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## **EUROPEAN PROGRAMME OF NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY REVIEWS**

### **STAGE PROJECT**

#### **Cultural Policy in Georgia: National Report**

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Item 10.1 of the draft agenda

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily engage the responsibility of the Council of Europe.

**CONTENTS**

<b>1. Historical background</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Responsibilities, administration and decision-making</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Decision-making process .....	6
<b>3. Cultural policy development and debate: current issues</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Heritage development</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>5. Strategies to boost employment in the cultural sector</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>6. Cultural management</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>7. Relations between the media and the cultural sector</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>8. Equality issues and cultural policy</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Cultural minorities .....	15
<b>9. Arts education: programmes and models</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>10. Cultural industries: development programmes and partnerships</b> .....	<b>20</b>
The book trade .....	20
Music .....	20
Film and the cinema .....	21
<b>11. Cultural policy: general objectives and principles</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>12. Main legal provisions in the cultural sector</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>13. Financing of Culture</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>14. Cultural institutions and new partnerships</b> .....	<b>28</b>
Archives .....	28
Libraries .....	29
Museums .....	30
Visual arts .....	31
Performing arts .....	31
<b>15. Fostering creativity</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>16. Participation</b> .....	<b>35</b>

## 1. Historical background

Georgia's original cultural identity has always been, and still is, central to its development. Culture as a whole and its various sectors have flourished and varied according to the diverse natural, historical and social situations that Georgia has experienced during its long and chequered history. A number of historical landmarks are worth pointing out: the adoption of Christianity as the official religion in 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, the unification of several Georgian kingdoms as a single political entity in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, Byzantine, Arab, Turkish and Persian influences at various times, and, last but not least, ever-greater cultural integration with Russia and the rest of Europe since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The diverse nature of Georgian cultural heritage is borne out by a vast number of architectural constructions (both religious and public buildings), a written literary heritage dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, original folklore (unwritten stories, legends, poetry, dance, music, including choral music, and performances of different kinds), frescos, icons and the whole spectrum of objects habitually used in everyday life, which also vividly illustrate the dominant cultural tendencies. The development of professional theatre, music, film and fine arts has also been remarkable in modern times.

We have thus decided to broach the concept of culture from the widest possible angle, encompassing a variety of activities and phenomena connected with our everyday lives. Cultural policy, in turn, has been taken to embrace all the major cultural trends, with a set of guiding principles designed to achieve a cultural equilibrium and prosperity in the community.

Over the last fifty years culture in Georgia has been subjected to drastic pressure for ideological reasons and as a result of political propaganda. Socialist Realism was central in shaping contemporary cultural policy priorities. The entire cultural system was highly centralised and state-subsidised: the state guaranteed consistent subsidies for culture but, at the same time, had full and unquestioned control of policy-making, especially when it came to selecting staff and repertoire.

The state also provided free artistic education at both secondary and higher level. Constant ideological pressure was matched by persistent financial involvement, which, particularly in Georgia, somewhat undermined artists' freedom, confining them to a limited cultural territory strictly guarded on political grounds.

Along with the task of improving the material and technical infrastructure, the state was responsible for cultural heritage. Much of the religious heritage was, however, destroyed, damaged or barred from wider public use. All cultural and artistic genres were denounced as mere formalism, except Socialist Realism, which was widely endorsed and expected to be practised. Admittedly, the state relaxed censorship from the 1960s onwards, and it was virtually abolished in the late 1980s. This tendency, of course, paralleled more important political changes that eventually led to the collapse of the USSR.

In 1991 Georgia regained political sovereignty and started to replace the Soviet system with a market economy, which in turn entailed setting up a modern financial, economic and legal infrastructure suited to modern reality.

Responsibility for the implementation of cultural policy was left primarily to the Ministry of Culture, with one significant change: the Ministry was no longer responsible for controlling the cultural sphere: instead it was made the sole co-ordinator of cultural activities. It became concerned with establishing priorities for future cultural development; these included promoting decentralisation and giving greater autonomy to institutions previously subordinate to the Ministry, particularly in financial terms. The latter, however, proved highly problematic and controversial because of more serious problems connected with the transition to a market economy, experienced by more or less all the post-Soviet countries up to present time.

