**

412. See above.

**131. The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to continue supporting teaching and learning of languages of numerically smaller minorities, to increase the number of class hours and to ensure that adequate learning and teaching materials are available.**

413. Significant positive steps have been taken to improve the teaching and learning of languages of numerically smaller minorities since 2015. Specifically:

- A National Minority Curriculum and Numerically Smaller Minority Language Standards for Grades I-VI were developed and approved (these include: Ossetian, Chechen, Assyrian Avar, and Udi).
- Based on a formal request from the schools, the list of schools where the teaching of minority ethnic minority languages will be introduced as an elected course shall be approved by an individual legal act.
- The Order №145 /N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia of October 27, 2015, changed the National Curriculum.

414. The following training modules have been created within the framework of the "Support Programme for Non-Georgian Language Schools":

- Georgian language course.
- Long-term training course for teachers at non-Georgian language schools.
- Georgian language grammar - systemic course.
- Methodology of teaching grammar in the process of mastering Georgian as a second language.
- Methodology of teaching Georgian as a second language (reading).
- Methodology of teaching Georgian as a second language (listening and speaking).
- Methodology of teaching Georgian as a second language (writing).
- Joint planning and training (co-teaching).

415. The Order N1255 of the Minister of Education and Science of November 20, 2015, defined schools/classes where the teaching of mother tongues of numerically smaller ethnic minorities was introduced.

416. In the 2021-2022 academic year, teaching of numerically smaller ethnic groups' languages were continued in the following public schools (classes): Avar – in Kvareli municipality, in the villages of Tivi, Chantliskure, Saruso (I-IX grades); Assyrian – in Mtskheta municipality, the village of Old Kanda (V, VI, VII grades); Ossetian – in Kvareli municipality, the village Tsitskanantseri (I-IX grades), and Lagodekhi municipality, the villages of Fona and Areshperani (I-XII grades); Udi – in Kvareli Municipality, the village of Zinobiani (I-VI grades); Chechen – in Akhmeta municipality, the villages of Duisi, Dumasturi, Birkiani, Omalo, Jokolo (V, VI grades). Kurdish is the only language allowed in the national curriculum but not introduced in practice due to a shortage of relevant teachers.

417. The teaching resources for these languages need to be developed. In 2021, with the advice and recommendation of the MoES, the Udi language textbook 'Bez Muse' [Our Language] for elementary school was published. Also, in 2021, a certified textbook of the Abkhazian language for grades I-IV was published. The Abkhazian language is taught in schools under the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, also Batumi Public School N14 and in Public School of the village Peria of Khelvachauri Municipality.

418. The National Curriculum provides 2 hours per week for teaching minority languages, although the school may, if necessary or desired, offer paid or free additional language classes to students in the form of a language group or club.

419. At the initiative of "Ave Sol", a Latvian community in Georgia, the Latvian language Sunday school has operated since 2018 at the "Friendship House" under the Tbilisi City Council.

420. The measures undertaken to teach the languages of numerically smaller minority ethnic groups contribute to the preservation of the mother tongue and identity of smaller ethnic minorities. Georgia will continue to support the teaching and learning of languages of numerically smaller minorities.

## Article 15 of the Framework Convention

### Institutional framework for the participation of national minorities in decision-making

**136. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to formalise and make compulsory the consultation of the Council of National Minorities and the Council of Religions on matters of potential concerns for the persons and communities they represent. In this regard, it specifically calls on the authorities to effectively consult representatives of national minorities before designing and launching important infrastructural projects that may affect them.**

421. One of the key priorities of the civic integration policy is further improvement of participation of ethnic minorities in civic and political processes, in decision making at central and local levels. The practice of recent years of civic participation shows that national minorities living in Georgia have adequate opportunities to participate in the process (civic activism, presenting their problems and current challenges); the state also facilitates communication, consultation, and advocacy mechanisms.

422. For further improvement of civic and political participation of ethnic minorities, two major mechanisms should be underlined that have been launched since 2017, specifically: -the Public Advisory Councils established at the Administration of the State Attorney in Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions; -a special internship programme in the public sector created for the beneficiaries of "1+4 Program".

423. The Public Advisory Councils, as a communication/consultancy format, contributes to improve involvement of ethnic minority representatives in decision-making process at local level. Councils are composed by the representatives of the local self-governments, Public Defender's Office and NGOs, community leaders, ethnic minority representatives.

424. The internship programme serves as an instrument to contribute to the strengthening of competitiveness of the youth belonging to ethnic minorities. It implies recruitment of ethnic minority students in public service to increase their employment opportunities, through enhancing qualifications, improving knowledge, and gaining working experience (More than 300 young people has successfully completed the programmes far).

425. Representation of ethnic minorities in the local self-government bodies in Samtskhe-Javakheti region is proportional to the percentage of the population. For instance, in the elected representative body (Council "Sakrebulo") of the local self-government of Akhaltsikhe municipality 5 members (out of 33) are the representatives of ethnic minorities; while representation of ethnic minorities at Akhalkalaki municipality Council equals to 35 members (out of 42), and at Ninotsminda municipality Council - 29 members (out of 30).

426. By same approach in the region of Kvemo Kartli, in Marneuli municipality's Council there are 10 representatives of ethnic minorities (out of 33); in Gardabani municipality's Council – 14 (out of 36); in Dmanisi municipality's Council – 10 (out of 30).

427. Ethnic minorities are properly and proportionally represented at the Civil Advisory Councils as well, established at the Mayors' Offices in the municipalities. For example, in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities, which are densely populated by ethnic minorities, their representation equals to 17 (out of 20). By same approach in Kvemo Kartli region, in Civil Advisory Council of Marneuli municipality, there are 6 representatives of ethnic minorities (out of 9).

428. The Council of National Minorities under the Tbilisi City Council – "Sakrebulo" is also a consultative mechanism. Another, consultative mechanism was established in Adjara - a structure focused on civic engagement of ethnic minorities in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara - "Friendship House"; it was established by the Batumi City Hall and is financed from the local budget.

### Representation of national minorities in elected bodies

**142. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to step up their efforts to create the conditions for proportional representation of persons belonging to national minorities in elected bodies.**

429. According to the Opinion on Georgia published on March 7, 2019, the 2015-2020 Strategy prioritized equal and full-fledged participation of national minorities in civic and political life. Mid-term goal 1.4, "Encouraging ethnic minority representatives' participation in the political decision-making process", specifically addressed this topic and set three tasks:

- Ensuring that ethnic minorities have an informed choice and a right to vote.
- Encouraging participation and involvement of ethnic minority representatives in activities of political parties and electoral party lists.
- Increasing participation of ethnic minorities in public service.

430. Participation of ethnic minority representatives in election process is protected and ensured by the legislation of Georgia. The Constitution of Georgia<sup>63</sup> defines the right to equality, as well as the participation of citizens of Georgia in political life, including ethnic minorities.

431. To facilitate the active participation of ethnic minorities in political life, the GOG continued implementing measures as reported in the Third State Report.

432. To promote an equal electoral environment for ethnic minority voters, the group working on ethnic minority issues in the Central Election Commission of Georgia (CEC), established in 2012, operates.<sup>64</sup> The election administration ensures full information and involvement of electoral stakeholders, transparency of activities and publicity through the working group.

433. According to the Organic Law of Georgia, “Election Code of Georgia” (Election Code)<sup>65</sup>, voters living in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, during the elections period, can access their personal data in the unified list of voters in ethnic minority languages.

434. Since signing the Association Agreement in 2014, The Election Administration has made great efforts to inform voters, including members of ethnic minorities, about the electoral process in the various elections. In addition, EA has created and offered various election services to the voters. EA uses all possible information channels to inform public. In particular, all news videos are translated into Azerbaijani and Armenian languages and are being shared on the website, social networks, regional television, and radio. In addition, the CEC publishes information in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages using print media. Information materials including critical and corresponding legal acts as well as voting and other informational posters are being translated into ethnic minority languages. Interested persons may receive information about election issues at the CEC contact hub in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages (during the election period). Election information in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages is posted on the CEC official website. A search system for the unified list of voters is also available for voters living in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. The election administration is conducting a large-scale information campaign to inform the representatives of minorities living in the regions, including minority ethnic groups.

435. Furthermore, the Election Administration ensures an equal environment for ethnic minority commission members with no command of the state language. All textbooks/instructions are translated for the commission members in the languages they understand. The Election Administration implements information and training programmes for various target or age groups, including in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. As a result of the aforementioned measures, voter turnout in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities does not significantly differ from the overall national turnout. It is noteworthy that the international observer organisations have positively assessed the activities carried out by the Election Administration toward ethnic minorities.

436. During the reporting period, four general elections (in 2017- local self-government elections, in 2018 - presidential elections, in 2020 – parliamentary elections and in 2021 - local self-government elections) were held (see detailed information on the 2020 and 2021 elections in Annex 4).

437. The representatives of national minorities who served in the Election Administration attended targeted trainings, and education materials were also ensured in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages to facilitate their work.

**Table 15. Statistical data on Precinct Election Commission members speaking Azerbaijani and Armenian languages**

<sup>63</sup> Articles 11, 23 and 24.

<sup>64</sup> The Working Group on Ethnic Minorities includes representatives of the election administration, international and local NGOs, government agencies, and the Public Defender Office.

<sup>65</sup> Articles 14, 45 and 63.



Elections	Precinct Election Commission Members (representatives of national minorities)	Armenian Speaking	Azerbaijani Speaking
<b>2017 Municipal Elections</b>	2,742	1,368	1,374
<b>2018 Presidential Elections</b>	1,639	762	877
<b>2020 Parliamentary Elections</b>	1,579	861	718
<b>2021 Municipal Elections</b>	1,276	643	633

438. The CEC implemented four election and civic education programmes in the regions densely populated by the national minorities. These programmes targeted school children, students, youth, and the whole population. These programmes include:

439. "Election Development School" – for the youth of 18-25 ages aimed at promoting election issues amongst youth, increasing civic engagement, improving training skills of the District Election Commission members, and developing new resources for the election commissions. 265 representatives of national minorities (146 women, 119 men) participated in 2017-2021.

440. "Election Administrators' Courses" - for the citizens older than 18 years to raise civic awareness and capacity building of election administration. From 2017 to 2021, 36,772 citizens received certificates within the programme's framework; 4,650 citizens -12.6% of the total were representatives of the national minorities, with a 60% and 40% ratio of women and men.

441. "Elections and Young Voters" – for the students of XI-XII grades of the public schools aimed at awareness raising and increasing civic responsibility amongst the youth. In 2017-2021, 10,395 citizens received certificates; out of them, 1,475 (15.3%) individuals were representatives of ethnic minorities, with a 59% and 41% of women and men.

442. An education course on electoral law for the Akhaltsikhe University Students - aimed to improving knowledge of electoral law amongst students, develop practical skills, and raise civic awareness. From 2017 to 2021, 2 388 students attended this course and received the certificates. Out of them, 8% were the representatives of the national minorities, with a 61% and 39% ratio of women and men.

443. Furthermore, to facilitate the participation of national minorities in political life, the CEC conducted an information campaign, "Talk to Voters", from 2017 to 2020. The meetings were held, inter alia, in regions densely inhabited by the national minorities, including Pankisi Valley, villages inhabited by Avar and Roma populations. The CEC disseminated flyers in Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani languages. Furthermore, the citizens were able to receive information concerning the election in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages via the hotline of the CEC.

444. In addition, the CEC issued grants to CSOs and minority communities to conduct awareness raising campaigns on the importance of elections and improvement of election culture. In 2017-2020, the CEC financed 203 projects with a total budget of 8 558 134 GEL for promoting the participation of the national minorities in elections.

445. As a result of the efforts mentioned above, in 2021, 50% (compared to 52% countrywide) of the population of regions densely populated by national minorities participated in the elections. In 2020, respective turnout percentage was 55.65% and 56.75%, in 2018, 43.43% and 46.87%, and in 2017, 44.74% and 45%. As the statistical data shows, the national minorities actively participate in the country's political life.

446. There are no legal barriers for national minorities to be elected to representative bodies at the national and local levels. The State can raise civic awareness amongst national minorities and create accessible environment (e.g., a tolerant environment, state language learning opportunities, etc.) for their participation. Otherwise, political parties decide to nominate national minorities in the political party lists and as candidates for various elected positions. The electoral reform in Georgia provides that after 2024 parliamentary elections will only be based on the proportionality principle. Thus, the role of the political parties will further increase. The 2020 parliamentary elections were conducted after the reform, 120 members of the parliament (MPs) were elected through a proportional system, and 30 MPs were majoritarian. As a result of the 2020 parliamentary elections, six representatives of national minorities were elected to the parliament (4% of the total number of MPs). Two are majoritarian MPs, and four were elected through a proportional system. In 2017 Municipal Elections, at least one representative of the national minority was elected in 21 out of 64 municipalities. Based

on the analysis of the 2017 election results in 8 municipalities, where national minorities were more than 20% of the local population (Gardabani, Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Tsalka, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda), it was clear that national minorities were not duly represented in some municipalities. As the final evaluation of the 2015-2020 Strategy stated, "it seems that Georgian political parties do not prioritize inclusion of ethnic minorities in line with the proportion of the population, or there are no sufficient resources."

447. However, the representation of the national minorities improved in the 2021 Municipal Elections. As a result of the 2021 elections, the representation of ethnic minorities in the local self-government bodies in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region is proportional to the percentage of the population. For instance, in the elected representative body (Council "Sakrebulo") of the Akhaltsikhe local self-government municipality, five members (out of 33) are the representatives of ethnic minorities. In comparison, representation of ethnic minorities in Akhalkalaki municipality Council equals 35 members (out of 42), and in Ninotsminda Municipality Council - 29 members (out of 30).

448. In the Kvemo Kartli region, in Marneuli municipality's Council, there are ten representatives of ethnic minorities (out of 33); in Gardabani municipality's Council – 14 (out of 36); in Dmanisi municipality's Council – 10 (out of 30). Also, see the relevant information.

**143. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to adopt incentivising measures, including legal ones, to increase the interest of political parties in proposing measures in their manifestos taking into account the needs of persons belonging to national minorities and in proposing to those persons to participate as candidates in the respective elections.**

449. At the legislative level, the legal acts regulating the formation and activities of political parties are the Constitution of Georgia, the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens, and the Organic Law of Georgia on the Election Code of Georgia. The regulatory framework ensures that citizens can fully exercise their political rights. According to article 23.1 of the Constitution of Georgia, "Citizens of Georgia shall have the right to form a political party and participate in its activities in accordance with the organic law." The 2018 amendments introduced a new provision that prohibits creating a political party that, inter alia, incites national, ethnic, provincial, or religious strife. According to the same provision, establishing a political party on a territorial principle shall be inadmissible. Article 11 of the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens prohibits the restriction of membership of a political party because of race, religion, national, ethnic, or social belonging or origin. Furthermore, according to article 45.3 of the Election Code of Georgia, the election programme shall not contain propaganda for violation of the territorial integrity of Georgia, national strife, and enmity, or religious or ethnic confrontation.

450. Strategic priority 3 of the 2021-2030 Strategy, "Equality, Civic and Political Participation", expressly states that "The Civic Equality and Integration State Strategy is directed, on the one hand, toward formal and quantitative improvement of ethnic minority representation and participation in political life and, on the other hand, strengthening legal and professional development of ethnic minority communities and the society in general, as an essential precondition for successful civic integration policy."

451. Under the Strategic priority 3, Goal 5 addresses the active electoral rights of the national minorities:

- a. "Goal 5. Improving participation at all levels of civic, political, and public governance
- b. Objective 5.1 Supporting the engagement of ethnic minority representatives in government and self-government activities.
- c. Objective 5.2 Developing mechanisms for effective realisation of active and passive electoral rights of ethnic minorities."