## 2. Responsibilities, administration and decision-making

The Georgian Ministry of Culture is part of the government and responsible for the implementation of state policy with regard to culture in accordance with legal provisions and/or presidential decrees. The Ministries of Culture of the Autonomous Republics of Abkhazia and Adjara are part of the same system as the Ministry of Culture of Georgia.

On the basis of a set of relevant laws and with due respect for the fundamental principles of state democracy and the market economy, the Georgian Ministry of Culture seeks to establish policy priorities in the cultural sphere. These include universal freedom of artistic expression, support for cultural initiatives by national minorities and co-operation with other state and non-state bodies.

The Ministry, in accordance with the rights given to it by its statutes, co-operates direct with the Head of State, Parliament, government bodies and other institutions. Regular sittings of the government and of parliamentary committees, permanent state commissions and councils provide an opportunity for co-operation between the various bodies concerned. One of the deputy ministers of culture also acts as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry. Interaction with civil society and other establishments is co-ordinated via the Ministry of Culture Council. At regular intervals the Minister holds an "open day", which enables interested individuals or groups to consult the Minister in person.

Since the collapse of the Soviet regime, the Ministry of Culture has become keen to establish international links. The Council of Europe and UNESCO have become major partners, and bilateral international agreements have been signed with counterparts in countries such as the USA, the UK, France, Greece and the People's Republic of China.

The relevant ministerial bodies have been involved in the elaboration of a detailed plan for co-operation with and between cultural offices in the provinces of Georgia. To this end, the Ministry regularly holds "organisation and methods" seminars locally.

As regards the financial aspect of the Ministry's work, some statistics are given below in order to illustrate the situation.

### Breakdown of approved and actual expenses in thousand GL

	1999			2000			2001		
	Estimate	Actual expenses	%	Estimate	Actual expenses	%	Estimate	Actual expenses	%
Ministry of Culture of Georgia	11624.7	8894.6	76.5	7408.0	7102.4	95.9	8759.6	7182.5	82.0
Employees' salaries	2694.2	2107.0	78.2	1778.0	1715.6	96.5	2491.3	2198.8	88.3
Employers' obligatory contributions on salaries	835.8	456.9	54.7	534.4	514.6	96.3	1071.4	934.4	87.2
Postings and official visits	62.3	39.6	63.6	19.7	18.0	91.4	17.5	6.6	37.7
Other goods and services	1133.3	805.2	71.0	432.9	387.2	89.4	810.5	398.2	49.1
Subsidies and current transfers	6899.1	5485.9	79.5	4643.0	4467.0	96.2	3390.9	3040.6	89.7
Capital expenditure							12.0	12.0	100.0
Programme expenses							966.0	591.9	61.3

The territorial budgets of regional and district offices of culture are decentralised and administered by local government.

### Decision-making process

The Georgian Ministry of Culture, as a central body of the Executive and state policy-maker in the field of culture, has an important role in drafting legislation in this area.

A Bill may be tabled by presidential decree or as a result of an individual initiative. Orders from the Minister of Culture (instructions, regulations, directives, etc) constitute rules that are subject only to the law.

Under Presidential Decree No. 326 of 1997, the Bill drafted by the Ministry is sent to the state institutions responsible for the matters dealt with in it. These institutions must discuss it, make comments and send it to interested parties within one month; otherwise the Bill is considered to have been approved. The Bill is then forwarded to the State Chancellery, together with comments by other institutions, and the Chancellery submits it to the Georgian Ministry of Justice, which assesses its compliance with the Georgian Constitution.

The Ministry of Justice gives its decision within one month and the Bill, along with the relevant documents, as provided for in Article 30 of the Georgian law on "normative acts", is then passed to the government for discussion. If the government agrees, the President submits the Bill to the Georgian Parliament.

Local taxes are provided for in the Georgian Tax Code (Article 6) and Article 5 of the Georgian law on local tax collection (which does not provide for taxation in the cultural field). The Minister has the final say as to whether to submit the final version of the Bill to the Government, and the President submits it to Parliament.

Under Article 33 of the Georgian law on "normative acts", the authority empowered to adopt such acts may refer the Bill to state, non-governmental organisation or institutional specialists (local as well as international), thereby consulting civil society. Such consultation is not compulsory, but may take place during the drafting process.