452. The impact indicator of the 2021-2022 Strategy Action plan for Goal 5 is "to improve participation of ethnic minorities in central and local electoral bodies." The baseline for this indicator is as follows: in the Parliament of Georgia, ethnic minorities represent 4%. In local self-government bodies: one representative per 779 Georgian voters, 1,116 ethnic Armenian voters, and 2,945 ethnic Azerbaijani voters. By 2024, 2027 and 2030, the GOG committed to continuing the increase of participation of ethnic minorities in central and local electoral bodies.

453. Notably, during the reporting period, the authorities, including the SMRCE, actively cooperated with the NGOs and international organisations that supported the capacity building of political parties to improve engagement and increase participation of national minorities in the political parties.

## Participation in social and economic life

**148. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to step up their efforts to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities benefit from the infrastructure projects carried out in areas traditionally inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities or where they live in substantial numbers and that their interests are taken into account when designing and implementing them.**

454. The GOG underlines that local infrastructure development is the precondition for the national minorities' economic empowerment and engagement in economic life. Therefore, the 2021-2030 Strategy is built on the achievements of the 2015-2020 Strategy and identifies "the need for the development of infrastructure (roads, water supply systems, gas supply) and the means of communication (internet coverage) in municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities. Considering local needs, the state will undertake substantial investments to create relevant new infrastructure and rehabilitate the existing one. Building/rehabilitating the infrastructure and communications will contribute to the development of different types of tourism in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities." This statement was translated into Goal 8, "Improving social-economic conditions and opportunities", and Objective 8.2, "Developing infrastructure in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities". Notably, the 2021-2022 Action Plan envisages 27 activities, including rehabilitation/construction of schools, kinder gardens, roads, touristic infrastructure, etc.

455. The state authorities continued to fulfil the recommendation and policy commitments to improve infrastructure in municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities. During the reporting period, the number of state projects implemented in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities and the provision of state programmes and services to support the development of micro, small and medium-sized businesses increased significantly. The existing challenges are solved by implementing large-scale infrastructural projects, such as gas infrastructure development in the villages, road constructions, irrigation and drinking water systems, rehabilitation of street lighting, etc. Moreover, many programmes and projects for the construction and rehabilitation of preschool establishments, schools, and ambulatory clinics have been implemented. The number of infrastructural projects funded by the state in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities demonstrates the aspiration of the state to drastically improve and invest in these regions and enhance social and economic opportunities for the local population.

456. During the reporting period, the Regional Development Fund financed various infrastructural projects in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities:

**Table 16. Budget of Fund for Projects to be implemented in the Regions**

	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Kakheti
<b>Year</b>	<b>Budget (GEL)</b>		
<b>2017</b>	23 899 681	26 215 008	6 435 414
<b>2018</b>	21 533 038	33 732 709	7 819 665
<b>2019</b>	29 616 044	39 513 090	40 583 927
<b>2020</b>	37 816 555	44 848 613	44 534 233
<b>2021</b>	31 097 267	42 247 801	52 724 999

457. The local municipalities are mainly focused on the initiatives related to local needs, such as the arrangement of wells, instalment of water pipelines, building drainage systems, rehabilitation of local roads, streetlights instalment, gasification, etc.

458. The Fund of Development of High Mountain Settlements also allocated funding for various projects in mountain villages of the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities:

**Table 17. Budget of infrastructural projects of the Fund of Development of High Mountain Settlements**

	Samtskhe- Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Kakheti
<b>Year</b>	<b>Budget (GEL)</b>		
<b>2017</b>	1 789 635	1 049 153	1 150 633
<b>2018</b>	2 516 262	194 644	968 436
<b>2019</b>	687 718	-	2 190 325
<b>2020</b>	3 874 731	1 239 958	1 127 595
<b>2021</b>	3 105 290	396 834	1 285 444

459. In 2019 the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) resumed the Rural Support Programme as it was viral amongst the rural population, including national minorities. The total budget of the programme allocated for the regions densely populated by national minorities was approximately 37 mln GEL:

**Table 18. MRDI rural development project budget**

	Samtskhe- Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Kakheti
<b>Year</b>	<b>Budget (GEL)</b>		
<b>2019</b>	3386000	4770000	4214000
<b>2020</b>	3366000	4760000	4214000
<b>2021</b>	3356000	4760000	4 224 000

460. Notably, the GOG committed to increase the number of population with access to essential services, including electricity, water supply, and sewage system, by 3030. According to the GeoStat data, by 2021, 100% of households had access to electricity.

461. In 2017-202, 171,974 families were able to access natural gas network, namely, 11,562 families in Kakheti, 5,946 - in Samtskhe-Javakheti and 16,134 - in Kvemo Kartli regions.

462. As a result of gasification projects, around 88% of the households (87% in Kakheti, 79.0% in Kvemo Kartli and 58% Samtskhe-Javakheti regions) have access to natural gas (On January 1, 2017, roughly 78% countrywide, with 79.0% in Kakheti, 70% in Kvemo Kartli and 48% in Samtskhe-Javakheti regions). 66 This process will continue. The works are ongoing/planned in 11 settlements of Kvemo Kartli, 5 settlements - in Kakheti, and 24 settlements of Samtskhe-Javakheti regions. By the end of 2024, gasification works will be completed in 40 settlements of these regions.

463. Improving water supply and sewage systems in the regions densely inhabited by national minorities is also a priority. United Water Supply Company (UWSC) continuously works in these regions, e.g., in 2021, the UWSC implemented eight water supply projects with a total budget of 10,442,609.18 GEL in Kakheti region, three projects with a total budget of 9,334,248.96 GEL in Samtskhe-Javakheti region and one project with the total budget 157 442 609.18 GEL in Kvemo Kartli region.

**Table 19. Distribution of the households by the basic supply sources of the drinking water (%)**

	Kakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Samtskhe- Javakheti	Georgia
<b>2017</b>				
<b>The water supply system installed in the dwelling</b>	48,4	55,8	...	<b>63,4</b>
<b>The water system tap in the yard or in the vicinity</b>	37,6	34,4	...	<b>14,1</b>
<b>The well in the yard or in the vicinity</b>	2,3	7,2	...	<b>14,3</b>

<sup>66</sup> Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, <http://geostat.ge/media/45406/Infrastructure.xls>

Natural spring in the yard or in the vicinity	11,7	0,1	...	<b>7,9</b>
Other sources	0,0	2,5	...	<b>0,3</b>
<b>2018</b>				
The water supply system installed in the dwelling	52,0	57,7	...	<b>65,0</b>
The water system tap in the yard or in the vicinity	30,5	33,4	...	<b>12,9</b>
The well in the yard or in the vicinity	3,0	3,1	...	<b>13,9</b>
Natural spring in the yard or in the vicinity	14,5	3,4	...	<b>7,9</b>
Other sources	0,0	2,5	...	<b>0,3</b>
<b>2019</b>				
The water supply system installed in the dwelling	56,1	58,7	75,7	<b>68,8</b>
The water system tap in the yard or in the vicinity	26,7	32,5	18,2	<b>11,9</b>
The well in the yard or in the vicinity	5,1	4,5	1,9	<b>12,8</b>
Natural spring in the yard or in the vicinity	12,1	4,2	4,2	<b>6,4</b>
Other sources	0,0	0,0	0,0	<b>0,1</b>
<b>2020</b>				
The water supply system installed in the dwelling	61,4	67,5	77,9	<b>73,4</b>
The water system tap in the yard or in the vicinity	30,2	23,3	16,9	<b>10,4</b>
The well in the yard or in the vicinity	3,7	6,2	1,6	<b>10,8</b>
Natural spring in the yard or in the vicinity	4,6	3,0	2,5	<b>5,3</b>
Other sources	0,0	0,0	1,1	<b>0,1</b>
<b>2021</b>				
The water supply system installed in the dwelling	69,7	72,0	81,2	<b>76,4</b>
The water system tap in the yard or in the vicinity	23,0	24,2	15,8	<b>8,7</b>
The well in the yard or in the vicinity	2,0	2,0	0,6	<b>9,8</b>
Natural spring in the yard or in the vicinity	5,2	1,8	1,4	<b>5,0</b>
Other sources	0,0	0,0	1,0	<b>0,1</b>
<b>... information not available</b>				

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia, <http://geostat.ge/media/45406/Infrastructure.xls>

464. The evaluation of the touristic infrastructure of the relevant regions is being finalized. Notably, as the road infrastructure is crucial for the development of touristic infrastructure and the local population's well-being, the Road Department actively rehabilitated the roads in the regions densely populated by national minorities. For example, in 2021, the Road Department implemented 22 projects in Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions with a total budget of 65,252.48 mln GEL.

465. Implementation of infrastructural projects in the regions densely populated by national minorities facilitates the mobility and economic activities of the local population in a long-term perspective. At the same time, engagement of the local people in ongoing projects has an immediate effect – a decrease in unemployment. Yet, in some cases, employment of the local population was not possible due to the lack of qualifications or information on the available job opportunities.

466. All infrastructural projects financed by the MRDI provide for the engagement of local population in decision-making process, as required by the relevant legal acts. As for the rural development programme, it directly depends on the participation of the population – locals submit project proposals directly and receive funding. Also, the urgent social-economic needs of local population are considered through the Civil Advisory Councils established at the Mayors' Offices (see info above).

467. Furthermore, the Local Self-Government Code implies creation of another mechanism - General Assembly of a Settlement for participation of local population in decision-making concerning local matters, including infrastructural projects. A general Assembly of a Settlement ('thereafter General Assembly') shall be a form of citizen participation in the self-organisation of the population of a village/small town/city, and in the exercise of local self-government that ensures active engagement of the constituents registered in the relevant

settlement in the discussion and solution of key and urgent issues, including initiation of the issues before the municipal bodies.” Members of the General Assembly are the constituents registered in the respective settlement. The owner of the immovable property in the territory of the relevant settlement, and any other adult person residing in that settlement may also participate in the General Assembly with a deliberative vote.<sup>67</sup>

468. The General Assembly, *inter alia*, may:

- discuss socio-economic issues important to the settlement, and draft relevant proposals for their submission to municipal bodies.
- discuss the projects to be implemented in the settlement before they are included in the municipal budget and submit reasonable remarks and proposals to the municipal bodies.
- discuss the ongoing and implemented projects of the municipality, and draft relevant remarks and proposals for submission to the municipal bodies.
- organise the involvement of the local population in the resolution of issues important for the settlement, in particular, in the cleaning of the territory of the settlement, in charity activities, in the repair and maintenance of local infrastructure, and also in such fields that do not contravene the legislation of Georgia, and if necessary, apply for aid to municipal bodies.

469. A decision of the General Assembly shall be submitted to the respective municipal bodies for further action. Municipal bodies shall be obliged to discuss a decision of the General Assembly and provide response on the outcomes of the discussion to the relevant members or the Chairperson of the General Assembly within the time limits prescribed by this Law and by the General Administrative Code of Georgia.

470. Notably, Municipal bodies are obliged to ensure the submission for discussion the projects to be implemented in the settlement before they are included in the municipal budget to the General Assembly. This procedure effectively safeguards right of national minorities to participate in the decision making concerning infrastructural projects funded by the local budgets.

**149. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to maintain their efforts to promote equal access to the labour market, medical and social services to persons belonging to national minorities, including numerically smaller ones living in remote areas.**

## Employment

471. The Government has been pursuing an active labour market policy since 2015 through state employment promotion programmes. Their main goal is to increase the competitiveness (vocational training, vocational training, and internships) of job seekers in the labour market, including vulnerable groups (youth, people with disabilities, etc.) and to promote the employment of job seekers.

472. In 2019, the State Employment Support Agency (SESA) was established, the main purpose of which is to increase the employment opportunities of job seekers, promote employment and pursue an active labour market policy. Within the framework of the state programme for the development of employment promotion services, the Employment Agency provides the following services: individual and group counselling on the labour market; provision of intermediary services; promoting the employment of vulnerable, low-competitive groups, subsidizing wages, and subsidizing protected jobs; organising employment forums.

473. The State Programme for Professional Qualification Development of Job Seekers provides short-term professional training / retraining of job seekers in professions required by the labour market, as well as internships and training courses on key competencies, which helps to increase the competitiveness of job seekers. Tuition is free for beneficiaries of the state program. SESA has identified a list of specific professions in demand in the regional context. Consequently, graduates of professional programmes have the opportunity to undergo a 3-month paid internship (GEL 200 per month) in the institutions offered by the agency, after which the employer is obliged to provide with a job for 6 months.

474. In 2019 the GOG approved the National Strategy 2019-2023 for Labour and Employment Policy of Georgia.<sup>68</sup> The Strategy notes that the Georgian labour market for some specific groups is less inclusive, and it needs to be further enhance and develop the opportunities also for the representatives of ethnic minorities. It

<sup>67</sup> See article 85<sup>2</sup> of the Local Self Government Code, available at:

<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2244429?impose=translateEn&publication=61>

<sup>68</sup> Available at: [https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2020/Failebi/strategy-13.12.19\\_final-translation.pdf](https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2020/Failebi/strategy-13.12.19_final-translation.pdf)

highlighted that language barriers interfered with employment of ethnic minorities. Task 3.6. of the Strategy directly addresses supporting employment of the representatives of ethnic minorities. To that end, the GoG has taken commitments to the following:

- a. "Access to workplaces will be increased and socioeconomic conditions and opportunities will be improved for the representatives of ethnic minorities. Besides, special attention will be paid to young people, women and those living in the villages.
- b. The given strategy is in full compliance with the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action plan for 2015-2020.<sup>69</sup> Developing equal socio-economic conditions and opportunities, provision of access to high-quality education, increasing the level of the state language that will promote employment and social inclusion, in general, are one of those things that the above-mentioned action plan aims at.
- c. Special attention will be paid to raising awareness of the representatives of ethnic minorities about the socioeconomic programmes and services. Internship programmes in state offices will continue for the representatives of ethnic minorities and beneficiaries of the educational programmes for teaching Georgian (Programme named as '1+4'). This will promote improving their knowledge and skills, boosting their competitiveness for employment, and increasing their involvement.
- d. Together with improving the skills for employment, special attention will be paid to the following: Learning Georgian language; Expanding vocational education network, offering state-funded vocational educational programmes that will contribute to the employment of the representatives of ethnic minorities and their civil integration in general."

475. The Labour and Employment National Strategy prioritized increased access to the employment of representatives of ethnic minorities and improved social-economic conditions and opportunities for them. In 2019 the LEPL Employment Support State Agency was created to facilitate labour and employment of the population.

476. Amendments to the Georgian labour legislation were adopted on February 19, 2019. The amendments introduced an obligation for employers to respect the equality of participants not only in contractual labour relations but also in pre-contractual relations. This obligation prohibits any form of discrimination when publishing a vacancy notice and at a selection stage.

477. In general, employment is a challenge across the country and the issue is equally relevant for both ethnic minorities and Georgian population as a whole.

478. Within the framework of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration, a number of initiatives and mechanisms have been introduced, concrete measures are being taken, which contribute to the improving knowledge and skills of ethnic minorities, raising their qualifications to increase their compatibility with the labour market. "Georgian language training program" (so-called "1 + 4 Program") is a unique and simplified opportunity for national minorities to continue studies in higher education. Simplified vocational education programme for national minorities is another opportunity enabling enrolment on relevant programmes through exams in minority languages. "1 + 4 Internship Program" aims to improve the involvement of ethnic minority youth in public service.

479. LEPL Employment Support State Agency implements an active labour market policy throughout the country. In the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities (Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti) it has organised information/awareness raising campaigns on the state programmes and supportive services. To this end, 500-500 information booklets in Georgian and minority languages were printed and distributed. As to the statistics, in 2021, 527 job seekers from Kvemo Kartli and 86 job seekers from Samtskhe-Javakheti region participated in employment support programmes. In total, in 2015-2021, 2,653 job seekers from Kvemo Kartli and 1,255 job seekers from Samtskhe-Javakheti regions participated in employment support programmes.

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<sup>69</sup> Strategic Objective 2 "Creating equal social and economic conditions and opportunities" of the 2015-2020 Strategy was based on the EU-Georgia Association Agreement signed in 2014, one of the main chapters of which, "Employment, Social Policy and Equal Opportunities", provides for an inclusive labour market, a system of social security, social inclusion, and anti-discrimination policies for vulnerable groups, including ethnic minority communities."



480. Women's economic empowerment is a priority. In 2018-2021 the SMRCE initiated training course "How to begin and develop business" for women residing in Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti (Pankisi Gorge) regions. The course aimed at providing knowledge and skills necessary for launching and developing business. UN Women financed the best 11 business projects.

481. There is not available information about representatives of national minorities registered in the labour market information system as the latter does not require self-identification of national origin. Considering that the employment perspectives are directly linked with professional preparedness and qualification, during the reporting period efforts were made to facilitate formal and informal professional education of national minorities. For example, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, conducted entrepreneurship regional school in Pankisi Gorge.

482. With the aim to overcome the existing language barrier, the Georgian language course has been integrated into professional programmes for ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, as a result of expanding the network of educational institutions, access of ethnic minorities to vocational education increased due to geographic proximity.

483. Representatives of ethnic minorities are enrolled in state vocational education (VET) institutions on the basis of Azerbaijani, Armenian and Russian language tests, after which they undergo and pass the Georgian language module and continue mastering the profession. Also, Pursuant to the requirements of the new law of Georgia on vocational education, in order to ensure access to vocational education and promote civic integration, the work to strengthen the capacity for state language teaching in the vocational education space has begun. A concept document and draft rules for the development, implementation and enrolment on a state language training programme have been prepared.

484. Also, the Ministry is also working to increase geographical access to vocational education and expand the network of VET institutions, including in the municipalities populated by the ethnic minorities, where the VET programmes are developed according to the regional needs and specialisations.

485. Adult education and training were added to vocational education system from 2019. They were offered job oriented short training courses. The LEPL Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration is the key actor in providing vocational training for ethnic minorities. The aim of Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration is to overcome the shortage of qualified staff in public service in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities by upgrading public servants' qualification, as well as integrate public servants into a common space.

486. In the framework of the public management and administration program, the school offers training courses to national minorities developed with a special approach, which implies delivering the field training integrated with relevant terminology and adapted material.

487. The school developed and implemented a new industry-specific course – Public Relations and Communication. Another new industry-specific course was developed – technical maintenance and management of infrastructural projects.

488. In order to conduct each module (Public Organization Management; Financial Management and Internal Audit for Public Servants; State Procurement; Human Resource Management and Office Administration in Public Service; Public Relations and Communication), effectively, sessions with invited guest-speakers' were held. The school prepared and printed textbooks for each course.

489. Research was carried out to identify the needs for creating the basic learning program in computer technologies; for this purpose, information on the existence of similar courses in regions had been searched, in order to find out the level of interest among public servants, as well as define the level of computer literacy.

490. Basic program in computer technologies was developed and implemented in four regional centres (Akhalkalaki, Marneuli, Gardabani and Dmanisi). Several hundred public servants were retrained within the framework of the Basic Course in Computer Technology Studies.

491. In cooperation with the Administration of the State Attorney in Samtskhe-Javakheti region and in partnership with the Samtskhe -Javakheti State University, a pilot program "Office administration automatic system (E-document) operations training course" was implemented. Public servants of local self-Government employed in the municipalities were retrained within the programme.

492. A new training course "Georgia and Euro-Atlantic Integration" was developed and delivered in 3 regions: Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti; 201 beneficiaries took part in it (60 participants from

Samtskhe-Javakheti, 107 participants from Kvemo Kartli, 34 participants from Kakheti). A course on “Gender Budgeting” was developed and approved by the Educational Process Management Board. 16 short-term training courses were developed and registered at LEPL-Vano Khukhunaishvili Center for Effective Governance System and Territorial Arrangement Reform.

493. Based on the Resolution No. 242 of the Government of Georgia dated May 22, 2018 "On the rules for determination of the professional development needs of professional civil servants, the standard and rules of professional development", Zhvania School has developed and implemented the basic professional development program of professional civil servants (for the I-II and III-IV rank officials) in 2 directions: “Managerial skills of the civil servant” and “Development of personals and professional competencies”.

494. In the direction of public management and administration, 5 new programs were developed in 2021: “Maintenance of the school building and its infrastructure”; “Spatial-territorial development of the municipality”; “Administrative supervision and fines”; “Municipal permits and fees”; “Fundraising”. 6 programs were updated: "Management of Human Resources in Public Organizations"; "Internal Audit in Public Administration"; "Management of infrastructure projects of civil buildings"; “Municipal Procurement”; Management of Municipal Property”; “Accounting”.

495. In addition to the National Strategy 2019-2023 for Labour and Employment Policy of Georgia, 2021-2030 Strategy is also focused on creating enabling environment and empowering national minorities to facilitate their employment.<sup>70</sup>

496. As the state supports learning of the state language, representatives of national minorities have more opportunities to find a job in public sector; furthermore, bilingual positions were introduced for service delivery that also increased employment opportunities of national minorities.

#### Medical and Social services

497. Customer oriented public service delivery is one of the top priorities for the Ministry of Justice of Georgia; Georgia tries to keep pace with universal progress though ensuring efficient public service delivery and it has become success story and the visit card for Georgia. Currently, 27 Public Service Halls operating countrywide in big cities and municipal centres and 88 – in rural areas, deliver up to 450 state-run and private services in one space with the “one window” principle. In order to further improve access to services and citizens; interaction with the public sector, upon the initiative of the Minister of Justice, the Mobile Public Service Hall project has been launched and successfully implemented since September 2021. Currently, Georgia has five mobile Public Service Halls covering up to 170 villages far from Public Service Halls and Community Centres throughout Georgia.

498. The provisions on housing are introduced in the Law on “Social Assistance”, adopted on December 29, 2006. According to the Law, in addition to other responsibilities the local authorities are obliged to provide shelters and registration for homeless people. Identity documents do not contain information about nationality and ethnicity. Consequently, the health information system does not imply statistics on ethnic minorities.

499. All people living in Georgia are equal, therefore, the protection of human rights guaranteed by Georgian legislation in the field of social security applies fairly to all citizens. Fairness and impartiality are key decision-making principles for the delivery of social services. Notably, representatives of ethnic minorities who are the target groups of the relevant social protection programmes have full access to benefits/services without any restrictions.

500. The social security system includes two main components - a pension system and targeted social assistance for families below the poverty line.

501. The basis for the state pension is the reaching of the retirement age: for women - 60 years; for men - 65 years. Law "On State Pension" applies to the citizens of Georgia, stateless persons with a status in Georgia, the citizens of foreign countries permanently residing on the territory of Georgia during the last 10 years at the time of filing the application for the pension.

502. Pension amounts increased periodically. In addition, from 2021, the annual pension increase is carried based on the indexation rule. All pensioners have their pensions increased by no less than the rate of inflation. And in the case of pensioners aged 70 and over, 80% of real economic growth is added to inflation.

<sup>70</sup> See Goal 8 of the Strategy, and relevant activities of the Action plan.

503. A social package is available for persons with disabilities/children with disabilities and other specific categories of persons. Recently, the social package of children with disabilities/persons with severe disabilities has been increased several times.
504. Within the framework of the "Targeted State Programme for the Promotion of the Improvement of the Demographic Situation", monthly cash assistance is provided in the regions of negative natural growth, for the 3rd and subsequent children, until a child turns 2 years old.
505. The Law of Georgia "On the Development of Highland Regions" provides social benefits in the highland settlements.
506. The targeted social assistance programme focuses on financial assistance to the population below the poverty line and vulnerable families. The mentioned programme is periodically improved in order to increase its targeting and to better see the needs of the family.
507. Within the framework of the targeted social assistance programme, those households receive monetary assistance, whose well-being (rating) score obtained as a result of the family assessment is lower than the threshold score established by the law. Aids are given according to a gradation system, which means that the more needs a family has, the more aid it receives. Under the patronage of the United Nations Children's Fund, a child benefit was introduced, which is permanently increasing.
508. "State Programme of Social Rehabilitation and Child Care" envisages family-supportive, preventive, and family-friendly state care services. The financing of the mentioned programme and the geographic availability of the services provided by the sub- programme increase every year.
509. In 2018-2022, in the municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities, information meetings on the state programmes/services were conducted. Furthermore, information leaflets in national minority languages were disseminated to the meeting participants.
510. Notably, additional social assistance was provided for addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (see more on the COVID-19 below).
511. According to the Law of Georgia on Health Care, it shall be prohibited to discriminate against a patient due to his/her race, skin colour, language, sex, religion, political and other beliefs, national, ethnic, and social affiliation, origin, property status and title, place of residence, disease, sexual orientation, or a personal negative attitude.
512. Therefore, health services for the national minority population are just as accessible as to the other population in the country. The State universal healthcare programme and other diseases state programmes ensure universal access to the health services for the population of the country. If a person does not have the identification documents and is admitted to a medical facility, he/she will be registered with the status of "unknown" and will be provided with the necessary medical services.
513. Since 2013, the government has laid the foundation for a policy focused on the health and well-being of the population, and in recent years, the amount of state allocations to the health sector has increased unprecedentedly (2012: 450 million GEL - 2.5 billion GEL in 2021). The share of state spending on health care in relation to GDP and the state budget is increasing (2012 - 1.7% - 2021 - 3.6%). The share of informal payments in the medical sector is insignificant.
514. In addition to the universal health care program, health care services for the population are reflected in the so-called public health care and disease-oriented so called vertical state programmes, such as management of HIV-AIDS, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, mental health, maternal and child health, paediatric oncology, transplantation, primary health care and others.
515. According to the assessment of the World Health Organization and the World Bank, by implementing effective reforms, the country improved access to health care and ensured better financial security. A solid trend of growth in the utilization of medical services was observed, the population's satisfaction with medical services increased significantly.
516. Beneficiaries of state health protection programmes are the citizens of Georgia, persons with a neutral identity card, a neutral travel document, and stateless persons with status in Georgia, persons with refugee or humanitarian status and asylum seekers, special emphasis is placed on the regions densely populated by national minorities and cross-border population.

517. The categories of beneficiaries of the universal healthcare programme are 1) the poor, teachers, public artists, children in foster care, compactly settled IDPs; 2) Population of retirement age, 0-5 years. Children, students, disabled people; 3) uninsured veterans; 4) persons with 70,000-100,000 rating points and 6-18 years. adults; 4) population whose monthly accrued salary is less than the average salary (1,000 GEL per month) or a person with irregular income or self-employed or others; 5) population whose annual income is less than 40,000 GEL and monthly accrued salary  $\geq$  the average salary (1000 GEL per month); 6) Population whose annual income is more than 40,000 GEL (except for retirement age).

518. The universal healthcare programme covers planned outpatient, emergency outpatient-inpatient and planned surgical services, as well as treatment of oncological diseases and childbirth.

519. Since 2017, the programme of provision of medicines for the treatment of chronic diseases has been launched in Georgia, which was integrated into the universal healthcare programme in 2020. This programme defines chronic cardiovascular diseases (annual limit 200 GEL), chronic lung diseases (annual limit - 300 GEL), type 2 diabetes (annual limit 40 GEL), chronic thyroid diseases (annual limit 20 GEL), Parkinson's (annual limit 400 GEL - 75% is covered by the state) and epilepsy (annual limit 300 GEL - 75% is covered by the state). Beneficiaries of the programme are socially vulnerable and pensioner-aged population, as well as disabled children, severely or significantly disabled persons, veterans, as well as residents living in the villages near the dividing line with the occupied territories of Georgia, citizens of Georgia suffering from Parkinson's disease and epilepsy.

520. The component of providing medicines for children aged 0-5 years provides for the financing of antibacterial drugs (annual limit 50 GEL - with 50% co-payment, and for disabled children 100 GEL - with 50% co-payment).

#### Articles 17 and 18 of the Framework Convention

##### Bilateral agreements and regional cooperation

**152. The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to maintain their efforts to further develop cross-border cooperation to the benefit and with the participation of persons belonging to the national minorities to promote good relations with the neighbouring countries.**

521. Georgia and Armenia have completed negotiating a drafts agreement on bilateral visa-free movement of nationals. This agreement aims to facilitate movement of Georgian and Armenian nationals across the border. According to the draft agreement, the nationals of both sides, irrespective of their place of residence can enter, transit, leave and stay on the territory of another state during 90 days in every 180-day period. Holders of diplomatic or service passports who work in a diplomatic mission consular post or an international organisation located in another state party, will not need visas for their personal travel. Furthermore, if the national legislation of either state party provides more preferential treatment these rules will be applicable to nationals of another country. The state parties are entitled to suspend partially or the whole agreement because of the state security, public order, or threat to the health of nationals.

#### Measures taken to implement the recommendations included in Part 2 – “Further recommendations” of the Committee of Ministers’ Resolution

**Adapt the census form in accordance with the right to self-identification and launch an information campaign, well ahead of the next census, targeting persons belonging to national minorities; adopt proper measures aimed at collecting data on discrimination in all relevant fields and to this end, develop adequate methods of disaggregated data collection while fully respecting the right to free self-identification and in accordance with international standards on personal data protection**

522. See above.

**Ensure that the cost for renting the premises of the Public Defender’s headquarters does not significantly reduce the operational budget of the Public Defender. Resources allocated to its field offices should also be increased to give the Public Defender the means to implement the necessary awareness raising work with regard to the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination**

523. See above.

Condemn systematically and in a timely manner all instances of intolerance, in particular in public discourse, and ensure that the existing legislation related to racial discrimination is effectively implemented; provide the necessary training to law enforcement and judicial authorities to ensure that the implementation of the existing legislation related to racial discrimination is in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights with regard to freedom of expression

524. See above.

Ensure, given the digital strategy implemented by the Public Broadcaster, that persons belonging to national minorities have access to internet, in particular in remote areas, and report publicly on the internet coverage in Georgia

525. See above.

Guarantee effectively the right to use minority languages orally and in writing for persons belonging to national minorities, in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities, in areas traditionally inhabited by those persons or where they live in substantial numbers; envisage translating relevant pieces of legislation into minority languages

526. See above.

Formalise and make compulsory the existing practice of consulting the Council of National Minorities and the Council of Religions under the auspices of the Public Defender of Georgia on matters of potential concerns for the persons and communities they represent; effectively consult representatives of national minorities before designing and launching important infrastructural projects that may affect them

527. See above.

Step up efforts to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities benefit from the infrastructure projects carried out in areas traditional inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities or where they live in substantial numbers and that their interests are taken into account when designing and implementing them, through effective consultations with the persons concerned

528. See above.

Promote equal access to the labour market, medical and social services to persons belonging to national minorities, including numerically smaller ones living in remote areas.

529. See above.

**Additional measures and policies adopted to implement all the detailed recommendations, various findings and conclusions contained in the Advisory Committee's Third Opinion**

#### **Major Policy and Regulatory Changes after the Third Cycle**

530. During the reporting period, the Government conducted significant reforms in terms of improving human rights protection standards that fundamentally improved legal and institutional framework of human rights protection.

531. Pursuant to the Constitution, people are the source of state authority. People exercise power through their representatives, as well as through referendums and other forms of direct democracy. State authority shall be exercised based on the principle of the separation of powers.

532. The right of citizens of Georgia registered in self-governing unit to regulate issues of local importance through local self-government is secured by the Constitution of Georgia. The State authority bodies shall promote development of the local self-government.

533. Due to the military occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, citizens of Georgia are deprived of opportunity to exercise their constitutional rights on these territories.

534. In 2017 the fundamental revision of the Constitution was conducted, which consolidated the parliamentary system in Georgia. Based on the 2017 amendments the following was implemented/strengthened:

- Proportional election system, which precludes a single political party from gaining constitutional or in general excess majority.
- The rule of indirect election of the president.
- Increased independence of the judiciary.
- The Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia was established as an independent constitutional authority.
- New safeguards of local self-government – corporate status of the self-governing unit was defined, principles of organisational and staff policy autonomy were strengthened, it became mandatory to hold consultations between state authorities and local self-government bodies regarding decisions related to the local self-government etc.

535. 2017 Amendments strengthened constitutional-legal meaning of the principle of social state, which has a significant meaning in terms of defining conceptual approach of the State towards social responsibility to people. Pursuant to the Article 5 of the Constitution “Georgia is a social state” and general responsibility of the State was defined to take care of “strengthening the principles of social justice, social equality and social solidarity within society”, “the equitable socio-economic and demographic development in the entire territory of the country, ... human health care and social protection, ensuring the subsistence minimum and decent housing, and protecting the welfare of the family”. The Constitution further established that the State shall promote the employment of citizens and defines the subsistence minimum.

536. Together with incorporation of norms strengthening principle of social State, the Constitution includes the provisions on fundamental human rights (Chapter II). Should be noted that “the legislation of Georgia shall comply with the universally recognized principles and norms of international law. An international treaty of Georgia shall take precedence over domestic normative acts unless it comes into conflict with the Constitution or the Constitutional Agreement of Georgia” (Article 4.5). In addition, “provisions of the gazetted treaties determining the specific rights and obligations and not requiring transposition in domestic legislation by adopting specific acts, shall be directly applicable in Georgia.”<sup>71</sup> Therefore, international agreements on human rights are used directly in Georgia even if guaranteed right is not incorporated in the national legislation. Georgia adhered to the main human rights instruments.

537. After strengthening the principle of social state, the State increased funding of social programmes.

538. The Constitution recognizes that all persons are equal before the law (Article 11) and prohibits discrimination. Therefore, pursuant to the Constitution the right to equality requires not only equality before the law, but formation of the law in accordance with the principle of equality.

539. Furthermore, the Constitution has affirmed that “in accordance with universally recognized principles and norms of international law and the legislation of Georgia, citizens of Georgia, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation or language, shall have the right to maintain and develop their culture, and use their mother tongue in private and in public, without any discrimination” (Article 11.2).

540. With the 2017 amendments a provision on gender equality was added to the Constitution, which as a fundamental right, sets in a tangible form the obligation of the State to ensure the essential equality and elimination of gender inequality.

541. Further, inviolability of human dignity, the right to life and physical integrity, right to free development of their personality, labour, healthcare, education etc. is strengthened (Chapter II). Constitution further establishes that “The restriction of a fundamental human right shall be commensurate with the significance of the legitimate aim that it serves” (Article 34.3).

542. A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Administration of the Government of Georgia and the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia. The Memorandum strives for deepening of mutual cooperation between the executive and local authorities and aims to improve the systemic mechanisms of human rights protection at the local level and the implementation of human rights-based policies. The document also envisages cooperation with the equality mechanisms operating within the municipal councils, including the Gender Equality Councils and Council of the Rights of Person with Disabilities. Moreover, the memorandum draws attention to the localization and implementation the National Human Rights Strategy and respective Human Rights Action Plans at the local level. It should be noted that memorandum of cooperation will serve to

<sup>71</sup> „Law of Georgia on International Treaties of Georgia “, Art. 6.3.

ensure the meaningful participation of ethnic minorities in the process of localization of National Action Plans (NAPs) and will promote the protection of the rights of ethnic minorities.

543. In 2013, the Government of Georgia for the first time established the Interagency Council for Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan, by the July 5, 2013, Government Decree No. 169, and entrusted to it the development of the national strategy for the protection of human rights.

544. National Human Rights Strategy (2014-2020) and relevant governmental action plans (2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2020) represented crucial documents for the protection of human rights and upholding equality in Georgia in the last couple of years.

545. The 2014-2020 strategy included a separate chapter on ensuring equal rights and the protection of the rights of minorities. The objectives of the former were to establish high standards of tolerance in society, through the prevention and condemnation of all forms of discrimination, as well as the consequences resulting from discriminatory actions; conduct effective investigations into all reported cases of discrimination; ensure greater participation and integration of minorities in civil society and public administration. The action plan 2018-2020 included various measures to be taken by the authorities to prevent and combat discrimination on various grounds. Therefore, the Action Plan addressed issues such as: increasing the effectiveness of identifying discriminatory and hate-motivated crimes and prosecution; proactively informing and raising public awareness regarding discriminatory and hate-motivated crimes; elimination of discriminatory provisions in the legislation, etc.

546. The Interagency Working Group, set up by the state agencies, international organisations, public defender, and civil society organisations for the Development of the National Human Rights Strategy, has recently concluded the process of drafting a new, second national human rights strategy document (2022-2030). The Strategy is designed to respond to national needs and challenges, and, in this light, it is guided by the Constitution of Georgia while paying careful attention to international human rights standards as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

547. In addition to the Human Rights Strategy and its action plans, the Government of Georgia has been developing and implementing: “National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Resolutions 1325 on Women, Peace and Security” and the “National Action Plan for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.” Both action plans are targeted towards promoting gender equality, women empowerment and tackling violence against women and gender-based discrimination.

548. Important policy development step was the adoption of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 and the Action Plan 2021-2022 of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030.<sup>72</sup> Before elaboration of a new strategy, the SMRCE conducted an evaluation of the implementation of the 2015-2020 State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020, inventory of international commitments of Georgia towards national minorities and ensured a transparent and participatory process.

549. The State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 aims to ensure the implementation of long-term and irreversible positive changes with regard to civic equality and integration, and for the purpose of the implementation of the corresponding policy defines five priority directions:

- State Language to support integration
- Access to quality education
- Equality, civic and political participation
- Social and economic integration
- Intercultural dialogue.

550. The Strategy clarifies the used methodology and legal framework. Notably, it reiterates that “Georgia remains committed to the obligations taken within the international organisations. Hence, civic integration

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<sup>72</sup> Approved by the Government of Georgia by Decree No356 dated July 13, 2021. English version of the Strategy is available at: [https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/\\_ონტერაგია/Concept\\_ENG21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/_ონტერაგია/Concept_ENG21.12.pdf); English version of the 2021-2022 Action Plan is available at: [https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/\\_ონტერაგია/Action\\_Plan\\_Eng\\_FINAL21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/_ონტერაგია/Action_Plan_Eng_FINAL21.12.pdf)

process is also based on international practices and political-legal regulations determining international standards of ethnic diversity management, as well as international agreements, principles, and standards in the area of Human Rights“.

551. Furthermore, the Strategy provides situation analysis overview and defines long-term vision, mission and vision as follows:

“The mission of this Strategy is to provide and strengthen equal, tolerant, and diverse environment through local and international practices, the existing resources, and innovative approaches with the engagement of the society and support of partner organisations. The state policy toward ethnic minorities has been developed and will be implemented from the viewpoint of the principles and perspectives such as human rights protection, equality, inclusion, cultural diversity. The policy envisages active interaction not only with the representatives of ethnic minorities, but the Georgian- speaking population as well.

The Strategy is based on the fundamental principles of legal, social, and political equality and shares the universally recognized values, in particular:

- The rule of law.
- Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Equality and equal opportunities.
- Justice, transparency, and coordination.
- Cultural diversity.
- Inclusion.
- Responsibility and accountability.
- Contributing to the strengthening and development of the country.”

552. The Strategy defines the following Strategic Priorities, Goals and Objectives:



Table 20. Logframe of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021-2030

Strategic Priorities	Goals	Objectives
<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 – STATE LANGUAGE TO SUPPORT INTEGRATION</b>	Goal 1. Strengthening the state language teaching for the representatives of ethnic minorities	Objective 1.1 Strengthening and popularization of the state language in formal education (preschool, general, vocational and higher education) Objective 1.2 Strengthening of the state language knowledge in adults and informal education
	Goal 2. Popularization of the state language in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities	Objective 2.1. Popularization of the state language, supporting its functioning and monitoring its application in the regions densely populated by the representatives of ethnic minorities.
<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 – ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION</b>	Goal 3. Ensuring access to high quality education ethnic minority groups at every level of education	Objective 3.1 Increasing access to preschool education and ensure quality; Objective 3.2 Ensuring access to quality general education; Objective 3.3 Supporting ethnic minorities to obtain vocational and higher education
	Goal 4. Promoting tolerant and inclusive educational environment	Objective 4.1 Supporting the representatives of ethnic minorities who are left behind educational opportunities (including persons with disabilities and Roma) Objective 4.2 Supporting civic equality and cultural diversity in formal and informal education.
<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 – EQUALITY, CIVIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION</b>	Goal 5. Improving participation at all levels of civic, political and public governance	Objective 5.1 Supporting the engagement of ethnic minority representatives in government and self-government activities; Objective 5.2 Developing mechanisms for effective realization of active and passive electoral rights of ethnic minorities
	Goal 6. Improving access to media and information	Objective 6.1 Improving the quality of media products in ethnic minority languages; Objective 6.2 Supporting the development of media literacy
	Goal 7. Strengthening environment based on equality	Objective 7.1 Raising public awareness on the issues of human rights, civic equality and integration policy, anti-discrimination and gender equality; Objective 7.2 Improving access to the mechanisms of justice and law-enforcement, and quality legal assistance.
<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 –SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION</b>	Goal 8. Improving social-economic conditions and opportunities	Objective 8.1 Increasing the participation of ethnic minorities in social-economic programmes; Objective 8.2 Developing infrastructure in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities; Objective 8.3. Supporting social-economic empowerment of women and youth; Objective 8.4 Improving collection, processing and access to statistical data on the basis of data protection regulations and self-identification of ethnic minorities, including those from smaller ethnic groups.
<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5 – INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE</b>	Goal 9. Supporting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue	Objective 9.1 Supporting and promoting the preservation of cultural heritage of ethnic minorities; Objective 9.2 Raising awareness on cultural diversity and supporting intercultural dialogue; Objective 9.3 Supporting intercultural sports and multiculturalism, developing relevant spaces/ infrastructure.

553. Most importantly, the Strategy introduces a very concise monitoring mechanisms for its implementation as follows: Information about the effective implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan and the opportunity for timely intervention and assessment will be ensured through strategy monitoring and assessment process which will collect information about the progress achieved and the implementation of the activities defined in the Action Plan on a regular basis. Each dimension of the Strategy, including preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, will be evaluated in terms of the mid and long run impact.

554. The established monitoring system ensures a high level of accountability and effectiveness of the implementation process by the responsible agencies. In regard to the logical framework of the Strategy, it introduces the impact and outcome indicators for each strategic goal and objective based on verifiable sources. The data obtained in the process of monitoring will be processed and reflected in respect to the implemented activities and the outcome indicators.

555. Based on the consolidation of the status-reports by the responsible agencies, under the coordination of the State Minister's Office, two documents will be prepared, namely: a progress report on outcome and impact indicators and an annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan, which will be submitted to the Government Commission for review and will be published. The report will also be presented to the Council of National Minorities at the Public Defender's Office and other interested parties. The annual monitoring report is also an important instrument to get information on the effectiveness and efficiency of specific state agencies, the main challenges, and the need for intervention in the process.

556. The Strategy Assessment will be conducted at the level of outcome and impact indicators. Since the Strategy covers a 10 year period, it will have two interim assessments to take place in 2024 and 2027, while the final assessment is planned for the end of its implementation period – in 2030. The assessments will be conducted in an external assessment form by independent experts and expert/research organisations, as well as local NGOs, international organisations, experts, and with active participation of ethnic minority representatives.

557. The Government Commission is entitled to decide which priorities/goals will be assessed within the interim assessment process. The Commission will take the above-mentioned decision after reviewing annual reports, considering particular challenges revealed within specific dimensions or based on high public interest.

558. During each interim assessment, along with studying the dynamics of achievements, it is important to assess the relevance of the objectives and vision considering the changed circumstances and the context. In the process of preparation of interim and final assessments, the criteria will be developed and applied in compliance with the goals and objectives. In the process of report preparation, the time, focus, relevance-based and reader-oriented approaches will be considered. Information on the impact and the results of the Strategy implementation will be available for all interested persons, among them NGOs, international organisations, research institutions and academia, private sector, and the field experts.

559. Comparative analysis of reciprocal influence of the results achieved within the objectives and activities under the Strategy and Action Plan will be based on the information obtained from annual and interim monitoring assessments, which will enable to observe the dynamics of the Strategy implementation and identify the existing challenges. For policy development, its effective implementation and revision of the existing approaches, with the purpose to initiate new decisions, the State Minister's Office will develop the relevant recommendations for the agencies involved in the Strategy implementation process.

560. The aim of the final assessment of the Strategy is to measure the achieved results, ensure accountability and create a ground for the Strategy development in the next years.

561. Based on the annual reports of the implementation and assessment of the Action Plans, the State Minister's Office will prepare the interim and final assessment documents on Strategy implementation, which will be available on the official website of the State Minister's Office: [www.smr.gov.ge](http://www.smr.gov.ge).

562. In 2021 the Government of Georgia also approved 2021-2030 Joint Programme (Strategy) on the State Language and 2021-2022 Action Plan of the Strategy.<sup>73</sup> This Strategy explicitly refers to the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 and mentions that special attention shall be given to teaching the state

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<sup>73</sup> Approved by the Government of Georgia by Decree No 629 dated December 30, 2021. Georgian version of the Strategy, Action Plan and information on consultation Strategy are available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5338987?publication=0>

language considering the needs of various groups of the population. The State Language Strategy also prioritises inclusion of national minorities in a unified information space, promotion, and preservation of cultural identity for national minorities and implementation of programmes aimed at empowering and engagement of the national minority youth. Its priorities are based on various studies and surveys concerning the needs of national minorities. Section 2.2.5 “Languages of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia” of the State Language Strategy specifically discusses challenges of the minority languages and problems for integration of linguistic minorities, such as: quality and/or duration of education in minority languages, quality of textbooks in minority languages, lack of comprehensive evaluation of textbooks on minority languages, lack of cultural awareness of national minorities, languages at risk without state support, lack of concept on preservation of linguistic and cultural diversity, and low awareness of linguistic minorities amongst population. Furthermore, the Strategy reiterates that “historical traditions and international law provides the preservation of linguistic diversity in Georgia” and “support to linguistic minorities is the priority of the State’s language policy”.

563. Amongst the tasks of the State Language Strategy the following should be highlighted:

“Objective 1.4. Improve the knowledge of the Georgian language at all levels of formal and informal education. This task, inter alia, includes teaching Georgian as the second language and development of the textbooks

Objective 1.5. Promote learning of the Abkhaz language

Objective 1.6. Support fundamental and applied research on Georgian languages and Abkhaz Language

Objective 1.7. Support learning of and research on national minorities’ languages of Georgia”

564. Furthermore, the Parliament of Georgia initiated a draft law on the Rights to Change the Family Name that contradicts historical and cultural traditions. The draft law aims at creating an effective mechanism for national minorities to claim their authentic family names that were lost due to some historical developments. The Parliament also plans to develop a detailed procedure for changing the family names that will ensure establishment of authentic family names through genealogic or another research.

### COVID -19 Response

565. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Georgia, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality within its mandate has been taking pro-active measures to ensure protection and support of ethnic minority representatives in response to the emerging needs. The assistance has been provided through 1) timely access to information on the pandemic and 2) access to subsistence items.

566. Access to information and awareness -raising on coronavirus-related issues has been prioritized. The Office of the State Minister has started to implement the following:

- Government information web-portal [www.StopCov.ge](http://www.StopCov.ge) in seven languages. Dissemination of printed, digital, and audio-visual materials on the Coronavirus in minority languages. Dissemination of information materials through online and social media outlets in minority languages. TV broadcasting of video clips, briefings, statements in minority languages. Displaying posters and other visual materials in public space - streets, shops, and pharmacies. Delivery of SMS text-messages on crucial issues in minority languages. Online consultancy (hot-line 144-1) in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

567. On March 3, 2020, the Office of the State Minister started preparation of materials in minority languages on the COVID-19 prevention recommendations, hygienic measures, regulations, and dissemination to ethnic minority population in the regions. The State Minister’s Office ensured translation of Government briefings, statements, recommendations of WHO into minority languages that have been circulated through official social media pages of regional and local governments, local TV, and radio outlets.

568. Since March 13, 2020, video clips on the COVID-19 hygiene recommendations and measures of its prevention, have been translated and disseminated in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. In addition, bilingual (Georgian-Armenian and Georgian-Azerbaijani) SMS messages on lockdown measures/regulations have been delivered to mobile phone owners from the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. Also, voice messages on the Coronavirus prevention measures have been delivered to the population by vehicles with loudspeakers.

569. In parallel, the Office of the State Minister, in cooperation with the UN Association of Georgia and with the support of USAID and UNICEF, started to produce printed information materials (leaflets, posters) in minority

languages and disseminate in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, especially in those villages which are relatively distanced from the administrative centres. Furthermore, the COVID-19 related information was published in Azerbaijani language newspaper “Gurjistan” and Armenian language newspaper “Vrastan” and their special editions. In total, 529 100 printed information materials have been prepared and delivered, including:

- Leaflets- 513 000
- Posters- 5 600
- Newspapers (“Vrastan” and “Gurjistan”) 4 500 copies; special editions – 6 000 copies

#### March 13, 2020 - on COVID-19 prevention recommendations and measures

- Kvemo Kartli - 3000 copies of leaflets in Azerbaijani language
- Samtskhe-Javakheti region – 3000 leaflets in Armenian language

#### March 25, 2020 - on COVID-19 hygiene/prevention recommendations

- Kvemo Kartli (Marneuli, Bolnisi) 49 800 copies (32 000 leaflets in Azerbaijani language and 16 000 in Armenian language/1200 Azerbaijani-language and 600 Armenian language posters)
- Samtskhe-Javakheti region (Ninotsminda) - 16 600 copies (16000 Armenian-language leaflets and 600 posters)
- Newspapers - 4500 copies (Armenian-language „Vrastan “-2000; Azerbaijani-language newspaper “Gurjistan” -2500)
- Special editions of newspapers 6000 copies („Vrastan“ - 3000; „Gurjistan“- 3000)

#### March 26, 2020 – on COVID-19 prevention recommendations

- Kvemo Kartli region- 41 400 copies (28 000 Azerbaijani-language leaflets/12 000 Armenian-language leaflets; 800 Azerbaijani-language/480 Armenian-language posters)
- Kakheti region - 5300 copies (4000 Azerbaijani language leaflets and 800 posters; 500 Armenian language leaflets)
- Samtskhe-Javakheti region- 29 120 copies (28000 Armenian-language leaflets and 1120 posters)

#### April 2-4, 2020 - on quarantine measures

- Kvemo Kartli region - 99 500 copies (90 000 Azerbaijani-language and 9 500 Armenian language leaflets)
- Samtskhe Javakheti region - 90 000 copies (80 000 Armenian-language and 10 000 Georgian-language leaflets)
- Kakheti region -20 500 copies (20 000 Azerbaijani-language and 500Armenian-language leaflets)

#### April 28-29, 2020 – frequently asked questions on COVID-19 related-emergency situation /quarantine measures

- ❖ 150, 000 copies (50 000 in each language) of information leaflets in Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian languages delivered to the population in the municipalities of Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti regions.

570. In order to mitigate negative social-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, food and hygienic items have been delivered to socially vulnerable ethnic minority families.

571. Since November 8, 2020, the Office of the State Minister, in cooperation with UNICEF has delivered up to 605 parcels with food and hygienic items to socially vulnerable ethnic minority families in quarantine zones of Marneuli and Bolnisi, as well as villages bordering quarantine zones, such as Tetrtskaro and other municipalities; access to subsistence items was also ensured for socially vulnerable families with many children and Roma community, specifically,

- Kvemo Kartli – 102 parcels
- Samtskhe-Javakheti – 50 parcels

- Kakheti – 73 parcels
- Roma community across the country – 380 parcels

572. Roma families have also been provided with audio information in their native languages about lockdown regulations.

573. Since April 16, 2020, the State Minister has conducted a series of online information meetings/consultations with ethnic minority young activists, regional media representatives, and representatives of non-governmental organisations. The above-mentioned communication aimed to deliver comprehensive information about the measures undertaken by the Government in response to pandemic, as well as enable ethnic minority representatives to provide feedback on the challenges faced by their communities.

574. In particular, the role of regional media broadcasters and the process of online schooling have been considered and discussed; the participants shared their initiatives for fostering and tailoring the supportive measures.

575. In response to the next waves of the COVID-19 pandemic (second half of 2020- 2021), the Office of the State Minister continued to implement specific adapted measures aimed at supporting ethnic minority representatives. Specifically, to facilitate access of ethnic minorities to important information on the COVID-19, including new regulations, the Office of the State Minister has launched a 3-component large-scale information-awareness-raising campaign which implies:

- Door-to-door delivery of up to 100,000 bilingual (Georgian-Armenian, Georgian-Azerbaijani) leaflets on the latest regulations, Coronavirus management and anti-crisis plan, COVID-19 vaccination.
- Online training sessions for ethnic minority youth on the COVID-19 related issues by bilingual volunteers. Bilingual young people who got special training on the above topic have already conducted 7 online meetings in 36 villages of 5 municipalities.
- Online consultancy (Government hotline 144-1) in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.
- Door-to door information/ awareness raising meetings on COVID-19 vaccination in the villages of the municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities with engagement of renowned immunologists and allergists.

576. Also, the Office of the State Minister, with the UNICEF support, has delivered 729 parcels with food and hygienic items to orphans and children with disabilities. Specifically,

- In Kvemo Kartli – 353 parcels
- In Samtskhe-Javakheti – 134 parcels
- In Kakheti -242 parcels.

577. In total, in 2020-2021, up to one million information printed materials were prepared in minority languages and delivered in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. Also, 1334 food and hygienic items were delivered to the most socially vulnerable ethnic minority families.

578. Access to education was ensured through rapid shift to remote/online learning format through introduction of digital education platforms. Also, a television project “TV School” of the Georgian Public Broadcaster is under implementation; it implies broadcasting TV lessons in various subjects for schoolchildren and entrant students, including ethnic minority representatives.

579. The Office of the State Minister within its competence continues further support of ethnic minority representatives as required.

## Annex 1. Internet providers in the regions densely populated by national minorities

Internet operators	# Of subscribers
<b>Kakheti</b>	<b>61752</b>
<b>Fibre</b>	
Georgianairlink	458
MagtiCom	39366
New Telecom	690
Silknet	10004
Skytel	3187
<b>LTE</b>	
Silknet	1902
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	
Georgianairlink	271
NEO.NET	301
Profservice	328
VGS Network	3
Union Tusheti Development Fund	15
Skytel	4557
<b>xDSL</b>	
Silknet	670
<b>Samtskhe Javakheti</b>	<b>40802</b>
<b>Fibre</b>	
Georgianairlink	3
Arthur Arzumanian	163
Global Telecom - (424254247)	209
MagtiCom	14918
Netcom - (423352712)	4646
Netcom - (436683144)	1417
Silknet	5645
Skytel	518
<b>LTE</b>	
Silknet	504
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	
Airmax	1
Arthur Arzumanian	466
Green Network - (440887391)	45
Green Network - (440889200)	11
VGS Network	149
Localnet	1
Netcom - (423352712)	3151
Netcom - (436683144)	1285
Simnet	3673
Skytel	3296
<b>xDSL</b>	

<b>Silknet</b>	701
<b>Kvemo Kartli</b>	<b>90168</b>
<b>Fibre</b>	
City Net	7
Georgianairlink	2395
Ailink	7342
Geo Vlan	423
MagtiCom	35611
Georgian Central Communications Corporation	13999
Silknet	12726
Skytel	335
Fibernet	0
Flycom	35
Janet	1793
<b>LTE</b>	
Silknet	798
<b>Wi-Fi</b>	
City Net	2
Georgianairlink	1449
PC&I Networks	49
Profservice	86
Ailink	6535
Akaki Ugrehelidze	59
Alnet	605
Geo Vlan	602
Express Network	1
Wifi Line	178
VGS Network	0
Zanetti	114
Maxnet	7
Georgian Central Communications Corporation	470
Simnet	1
Smart-Telecom	168
Skytel	2721
Tenet	1
Ubicom	1
Flycom	6
Janet	1188
Geo Network	34
<b>xDSL</b>	
Georgian Central Communications Corporation	48
Silknet	379

**Annex 2. Matrix on the Implementation of Standards defined by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Georgia**

**Implementation of the Standards defined by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages  
by Georgia**

**Matrix  
December, 2021**

**Article 8. Education**



Language	Article and paragraph of the Charter	Comments/specifications
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian	<p><b>Article 8.1. a</b></p> <p>ii. to make available a substantial part of pre-school education in the relevant regional or minority languages; or</p>	<p>ii. On 8 June 2016 “<b>Law on Early and Preschool Education</b>” was adopted. The main part of the norms of the Law entered into force on 1 October 2017, a certain part – on 1 April 2018 and the rest – on 1 April 2020. According to the Article 5 of the Law, the teaching language in the educational institution is Georgian, and additionally Abkhazian language in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia”.</p> <p>The institution is authorized to offer programs and resources relevant to the state education standard defined by the law to ethnic minority children, not only in state, but also <b>in their native languages</b>, taking into consideration language needs. The institution is authorized to provide children with fostering and educational services <b>in their native and/or in non-state language</b> and to use programs and resources relevant to the state education standard defined by this Law.</p> <p>In 2018 state standards of early and pre-school education and professional standards of teacher- pedagogue were translated into Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.</p> <p>In July 2020, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia initiated the program “Implementation of the State Standards in National Minority Preschools and Schools”. The program aims at introduction and implementation of the state standards at pre-schools and schools of ethnic minorities via application of the bilingual education approach. At this stage, the program has been running in 9 minority pre-schools in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti regions (piloting). From September 2022, the Program is planned to be expanded and introduced in 7 pre-schools.</p> <p><i>The State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021-2030</i><sup>74</sup> defines the access to preschool education in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities as a priority goal; respective Action Plan for 2021-2020 implies introduction of bilingual (native language and the State language) education model.</p>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian	<p><b>Article 8. 1. B</b></p> <p>ii. to make available a substantial part of primary education in the relevant regional or minority languages; or</p>	<p>ii. The unified strategic document ensuring access to education “<b>The Education Policy for the Integration of the Society</b>” has been elaborated. It aims to introduce bilingual education at preschool and school level education through the new resource models.</p> <p>In July 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia initiated the program “Implementation of the State Standards in the National Minority Pre-schools and Schools”. The program aims at introduction and implementation of the state standards at pre-schools and schools of ethnic minorities through application of the bilingual education approach in both state and their native languages. At this stage, program is being piloted at elementary level of 1-4 grades.</p>

<sup>74</sup>[https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/Concept\\_ENG21.12.pdf](https://smr.gov.ge/uploads/Files/%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/Concept_ENG21.12.pdf)

	<p>iii. to provide, within primary education, for the teaching of the relevant regional or minority languages as an integral part of the curriculum; or</p>	<p>iii. The state provides the opportunity for ethnic minority representatives to receive the pre-school and school education in their mother tongue as well. There are more than 100 non-Georgian preschools, 210 non-Georgian-language schools and 70 non-Georgian-language sectors, constituting 13.9% of public schools across the country, with 54,544 non-Georgian students (<i>8% of total number of students</i>). Among them, 81 Azerbaijani, 118 Armenian, and 11 Russian-language schools, also 32 Georgian-Azerbaijani sectors, 26 Georgian-Russian sectors, 10 Georgian-Armenian sectors, 1 Georgian-Azerbaijani-Russian sector, and 1 Georgian-Russian-Armenian sector.</p> <p>In July 2020, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia initiated the program “Implementation of the State Standards in National Minority Preschools and Schools”. The program aims at introduction and implementation of the state standards at pre-schools and schools of ethnic minorities through application of the bilingual education approach. At this stage, the program has been running in 25 minority schools in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti. From September 2022, it is planned to expand the activities of the programme in up to 30 schools.</p> <p>ii-iii. In 2018, subject standards of primary level (I-IV, V-VI grades) education were translated into Azerbaijani and Armenian languages.</p> <p>BA Program “Abkhazian Philology” is offered by LEPL Sokhumi State University.</p> <p>iv. By the Order 1255, 20 November 2015 (“On Defining Those Schools and Relevant Grades, where the Language of Smaller Ethnic Minorities are Taught”) of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia the schools/grades were defined where instruction of <b>smaller ethnic minority languages was launched</b> (Ossetian, Avar, Udi, Kurdish, and Assyrian).</p> <p>Ossetian language – in public school of Tsitskanaantseri village of Kvareli municipality (1-9 grades); in public school of Pona and Areshperani villages of Lagodekhi municipality (1-12 grades).</p> <p>Avar language – in public schools of Tivi, Chantliskura and Shorokhi villages of Kvareli municipality (1-9 grades).</p> <p>Udi language – in public school of Zinobiani village of Kvareli municipality (1-6 grades).</p> <p>Assyrian language – in public school of Dzveli Kanda village of Mskheta municipality (5-11 grades).</p> <p>Kurdish language - by the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia in Tbilisi public school #79 (10-11 grades), but due to the lack of teachers the learning program has not been launched.</p> <p>On 13 September 2016 in accordance with the Order N702 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, amendment was made to the Minister’s Order N1255, which defined Chechen language as an optional subject (two hours per week) in public schools (5-6 grades) of the villages Omalo, Duisi, Dumasturi, Birkiani and Jokolo of Akhmeta municipality.</p> <p>Since 2017 <b>Abkhazian language classes</b> are operational at Public School #14 in Batumi; Public School of the village Peria of Khevlachauri municipality and in Abkhazian public schools.</p>
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Ossetian, Abkhazian, Chechen, Assyrian, Udi, Avar, Kurdish, Latvian	<p><b>iv.</b> to apply one of the measures provided for under i to iii above at least to those pupils whose families so request and whose number is considered sufficient.</p>	<p>Since 2018 the <b>Latvian language</b> program has been introduced at the House of Friendship at Tbilisi Municipal Council.</p> <p><b>iv.</b> According to the <b>Order N63 (11.05.2018) of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia</b>, if the schoolchildren of ethnic minorities are studying at Georgian school/sector, the school is entitled to offer their native language teaching for the same or different hour-time rather than it is given in the language of non-Georgian language schools/sectors for the subject “ethnic minority language”. For this subject, students of several classes can be clustered under one group consisting of 10 students. In case of introducing this subject, it shall be included in school curriculum. The subject must be evaluated in accordance with the rule established by the item 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of Article 31 of the mentioned Order.</p>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian	<p><b>Article 8. 1. c</b></p> <p><b>ii.</b> to make available a substantial part of secondary education in the relevant regional or minority languages; or</p>	<p><b>ii.</b> Ethnic minorities in Georgia have access to the secondary stage of education, also in their native languages (Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Russian). <b>210 non-Georgian-language schools and 70 non-Georgian-language sectors are functioning in Georgia</b> (it constitutes 13.9% of all public schools nationwide), where 24463 students (primary and secondary level) are enrolled. Among them, 81 Azerbaijani, 118 Armenian, and 11 Russian-language schools, also 32 Georgian-Azerbaijani sectors, 26 Georgian-Russian sectors, 10 Georgian-Armenian sectors, 1 Georgian-Azerbaijani-Russian sector, and 1 Georgian-Russian-Armenian sector.</p> <p>The <b>standards of native language instruction</b> (Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian) for VII-IX grades have been prepared.</p> <p>During 2017-2018 the following measures were undertaken:</p> <p><b>National standards for early and preschool education were developed</b>, including ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity in educational resources, in order to encourage of the Georgian (State) language teaching by the teachers in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, as well as to respect diversity among schoolchildren.</p> <p><b>Standards were developed for secondary level (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades) of education in the languages of ethnic minorities (Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian).</b></p> <p><b>Native language standards for the elementary level (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades) education were translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.</b></p> <p>Special attention was given to upgrading the qualifications of teachers in non-Georgian schools.</p> <p><b>iii. Abkhazian language and literature subject program is introduced in the national curriculum</b> that implies its instruction at schools. It is necessary to prepare appropriate textbooks for ensuring study of Abkhazian language.</p>

Ossetian, Chechen, Assyrian, Udi, Avar, Abkhazian, Kurdish	<p><b>iii.</b> to provide, within secondary education, for the teaching of the relevant regional or minority languages as an integral part of the curriculum; or</p> <p><b>iv.</b> to apply one of the measures provided for under <b>i</b> to <b>iii</b> above at least to those pupils who, or where appropriate whose families, so wish in a number considered sufficient;</p>	<p>Also, see 8.1.b.iv</p> <p><b>iv.</b> See 8.1.b.iv</p>
Abkhazian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, other Caucasian languages	<p><b>Article 8. 1. e</b></p> <p><b>ii.</b> to provide facilities for the study of these languages as university and higher education subjects; or</p>	<p><b>ii.</b> Teaching and research of ethnic minority languages are carried out at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. In addition, scientific research of these languages is conducted in the Institute of Linguistics.</p> <p>BA program “Armenian Studies”, “Caucasian Studies”, “Russian Philology” (qualification “The Bachelor of Philology”), also MA Program “Caucasian Studies”, Slavic Philology” functions at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.</p> <p>BA program “Russian Philology” is available at LEPL – Shota Rustaveli Batumi State University.</p> <p>Within the framework of the State Language Strategy, the priority direction of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation's target grant competition is the documentation and research of minority languages in Georgia.</p> <p>The Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation financed the study “Eco-linguistic analysis of the modern Abkhazian Language” in 2019.</p>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian	<p><b>Article 8. 1. H</b></p> <p>to provide the basic and further training of the teachers required to implement those of paragraphs a to g accepted by the Party;</p>	<p>National curriculum and related training materials have been developed, approved, and translated into Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Russian languages.</p> <p>In 2016 a special training module was developed and the teachers of all three languages were trained.</p>

	<p>In 2016, the professional standard for teachers of ethnic minority language and literature (I - VI grade) as well as professional standard for teachers of the mother tongue of smaller ethnic minority groups' languages in Georgian-language schools (Assyrian, Ossetian, Udi, Kurdish, Chechen, Avar) was developed and approved.</p> <p>The e-versions of the following materials are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A list of teaching activities for teachers' engagement in the "Teacher Induction, Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme (in Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian languages).</li> <li>-The first part of the guide for the "Teacher Induction, Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme" for teachers' engagement (in Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian languages)</li> <li>-Teacher self-evaluation questionnaire (in Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian languages).</li> </ul> <p>Since 2015 "<b>Non-Georgian Language Schools Support Program</b>" has been implementing in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. The program aims at professional development of ethnic minority teachers in respective subjects as well as in general pedagogical skills through providing individual consultations to teachers in their mother tongue. The program is designed to facilitate improvement of school environment and learning &amp; teaching quality in non-Georgian schools, full engagement of this target group into the "Teacher Induction, Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme", and professional development of the teachers involved in the Program. All materials were translated in the target groups' languages.</p> <p>National Centre for Teacher Professional Development is implementing a Program "Standards and Resources Program". Under the Program,</p> <p>In 2015, professional standards for ethnic minority languages and literature teachers according to levels were elaborated. 1,5 credit module was created based on the standard, which is intended for ethnic minority languages and literature teachers. This module was translated in Azerbaijani, Armenian and Russian languages, materials were revised, and trainers' trainings (TOT) were carried out.</p> <p>In 2021, the "Non-Georgian Language Schools Support" Program was amended. According to the amendment, the program aims to promote the professional development of non-Georgian language teachers in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, to support the learning-teaching process, as well as the professional development of non-Georgian preschool teachers, also through improving Georgian language skills and non-formal school-based teaching practices as well.</p> <p>For the 2020-2021 academic year, 250 teachers were appointed to 166 non-Georgian language schools in Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kakheti as well as 121 Consultant Teachers of Georgian as a Second Language, 129 Assistant Teachers, including 63 Bilingual Assistant Teachers. A piloting process in 4 pilot schools and 4 kindergartens for promotion of bilingual education was launched in 2021.</p>
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		<p>In 2021, the process of training practicing teachers at non-Georgian language schools in Georgian language (Level B1) has started, which will be followed by the long-term professional development course for professional advancement for the teachers.</p> <p>On March 6, 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the National Assessment and Examinations Centre (NAEC) and the State Examinations Centre (SEC) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the framework of the MoU, the SEC will assist the National Assessment and Examinations Centre in establishing an Item Bank with the purpose to elaborate the Azerbaijani Language Teachers' Competency Test for Azerbaijani-language schools of Georgia. The Centre, undertakes the responsibility to review and edit items developed by SEC's experts for school – leaving examinations (9th and 11th grades). These tasks are performed according to the action plan agreed between the parties. <i>Further information is available at: <a href="https://naec.ge/#/ge/post/2138">https://naec.ge/#/ge/post/2138</a> - Information about signing a MoU between the parties is available at: <a href="http://dim.gov.az/en/news/5236/">http://dim.gov.az/en/news/5236/</a>.</i></p> <p>Similar collaboration is planned for the Armenian language and literature teachers. The terms and conditions of the MoU are being negotiated between the parties.</p>
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#### Article 9. Judicial authorities

Language	Article and paragraph of the Charter	Comments/specifications
<p>Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian,  other languages</p>	<p><b>Article 9. 1. A</b> in criminal proceedings:</p> <p>ii. to guarantee the accused the right to use his/her regional or minority language; and/or</p>	<p>ii. In compliance with the Constitution of Georgia (Article 62(4)) the court proceedings take place in <b><u>the state language</u></b>. The person, who does not know the state language, will <b><u>be provided with an interpreter</u></b>. In accordance with the law “On Common Courts” (Article 10), the court proceedings take place in <b><u>the state language</u></b>. The person, who has no command of the state language, will <b><u>be provided with an interpreter</u></b>. The service cost of interpreter <b><u>will be covered from the State budget of Georgia</u></b>.</p> <p><b>Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia:</b></p> <p><b>Article 11</b> – “Criminal proceedings shall be carried out in the Georgian language, and in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, also in the Abkhazian language. A trial participant who has no command or appropriate command of the language of the criminal proceedings shall be assigned an interpreter in the manner provided for by this Code”.</p> <p><b>Article 38, Para 1</b> “...an accused shall be notified in the language that he/she understands, of the offence defined by the Criminal Code of Georgia in the commission of which he/she is reasonably suspected”.</p>

		<p><b>Article 38 Para 8</b>, “An accused may, during the conduct of an interrogation and other investigative actions, use <b>the services of an interpreter</b> at the expense of the State, if he/she has no command or insufficient command of the language of a criminal trial, or has such physical disability that does not allow him/her to communicate without an interpreter.</p> <p>In addition, according to Article 197, during the initial appearance of the accused before the court the magistrate judge shall find out whether the accused understands the language of the criminal proceedings; Furthermore, if the accused has no or inadequate command of the language of the criminal proceedings, the judgment shall, upon its announcement or simultaneously, be translated for the accused in his/her mother language or any other language that he/she understands.</p> <p>According to Article 45 of Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia, the lack of command by the accused of state language is the basis for providing him with mandatory defence.</p> <p><b>Article 49 Para 1. Sub. Para “b”</b> - “A witness, if he/she has no command or insufficient command of the language of the criminal procedure, has a right to give a testimony in the native or any other language of his/her choice, and use the services of an interpreter at the expense of the State.</p> <p>According to the code a victim has the rights and obligations of the witness. Accordingly, article to victims as well.</p> <p>Article 72 sets the only and exhaustive criteria for evidence to be regarded as inadmissible – if it obtained as a result of the substantial violation of the law. Therefore, there is no reference to language, the evidence is formulated in, as a basis for its inadmissibility. In additional, Article 78 provides that a document shall be considered to have an evidentiary force, if its origin has been established and it is authentic.</p> <p><b>Article 53 – Interpreter, Para 1.” An interpreter shall be called when:</b></p> <p><b>a) a trial participant has no command or insufficient command of the language of the criminal law procedure</b></p> <p><b>b) It is necessary to translate a text in the language of the criminal procedure”.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The criminal procedure takes place in the Georgian language, in Abkhazia also in Abkhazian language.</li> <li>2. The trial participant who has no command or appropriate command of the language of the criminal law proceedings has a right <b><u>to make a statement, to give a testimony and an explanation, to fill a motion, to lodge a complaint and to plead court in his/her native language or the language he/she knows. In this case the trial participant has a right to use the services of an interpreter while familiarizing with the case materials</u></b> (25.03.2005 N1204).</li> <li>3. An accused or the other participant is allowed, by his initiative, to translate <b>investigative and judicial</b> documents, though the state is not obliged to provide translation for all the persons who does not know state language. A right to enjoy the services of an interpreter is guaranteed by the Code. It is allowed to invite an interpreter during both investigation and trial.</li> </ol>
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	<p>iii. to provide that requests and evidence, whether written or oral, shall not be considered inadmissible solely because they are formulated in a regional or minority language; and/or</p>	<p>4. An authority which carries out the process is obliged to explain to the trial participants their rights noted in points 2 and 3.</p> <p>5. The services of an interpreter participating in the criminal law case will be provided at the expense of the state.</p> <p>The interrogation is a part of judicial process. Accordingly, in conformity with the Article 11 of the Criminal procedure code the interrogation shall be carried out in the state language as well. Though, if an accused or the other participant of the trial does not know the language of the process, he/she is provided with an interpreter.</p> <p><b>iii. Criminal procedure Code of Georgia:</b></p> <p><b>Article 11.</b> “The criminal procedure is carried out in the <b>Georgian language</b>, and in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, also in <b>Abkhazian language</b>. The trial participant who has no command or appropriate command of the language of the criminal procedure, will be provided with an interpreter according to the rule defined by the Code.</p> <p>According to the first part of Article 53 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia an interpreter shall be appointed when:</p> <p>The trial participant has no command or appropriate commands of the language of judicial procedure.</p> <p><b>It is necessary to translate text (including documentary evidence) in the language of judicial process.</b></p> <p><b>Article 115 of the general rule for interrogation does not imply any specific requirement regarding the language of interrogation, however any participant of the criminal procedure, at any stage of the process, enjoys the right to give a testimony in his/her mother tongue or other language understandable for him/her or have access to the service of an interpreter at the expense of the state.</b></p>
<p>Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, other languages</p>	<p><b>Article 9.1.b</b> in civil proceedings:</p> <p>ii. to allow, whenever a litigant has to appear in person before a court, that he or she may use his or her regional or minority language without thereby incurring additional expense; and/or</p>	<p>ii. In accordance with Georgian Constitution (Article 62(4)) “Legal proceedings shall be carried out in the state language. <b>An individual who does not have a command of the state language shall be provided with an interpreter.</b> In accordance with Georgian Law on General Courts of Georgia (Article 10), “Language of proceedings shall be conducted in the official language. <b>Persons having no command of the official language shall be assigned an interpreter. Interpreter services shall be paid from the State Budget of Georgia</b>”.</p> <p>In accordance with Civil Code of Georgia (Article 9.4), Legal proceedings shall be conducted in the state language. <b><u>An individual who does not have a command of the state language shall be provided with an interpreter.</u></b></p>



<p>Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, other languages</p>	<p><b>Article 9. 1. c</b></p> <p>in proceedings before courts concerning administrative matters:</p> <p>ii. to allow, whenever a litigant has to appear in person before a court, that he or she may use his or her regional or minority language without thereby incurring additional expense; and/or</p>	<p>ii. In accordance with General Administrative Code of Georgia, (Article 14), Administrative proceedings shall be carried out in <b>Georgian language</b>, and in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, <b>also in the Abkhazian language</b>.</p> <p>In accordance with the Georgian Constitution (Article 62(4)), “Legal proceedings shall be conducted in the state language. <b>An individual not having a command of the state language shall be provided with an interpreter</b>. In accordance with Georgian Law on General Courts of Georgia (Article 10), “Language of proceedings shall be conducted in the official language. Persons having no command of the official language shall be provided with an interpreter. <b><u>Interpreter services shall be paid from the State Budget of Georgia</u></b>”.</p> <p>According to the Article 9.4 of the Civil Procedure Code of Georgia (which is already used in the administrative judicial procedure) the judicial procedure shall be carried out in the state language. <b><u>Persons having no command of the official language shall be provided with an interpreter</u></b>.</p>
<p>Armenian, Azerbaijani, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Russian</p>	<p><b>Article 9.3</b></p> <p>The Parties undertake to make available in the regional or minority languages the most important national statutory texts and those relating particularly to users of these languages unless they are otherwise provided.</p>	<p>With donor support, key legal documents, including the Constitution, are translated in Armenian, and Azerbaijani languages, and disseminated. The following acts are available in Armenian and Azerbaijani language: Administrative Procedure Code of Georgia; Law of Georgia on General Education; Law of Georgia on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and/or Domestic Violence, and the Protection and Support of Victims of Such Violence; Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination; Organic Law of Georgia on Official Language and Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship; The Organic Law of Georgia on State Symbols of Georgia was translated into Abkhazian by the Legislative Herald of Georgia; All mentioned acts are available on the official web-page of the Legislative Herald of Georgia (<a href="https://matsne.gov.ge">https://matsne.gov.ge</a>).</p> <p>All the key legislative acts, including Constitution of Georgia, Civil, Administrative and Criminal Codes, the Law on the Elimination of Discrimination, are available in English and Russian languages on the official webpage of the Legislative Herald of Georgia (<a href="https://matsne.gov.ge">https://matsne.gov.ge</a>).</p> <p>The website of LEPL Public Service Hall (<a href="http://psh.gov.ge/">http://psh.gov.ge/</a>) is available in Abkhazian and Russian languages that gives an opportunity to receive information in the languages they understand on the procedures.</p> <p>9 Community Centres operate in the regions inhabited by ethnic minorities (Kabali, Kvareltskali, Iormughanlo, Sadakhlo, Poka, Kumurdo, Baraleti, Kachaghani Ninotsminda) in which 20 representatives of local, ethnic minority communities are employed. This enhances to overcome the language barrier between the Community Centre officers and beneficiaries.</p> <p>The Ministry of Justice of Georgia prepares and distributes various information brochures on the state-run services, domestic violence and violence against women, anti-discrimination legislation, EU visa free travel, human trafficking, etc. Information brochures and leaflets in the native languages of ethnic minorities (Armenian and Azerbaijani) are distributed through the</p>

		<p>Community Centres of the LEPL Public Service Hall of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia in the regions densely populated by minorities.</p> <p>Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020-2021, the distribution of information brochures was delayed. Nevertheless, Government of Georgia made a lot of effort to distribute brochures, booklets, and information materials wherever possible to a potential victim of human trafficking. To this end, thousands of multilingual (Georgian, English, Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Turkish) information materials (brochures, booklets, T-shirts, handbags, notebooks, etc.) were distributed in the following places: Public Service Halls, Community Centres, Georgia Diplomatic missions abroad, diaspora organisations, tourism information centres, border checkpoints, places, and regions at high risk of trafficking. These materials effectively and comprehensibly reflect information on the risks of trafficking, as well as the relevant hotline (if a person is considered to be a potential victim of human trafficking).</p>
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#### Article 10. Administrative authorities and public services

Language	Article and paragraph of the Charter	Comments/specifications
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Ossetian	<p><b>Article 10.1.</b></p> <p><b>b.</b> to make available widely used administrative texts and forms for the population in the regional or minority languages or in bilingual versions.</p>	<p>Pursuant to Article 63 of the Organic Law of Georgia “Election Code of Georgia”, the ballot paper is printed in Georgian according to the sample established by the CEC ordinance, also in Abkhazian language in Abkhazia, and if necessary - in other languages understood by the local population.</p> <p>For the October 2, 2021, municipal elections- a total of 348 polling stations were established in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.</p> <p>For these precincts, the ballot paper was translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. 496,350 ballot papers were printed in Georgian-Azerbaijani languages for the first round of elections, 181,500 ballot papers in Georgian-Armenian languages, and 5,600 ballot papers were printed in Georgian-Armenian languages for the second round of elections.</p> <p>Pursuant to Article 14, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph “V” of the Election Code, the CEC is responsible for creating a unified list of voters, for its computer processing, and for posting the information designated as public on the CEC official website (first name, last name; photo; date of birth; address as specified in the identity card of a citizen of Georgia; for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the occupied territories of Georgia – an actual address as well; for individuals registered without indication of address, individuals removed from registration according to the place of residence and those whose registration has been declared invalid by decision of the Agency – the address of their actual residence; the date of registration of a voter in the unified list of voters). The lists of voters belonging to ethnic minorities in the electoral precinct shall also be posted on the CEC official website during the election period in the language that they understand.</p>

	<p>For Municipal Elections (Rounds I and II), voters living in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities could access the Unified Voter List via Search Engine (voters.cec.gov.ge) in Georgian-Azerbaijani and Georgian-Armenian languages on the CEC official website.</p> <p>For both rounds of elections, the following electoral documents and information materials were translated and printed for Armenian and Azerbaijani-speaking voters: Unified Voter List; Ballot paper; The rule of filling in the ballot paper; Voting poster. On the CEC website, under the banner “Ethnic Minorities” were posted various information in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages, as well as the CEC Decree 353/2021 of 23 August 2021 on preventing the spread of Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) infection (COVID-19) and "On participation of municipal bodies in inpatient medical institutions and isolation (quarantine, self-isolation) in the October 2, 2021 municipal elections, establishment of polling stations and special groups, definition of some election measures and sanitary-hygienic requirements" and the Temporary Rule for wheel-chair user voter.</p> <p>10 (ten) types of information materials were also translated, including ballot papers and other information posters, and the following information flyers: "Verification of data in the unified voter list", "Voting procedures", as well as the CEC chairperson's address to young voters - those who participated in the elections for the first time. 10 types of manuals/instructions were translated and published for ethnic minority PECs members to perform their functions and duties competently: PEC members' manuals; Commemorative instruction of the chairperson of the precinct election commission; Powers of the PEC Secretary on the polling day; Functions of a member of the Commission for Regulating the Voter Flow; Functions of a member of the Voter Registrar Commission; Functions of a member of the Commission for Supervision of Ballot Boxes and Special Envelopes; The functions of a member of the commission carrying a mobile ballot box; Training module "Election Security" for PEC members; Poster depicting the sealing of electoral documents.</p> <p>For the first round of municipal elections, 17 video footage prepared by the CEC were translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages, including a video footage on services available to ethnic minorities. The videos were posted on the CEC website, on the social network, on central and local television and radio. In addition, the Armenian-language newspaper “Vrastan” and Azerbaijani-language newspaper “Gurjistan” published information on voting procedures. The CEC also prepared clips for radio during both rounds of elections.</p> <p>Representatives of ethnic minorities could receive information on electoral issues in Armenian and Azerbaijani at the CEC Contact-Hub. Voters living in areas densely populated by ethnic minorities had the opportunity to verify their personal data in a unified voter list on the CEC website in Armenian and Azerbaijani.</p> <p>For the municipal elections, the election administration conducted an information campaign "Talk to Voters" throughout Georgia, including in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. As part of the campaign, representatives of district election commissions and volunteers in full compliance with all pandemic-related regulations held 297 information rallies throughout Georgia, namely in the city of Tbilisi. Centres, villages, and public places of 63 municipalities, - including 13</p>
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		<p>rallies in villages densely populated by ethnic minorities. Six rallies were held for Azerbaijani-speaking voters and five for Armenian-speaking voters. In addition, two meetings were held with smaller ethnic groups.</p> <p>As part of the information campaign, election administration officials, along with volunteers, provided voters with information on suffrage and municipal elections, as well as offered them to verify personal and family data in a unified voter list using a tablet and a quick payment machine. According to the place of registration, information leaflets were distributed by the precinct election commissions about the verification of the data in the voter list and the voting procedures. In addition, PEC representatives issued a written appeal of the CEC chairperson to young people who had reached the election age on Election Day. As a pilot project was planned in Krtsanisi electoral district, which involved electronic voting and counting procedures on polling day, voters also received an information flyer on the use of electronic counting machines. Basic information posted on the CEC website is also available in Abkhazian.</p> <p>By-elections of the Parliament of Georgia were held on April 2, 2022, in the N12 majoritarian electoral district (Rustavi and Gardabani districts). A total of 121 polling stations were set up in the district, including two polling stations for voters living in areas densely populated by ethnic minorities. Information and election documents were provided in Azerbaijani for the voters of the mentioned precincts. They, like in previous years, had the opportunity to participate in elections independently.</p>
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#### Article 11. Media

Language	Article and paragraph of the Charter	Comments/specifications
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian,	<p><b>Article 11. 1. A</b></p> <p>to the extent that radio and television carry out a public service mission:</p> <p>iii. to make adequate provision so that broadcasters offer programmes in the regional or minority languages.</p>	<p>iii. The Law of Georgia “On Broadcasting”<sup>75</sup> obliges the Public Broadcaster to “reflect ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, age and gender diversity of the society within programs” (Article 16, h) and “broadcast a number of programmes in certain proportions prepared in the languages of minorities, about minority groups and programmes prepared by minorities”. (Article 16, l). According to the Article 33 (1') of the Law, the Public Broadcaster shall create one or more regular programme products in at least 4 languages annually, including in the Abkhazian and Ossetian languages. Community broadcasting shall ensure covering the opinions of minorities living within the respective service area. (The Law, Article 46, 1 c)</p> <p>With the purpose to ensure access of ethnic minorities to information, preparation of programs in minority languages and for ethnic minorities in 2017 the group “Diverse Georgia” was established. The news in seven minority languages is available through the web-site of the Public Broadcaster <i>1tv.ge</i> in 24-hours format.</p>

<sup>75</sup> <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/32866/39/en/pdf>

		<p>The <b>web-portal launched under the Public Broadcaster is available in seven-languages</b>, including ethnic minority languages in 24-hours format. Live broadcasting of news program with simultaneous translation in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages through regional TV channels is also operational on a daily basis. To support access of ethnic minorities to media, in 2017, the Public Broadcaster developed a special media strategy with the purpose to provide ethnic minorities with information in the languages they understand and promote the culture and traditions of ethnic minorities among Georgian-speaking population, stressing the significance of their role and engagement.</p> <p>In 2021 The Georgian Public Broadcaster signed a <b>Memorandum of Cooperation</b> with the regional TV channels (“ATV12”, “Parvana TV”, “Marneuli TV”) in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities; it implies provision of regional televisions with the news programs in minority languages as well as other media programs (upon request) prepared by the Public Broadcaster.</p> <p>The regional TV channels in minority languages are operational.</p>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Kurdish	<p><b>Article 11. 1. b</b></p> <p>ii. to encourage and/or facilitate the broadcasting of radio programmes in the regional or minority languages on a regular basis;</p>	<p>ii. Weekly cultural-educational program in Kurdish language is broadcasted on Georgian Public Radio.</p> <p>Radio broadcasting in the languages of ethnic minorities is also available in penitentiary establishments of Special Penitentiary Service.</p>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Kurdish	<p><b>Article 11. 1. c</b></p> <p>to encourage and/or facilitate the broadcasting of television programmes in the regional or minority languages on a regular basis</p>	<p>ii. Since 2019, the format of broadcasting in ethnic minority languages had changed. In the framework of the project “Diverse Georgia”, internet-televisions Birinci Kanal (First Channel) and Առաջին Ալիք (First Channel) started broadcasting respectively in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages. A 15-minute newscast “Moambe” is broadcasted at 12:00 am, 15:00 pm, 18:00 pm, 20:00 pm, while one-hour “Moambe” with simultaneous translation in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages is aired at 21:00 pm through regional TV channels. TV receiver devices DVBT2, which are intensively used by the population, for digital broadcasting have the language selection function and the button for the selection of the appropriate language.</p> <p>TV broadcasting in the languages of ethnic minorities is also available in penitentiary establishments of Special Penitentiary Service.</p>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian	<p><b>Article 11. 1. d</b></p> <p>to encourage and/or facilitate the production and distribution of audio</p>	See 11.1 b and 11.1.c

	and audio-visual works in the regional or minority languages	
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian	<b>Article 11. 1. e</b> i. to encourage and/or facilitate the creation and/or maintenance of at least one newspaper in the regional or minority languages; or	Armenian-language newspaper “Vrastan” and Azerbaijani-language newspaper “Gurjistan” are published with the state support.  In 2021, 102 issues of the Armenian-language newspaper “Vrastan” (circulation- 3500 copies) and 50 issues of the Azerbaijani-language newspaper “Gurjistan” (circulation – 4700 copies) were published. They are disseminated in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, as well as in penitentiary and probation establishments. Up to 4 000 copies of newspapers in Azerbaijani and Armenian languages were delivered to the libraries of penitentiary establishments in 2021.
Armenian, Azerbaijanian, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian	<b>Article 11. 1. g</b> to support the training of journalists and other staff for media using regional or minority languages.	Training for journalists, including ethnic minority representatives, participate in relevant seminars/training. In 2021, a training in disinformation and propaganda for media representatives from the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities was conducted.
Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani	<b>Article 11.2</b> The Parties undertake to guarantee freedom of direct reception of radio and television broadcasts from neighbouring countries in a language used in identical or similar form to a regional or minority language, and not to oppose the retransmission of radio and television broadcasts from neighbouring countries in such a language. They further	Media of neighbouring countries as well as international media is available.

	<p>undertake to ensure that no restrictions will be placed on the freedom of expression and free circulation of information in the written press in a language used in identical or similar form to a regional or minority language. The exercise of the above-mentioned freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and</p>	
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	impartiality of the judiciary.	
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian	<p><b>Article 11. 3</b></p> <p>The Parties undertake to ensure that the interests of the users of regional or minority languages are represented or taken into account within such bodies as may be established in accordance with the law with responsibility for guaranteeing the freedom and pluralism of the media.</p>	Media of neighbouring countries as well as international media is available.

**Article 12. Cultural Activities and Facilities**

Language	Article and paragraph of the Charter	Comments/specifications
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<p>Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, any other minority language</p>	<p><b>Article 12.1</b></p> <p><b>a.</b> to encourage types of expression and initiative specific to regional or minority languages and foster the different means of access to works produced in these languages;</p> <p><b>b.</b> to foster the different means of access in other languages to works produced in regional or minority languages by aiding and developing translation, dubbing, post-synchronization and subtitling activities.</p> <p><b>c.</b> to foster access in regional or minority languages to works produced in other languages by aiding and developing translation, dubbing, post-synchronization and subtitling activities;</p>	<p>The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia supports projects and events aimed at protection, development, popularization, and self-expression of the culture of ethnic minorities and promotes their further integration into the Georgian space.</p> <p><b>b. c.</b> The Georgian “<b>Law on Culture</b>” states that “Georgian citizens are equal in cultural life regardless their national, ethnic, religious, or linguistic belonging. (Article 6). The Law guarantees the right of all citizens for cultural participation and protection of cultural identity.</p> <p>The Ministry of Culture, Sport and youth of Georgia supports theatres, museums and cultural centres of ethnic minority representatives. In particular:</p> <p><b>LEPL Heydar Aliyev Tbilisi State Professional Azerbaijani Drama Theatre; LEPL Alexander Griboyedov Tbilisi State Russian Professional Drama Theatre; LEPL Petros Adamyan Tbilisi State Armenian Professional Drama Theatre.</b></p> <p><b>LEPL Mirza Phatali Akhundov Museum of Azerbaijani Culture; LEPL David Basazov Museum of Jewish and Georgian-Jewish Relations</b> (The museum was rehabilitated by the Cartu Foundation in 2013-2014 and the new exposition was arranged)</p> <p><b>Russian troupe of LEPL Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre and Russian puppet theatre of LEPL Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre.</b></p>
	<p><b>Article 12.1</b></p> <p><b>d)</b> to ensure that the bodies responsible for organising or supporting cultural activities of</p>	<p>Preservation of cultural identity of ethnic minorities is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia, which implies promoting the creativity and artistry (exhibitions, performances, publications, concerts) of ethnic minorities working in the field of culture.</p>

Armenian, Azerbaijani, Jewish, Kurdish, Chechen/Kist, Assyrian, any other minority language	various kinds make appropriate allowance for incorporating the knowledge and use of regional or minority languages and cultures in the undertakings which they initiate or for which they provide backing;	The activities aimed at popularization of culture of ethnic minorities are defined in the <i>State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2021-2030 and the Action Plan for 2021-2022</i>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Jewish,  any other minority language	<b>Article 12. 1</b> <b>e)</b> to promote measures to ensure that the bodies responsible for organising or supporting cultural activities have at their disposal staff who have a full command of the regional or minority language concerned, as well as of the language(s) of the rest of the population;	The staff involved in the activities of the following LEPLs under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia has a good command of the relevant language, as well as plays are staged in theatres in these languages: <b>David Basazov Museum of Jewish and Georgian-Jewish Relations.</b> <b>Mirza Phatali Akhundov Museum of Azerbaijan Culture.</b> <b>Heydar Aliyev Tbilisi State Professional Azerbaijani Drama Theatre.</b> <b>LEPL Alexander Griboyedov Tbilisi State Russian Professional Drama Theatre; LEPL Petros Adamyan Tbilisi State Armenian Professional Drama Theatre.</b> <b>Russian troupe of LEPL Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre and Russian puppet theatre of LEPL Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre.</b>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Jewish  any other minority language	<b>Article 12. 1.</b> <b>f)</b> to encourage direct participation by representatives of the users of a given regional or minority language in providing facilities and planning cultural activities;	During 2021, the implementation of programs / projects and activities aimed at developing and promoting the culture of ethnic minorities continued. In order to promote and further integrate cultural self-expression, it was important to support the activities of museums (annual budget 204 000 GEL) and theatres (annual budget 1 952 000 GEL) through financial support. Within the competitions, 17 cultural events (concerts / theatre performances) were held in the municipalities densely populated by ethnic minorities, such as: Akhaltsikhe, Bolnisi, Tetrtskaro, Marneuli, Gardabani, Tsalka, Akhmeta (Pankisi) - 126 actors were involved.

<p>Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian, Abkhazian, Ossetian, Jewish</p> <p>Any other minority language</p>	<p><b>Article 12.2</b></p> <p>In respect of territories other than those in which the regional or minority languages are traditionally used, the Parties undertake, if the number of users of a regional or minority language justifies it, to allow, encourage and/or provide appropriate cultural activities and facilities in accordance with the preceding paragraph.</p>	<p>The projects are being implemented both in the regions and in the capital.</p>
<p>Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian</p>	<p><b>Article 12.3</b></p> <p>The Parties undertake to make appropriate provision, in pursuing their cultural policy abroad, for regional or minority languages and the cultures they reflect.</p>	<p>The State supports activities of LEPL <b>Heydar Aliyev Tbilisi State Professional Azerbaijani Drama Theatre</b>, LEPL <b>Alexander Griboyedov Tbilisi State Russian Professional Drama Theatre</b>, LEPL <b>Petros Adamyan Tbilisi State Armenian Professional Drama Theatre</b>, Russian troupe of LEPL Tbilisi Nodar Dumbadze Professional State Youth Theatre and Russian puppet theatre. The above- mentioned theatres usually conduct performances abroad, however, in 2020-2021 due to pandemic the performance tours were postponed.</p>

### Article 13. Economic and Social Life

Language	Article and paragraph of the Charter	Comments/specifications
	<p><b>Article 13. 1</b></p> <p>With regard to economic and social activities, the</p>	<p>a) In the framework of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 and respective Action Plan for 2021-2022, large-scale door-to-door information/ awareness-raising bilingual campaigns (in 2020-2021, 248 meetings, up to 4200 beneficiaries) were conducted in the regions densely populated by ethnic minority representatives (Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti) on state programs and services (education, healthcare, legal aid), as well as acute</p>

Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian	<p>Parties undertake, within the whole country:</p> <p><b>a)</b> to eliminate from their legislation any provision prohibiting or limiting without justifiable reasons the use of regional or minority languages in documents relating to economic or social life, particularly contracts of employment, and in technical documents such as instructions for the use of products or installations;</p>	<p>topics (Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes, disinformation and propaganda, etc). Relevant materials were prepared also in minority languages and delivered.</p> <p>State Employment Support Agency (SESA) implements an active labour market policy throughout the country. In the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities (Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti) SESA has organized information campaigns aimed at informing target groups about the state programs and supportive services. To this end, 500-500 information booklets in Georgian and minority languages were printed and distributed.</p>
	<p><b>Article 13.1.</b></p> <p><b>d)</b> to facilitate and / or encourage the use of regional or minority languages by means other than those specified in the above subparagraphs.</p>	<p>In the framework of the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 and the Action Plan for 2021-2022 information materials (printed and electronic) on state programs and services were prepared in minority languages and disseminated/circulated.</p>
Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian	<p><b>Article 13. 2</b></p> <p><b>c)</b> to ensure that social care facilities such as hospitals, retirement homes and hostels offer the possibility of receiving and treating in their own language persons using a regional or minority language who are in need of care on grounds</p>	<p><b>In response to COVID-19 pandemic</b> to ensure protection and support of ethnic minority representatives pro-active measures have been undertaken. The assistance has been provided through 1) timely access to information on the pandemic and 2) access to subsistence items.</p> <p>Access to information and awareness-raising on COVID-19 related issues was provided through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Government information web-portal <a href="http://www.StopCov.ge">www.StopCov.ge</a> in seven languages.</li> <li>-Dissemination of printed, digital, and audio-visual materials on the COVID-19 in minority languages.</li> <li>-Dissemination of information materials through online and social media outlets in minority languages.</li> </ul>

	<p>of ill-health, old age or for other reasons.</p> <p>e) to arrange for information provided by the competent public authorities concerning the rights of consumers to be made available in regional or minority languages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-TV broadcasting of video clips, briefings, statements in minority languages.</li> <li>-Displaying posters and other visual materials in public space - streets, shops, and pharmacies.</li> <li>-Delivery of SMS text-messages on crucial issues in minority languages.</li> <li>-Online consultancy (Government hotline 144-1) in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.</li> <li>-Online training sessions for ethnic minority youth on the COVID-19 related issues by bilingual volunteers. Bilingual young people who got special training on the above topic have already conducted online meetings in 36 villages of 5 municipalities.</li> </ul> <p>In 2020-2021 up to one million information printed materials were prepared in minority languages and delivered in the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. Also, 1334 food and hygienic items were delivered to the most socially vulnerable ethnic minority families.</p> <p><b>The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia</b> provides communication with the citizens of Georgia on the issues within its competence. The communication process with ethnic minorities is carried out in the relevant language, with the help of unofficial translators.</p> <p>Various materials on ongoing topical issues were prepared and published in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.</p> <p>e) The website of LEPL Public Service Hall (<a href="http://psh.gov.ge/">http://psh.gov.ge/</a>) is available in Abkhazian and Russian languages that allows everyone to know what procedures should be passed to get the state run services.</p> <p><b>The Ministry of Justice of Georgia</b> prepares and distributes various information brochures on the state-run services, EU visa free travel, human trafficking, etc. Information brochures and leaflets in the native languages of ethnic minorities - Armenian, Azerbaijani) (also, Turkish, English, and Russian) are distributed through the Community Centres of the LEPL Public Service Hall of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia in the regions densely populated by minorities. Since 2011, applications can be submitted on various services in LEPL Public Service Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia on Abkhazian and Ossetian languages and since 2021, submission of applications in Abkhazian language is also enabled electronically. Remands / convicts are informed about the rights and duties in understanding language from the very first moment of entry to the Penitentiary Establishment. The catalogue of the rights is available in 5 different languages (English, Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Turkish) in Penitentiary System. The brochure of the rights and duties is available in 4 different languages (English, Russian, Arabic, and Turkish) which upon the request is provided to the beneficiary in printed mode.</p> <p>Since 2019, about 400 information brochures were distributed in the languages of ethnic minorities: in the Community Centres of Didi Jikhaishi, Mukhrani, Tsalka, Sadakhlo, Dmanisi, Adigeni, Kumurdo, Baraleti.</p>
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		<p>9 Community Centres operate in the regions inhabited by ethnic minorities (Kabali, Kvareltskali, Iormugalno, Sadakhlo, Poka, Kumurdo, Baraleti, Kachaghani Ninotsminda) in which 20 representatives of local, ethnic minority communities are employed. This enhances to overcome the language barrier between the Community Centre officers and beneficiaries.</p>
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## Annex 3. State Language Training and Integration Program

State Language Training and Integration Programme 2015-2022											
№	Region	Regional Training Center /Municipality	Beneficiaries							Total	
			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021		2022
1	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Akhalkalaki	465	917	788	877	616	397	961	741	5762
2		Aspindza							27	20	47
3		Akhaltzikhe		161	164	210	158	194	199	602	1688
4		Borjomi						2	11	94	107
5		Ninotsminda	160	383	404	406	502	205	639	14	2713
6	Kvemo Kartli	Bolnisi	61	210	165	126	128	77	139	48	954
7		Gardabani	117	224	238	267	81	194	234	223	1578
8		Dmanisi	90	164	205	192	203	48	95	98	1095
9		Tetritskaro							18	490	508
10		Marneuli	233	536	534	544	514	372	466	8	3207
11		Tzalka	76	131	60	54	111	54	85	66	637
12	Kakheti	Sagarejo	67	141	171	109	114	7	7	37	653
13		Dedoplistkaro							11	8	19
14		Lagodekhi		267	326	152	226	42	117	63	1193
15		Akhmeta		59	52	25	115	16			267
Imereti/Adjara				40	59	10	14	8	71	202	
Samegrelo/Zemo Svaneti									8	8	
WV Project						122	43	30		195	
GGI project								40		40	
Tbilisi- Integration				100	80	40	32	103	28	383	
Tbilisi- Friendship House								73	240	74	387
Tbilisi						64	18	99	215	396	
Martkopi Shelter								18		18	
Military bases					299	541	271	372	148	1631	
<b>Total</b>			<b>1269</b>	<b>3193</b>	<b>3247</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>3545</b>	<b>2059</b>	<b>3919</b>	<b>3056</b>	<b>23688</b>

## Annex 4. The 2020 and 2021 Elections

### 2020 Parliamentary Elections

In line with Article 63 of the Election Code of Georgia, ballot papers shall be printed under a Central Election Commission (CEC) ordinance in compliance with the sample established by the CEC in the Georgian language, while in Abkhazia, ballot papers shall be printed in Georgian and Abkhazian languages, and if necessary, in other languages understandable to the local population.

For the first round of October 31, 2020, parliamentary elections (Parliamentary Elections), 348 polling stations were set up in seven majoritarian districts densely populated by ethnic minority voters. Ballot papers for given precincts were translated and printed. Namely: 321,200 ballots in Georgian-Azerbaijani languages were printed for 213 precincts. While 125,400 ballot papers in Georgian-Armenian languages for 135 precincts. 14,600 ballot papers in Georgian-Azerbaijani languages were published for 13 polling stations in two majoritarian districts densely populated by ethnic minorities for the second round of parliamentary elections.

According to the subparagraph 14.1.v of the Election Code of Georgia, the CEC is responsible for creating a unified list of voters, for its computer processing, and for posting on the CEC official website the information designated as public (first name, last name; photo; date of birth; address as specified in the identity card of a citizen of Georgia; for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the occupied territories of Georgia – an actual address as well; for individuals registered without indication of address, individuals removed from registration according to the place of residence and those whose registration has been declared invalid by a decision of the Agency – the address of their actual residence; the date of registration of a voter in the unified list of voters) to be displayed on the official website of the CEC. During the election period, the lists of voters belonging to ethnic minorities in the electoral precinct shall also be available on the CEC official website in the language they understand

During Parliamentary Elections (1st and 2nd rounds), the search system of the unified voters' list (voters.cec.gov.ge) was available at the CEC official website in Georgian-Azerbaijani and Georgian-Armenian languages for voters residing in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.

During Parliamentary Elections (1st and 2nd rounds), for Armenian and Azerbaijani-speaking voters residing in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, the following electoral documentation and materials were available, translated and printed: unified voter's list; ballot paper; instruction for filling in the ballot; poster displaying the polling; various information to be placed under the banner "Ethnic Minorities."<sup>76</sup> On the CEC website, the CEC Decree No 38/2020, dated September 18 2020, on Establishing Certain Election Measures and Sanitary and Hygiene Requirements for the Polling Day of the October 31, 2020, Regular Parliamentary Elections of Georgia / By Elections of the Municipality Representative Body – "Sakrebulo"/ Extraordinary Elections of Mayors to Prevent the Spread of Infection Caused by the Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) (COVID-19)" was also translated and available.

furthermore, the temporary rule for the participation of wheelchair user – voters in parliamentary elections; informational flyers: "Verification in unified voters' list"; " Voting procedures"; "Address of CEC Chairperson to young voters who turned 18 years old by the October 31, 2020, parliamentary elections", also CEC Chairperson's interview (from press) were available. In addition to given materials, posters depicting sanitary - hygienic requirements to be followed on elections day and translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages designated for voters and electoral stakeholders were placed at electoral precincts in a visible place.

During Parliamentary Elections, for Armenian and Azerbaijani language-speaking Precinct Election Commission (PEC) members, the following textbook/manuals were translated and printed: textbook/manual of the PEC members; manual of the PEC Chairperson; authority of PEC secretary on E-day; functions of the PEC member responsible for the regulation of the flow of voters; duties of the registrar PEC member; duties of the PEC member supervising the ballot box and special envelopes; duties of the PEC members conveying the mobile ballot box, Training module – Election Security for the PEC members; poster depicting the sealing of the electoral documentation; Training module for the PEC members to promote independent participation of persons with disabilities in elections.

<sup>76</sup> See the banner "Ethnic Minorities" on the CEC website <https://cesko.ge/geo/list/2597>



For the first round of Parliamentary Elections, 13 videos prepared by the CEC were translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages, including the footage on services available to ethnic minorities. They were posted on the CEC website, social networks, and regional TV. For the second round<sup>77</sup> of elections, three video footages were prepared and translated into Azerbaijani languages.<sup>78</sup> In addition, the CEC prepared ads for radio spots for the second round.

For Parliamentary Elections, the Election Administration of Georgia ran an informational campaign "Talk to Voters" throughout Georgia, including regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. As part of the campaign, representatives of District Election Commissions (DECs) and volunteers held 40 rallies called "Find Yourself Find Your Precinct" at public gathering places of municipality centres and villages densely populated by ethnic minorities. Within the campaign framework, they suggested that voters verify their and their family members' data using modern technology (tab and quick pay terminal) in the unified voters' list. Seventeen meetings were held with Azerbaijani-speaking voters, while 18 were with Armenian-speaking voters. Also, five meetings were conducted with a small number of ethnic groups, including Kists - two meetings, two meetings with Avars and one meeting with the Roma community.

In addition, as part of the campaign, according to the place of registration of voters, PEC members disseminated the following informational flyers: "Verification in unified voters' list"; "Voting procedures"; "Address of CEC Chairperson to young voters who turned 18 years old by the October 31, 2020, parliamentary elections". All informational materials disseminated within the campaign were translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

The main information published on the CEC official webpage is also available in the Abkhazian language for interested persons.

### **2021 Local Self-Government Elections**

According to Article 63 of the Organic Law of Georgia "Election Code of Georgia", the ballot paper is printed in Georgian according to the sample established by the CEC ordinance, also in Abkhazian language in Abkhazia, and if necessary - in other languages understood by the local population.

For the October 2, 2021, municipal elections - 348 polling stations were established in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.

The CEC translated the ballot paper into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages for these precincts. For the first round of elections, 496,350 Georgian-Azerbaijani and 181,500 Georgian-Armenian languages.

Ballot papers were printed, and 5,600 Georgian-Armenian ballot papers were published for the second round of elections.

For Municipal Elections (Rounds I and II), voters living in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities could access the Unified Voter List via Search Engine (voters.cec.gov.ge) in Georgian-Azerbaijani and Georgian-Armenian languages on the CEC official website.

In addition to the documents translated and published for the 2020 parliamentary elections, the following documents were published in Azerbaijan and Armenian languages on the CEC website: the CEC Decree 353/2021 of August 23 2021, on preventing the spread of Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) infection (COVID-19) and "On participation of municipal bodies in inpatient medical institutions and isolation (quarantine, self-isolation) in the October 2, 2021 municipal elections, establishment of polling stations and special groups, definition of some election measures and sanitary-hygienic requirements" and the Temporary Rule for wheelchair user voter.

Ten types of information materials were also translated, including ballot papers and other information posters, and the following information flyers: "Verification of data in the unified voter list", "Voting procedures", as well as the CEC chairperson's address to young voters - those who participated in the elections for the first time. Ten manuals/instructions were translated and published for ethnic minority PECs members to perform their functions and duties competently: PEC members' manuals; Commemorative instruction of the chairperson of the precinct election commission; Powers of the PEC Secretary on the polling day; Functions of a member of the Commission for Regulating the Voter Flow; Functions of a member of the Voter Registrar Commission; Functions

<sup>77</sup> The second round of parliamentary elections was held in the regions inhabited by ethnic Azerbaijanis

<sup>78</sup> Videos in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages are available at the following link:

[https://cesko.ge/geo/video\\_gallery/show/1629/913](https://cesko.ge/geo/video_gallery/show/1629/913);

of a member of the Commission for Supervision of Ballot Boxes and Special Envelopes; The functions of a member of the commission carrying a mobile ballot box; Training module "Election Security" for PEC members; Poster depicting the sealing of electoral documents.

For the first round of municipal elections, 17 videos prepared by the CEC were translated into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages, including a video on services available to ethnic minorities. The videos were posted on the CEC website, social networks, and central and local television and radio. In addition, the Armenian-language newspaper "Vrastan" and Azerbaijani-language newspaper "Gurjistan" published information on voting procedures. The CEC also prepared clips for radio during both rounds of elections.

Representatives of ethnic minorities could receive information on electoral issues in Armenian and Azerbaijani at the CEC Contact-Hub. Voters living in areas densely populated by ethnic minorities had the opportunity to verify their personal data in a unified voter list on the CEC website in Armenian and Azerbaijani.

The election administration conducted an information campaign, "Talk to Voters", for the municipal elections throughout Georgia, including in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. As part of the campaign, representatives of District Election Commissions and volunteers in full compliance with all pandemic-related regulations held 297 information rallies throughout Georgia, namely in Tbilisi. Centres, villages, and public places of 63 municipalities - including 13 rallies in villages densely populated by ethnic minorities. Six rallies were held for Azerbaijani-speaking voters and five for Armenian-speaking voters. In addition, two meetings were held with smaller ethnic groups.

As part of the information campaign, Election Administration officials, along with volunteers, provided voters with information on suffrage and municipal elections and offered them to verify personal and family data in a unified voter list using a tablet and a quick payment machine. According to the place of registration, information leaflets were distributed by the precinct election commissions about verifying the data in the voter list and the voting procedures. In addition, PEC representatives issued a written appeal of the CEC chairperson to young people who had reached the election age on Election Day. The CEC piloted a project for electronic voting and counting procedures in the Krtsanisi electoral district; voters received an information flyer on using electronic counting machines. Basic information posted on the CEC website is also available in Abkhazian.

By-elections of the Parliament of Georgia were held on April 2, 2022, in the N12 majoritarian electoral district (Rustavi and Gardabani districts). The CEC set up 121 polling stations therein, including two polling stations for voters living in areas densely populated by ethnic minorities. Information and election documents were provided in the Azerbaijan language for the voters. Like in previous years, they had the opportunity to participate in elections independently.