The President of Georgia is vested with the right to initiate legislation (under Article 67 of the Georgian Constitution), and submits draft legislation prepared by the executive authorities to Parliament. If the President requests speedy discussion of a Bill, it is debated at the next parliamentary sitting (Article 34 of the Georgian law on "normative acts").

Access to information for the public is provided for in the third chapter of the General Administrative Code of Georgia.

Museums and exhibitions, music schools, libraries, cinemas and theatres, the founding of cultural institutions and their conservation, finance and the upkeep of cultural monuments are the responsibility of local authorities.

Both decisions taken by the representative local authority and the order issued by the Chair of the local authority are "normative acts", applicable to the whole territory of the local authority. The latter is responsible for forwarding the "normative act", signed by an official, to the Ministry of Justice within ten days.

The public may also participate in the drafting of a Bill.

Rules governing decision-making and the issuing of orders by local authorities are set out in charters.

### 3. Cultural policy development and debate: current issues

It is self-evident that culture is immensely important, and crucial to the development and prosperity of a community. Accordingly, cultural policy is at the top of the agenda of most policy-makers. How cultural policy priorities are put into effect, however, depends largely on the determination of those responsible, organisation ability and the financial resources provided. Such resources have in fact been very scant in Georgia in the last decade.

The Georgian Ministry of Culture and its partner institutions have nevertheless been concentrating on a number of cultural policy priorities and looking for ways of carrying out the tasks assigned to them in practice. The priorities are connected with:

1. Preservation of cultural heritage (movable and immovable artefacts, tangible and intangible cultural products of the past);
2. Original Georgian folklore (unwritten stories, folk poetry, songs, choreography, choral music);
3. Artistic education (theatre, film, fine arts and music);
4. Professional music, fine arts, theatre and film;
5. Museums and libraries;
6. Incentives for young artists;
7. Improvement of socio-economic conditions for those involved in the field of culture;
8. Improvement of the material and technical infrastructure of organisations involved in the cultural field;
9. Intensification of international links.

Among the wide range of policy objectives, one of the most pressing issues has been that of decentralisation versus centralisation. The issue is broached from a broad perspective. In 2001 the Georgian executive authority decreed that from the year 2002, all budgetary revenue and income tax collected in the country's territorial units would be credited to local budgets. Accordingly, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Finance, the Georgian Ministry of Culture endorsed a decision to transfer ten major cultural organisations previously subsidised from the Ministry's central budgetary funds to territorial budgets. The Ministry had in fact already made remarkable efforts in this respect even earlier. Most of the museums, cultural associations, libraries and artistic education institutions had been assigned to official local financial agencies operating according to local government needs and resources.

On the other hand, systematic and prolonged deliberation led decision-makers to conclude that cultural institutions still funded from the Ministry's central budget needed to be preserved, for they ensured consistent governance of the cultural sector and were crucial to the steady development of the main artistic branches and the preservation of links with other spheres of activity. Direct, guaranteed state financial support is also necessary in order to



preserve and promote artistic development, optimise the number of professional staff in the arts education system, and maintain a diversity of genres and of regional cultural traditions and cultural heritage.

Overall, the decentralisation process can and should go ahead for the benefit of all concerned, but only to the extent that the Georgian Ministry of Culture is unhindered in achieving the ultimate state policy objective of pursuing established policy priorities in the vast field of culture.

#### **4. Heritage development**

Cultural heritage is the subject of a special study and particular attention in Georgia. Article 34, paragraph 2, of the Georgian Constitution states that every citizen of Georgia has an obligation to help maintain the cultural heritage.

For the sake of clarity, cultural heritage policy must be seen from a historical perspective. The state started to be committed to the preservation of cultural heritage in 1940s, but there were remarkable ideological impediments. In 1978 a new agency was set up under the Ministry of Culture – the Central Scientific Division for the Preservation and Use of Historical, Cultural and National Monuments. The Division was later brought under the direct control of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia. This led to an abundance of material resources – an increasing number of architectural and natural monuments were taken under its wing, and historical and architectural museum parks were set up in most of the regions of cultural importance, which sought to achieve heritage policy objectives locally. In 1991 the so-called Office for the Preservation of Monuments was given back to the Ministry of Culture of a now independent Georgia. At the same time, the USSR collapsed and the concept of cultural heritage immediately began to be transformed. The transformation in question was largely caused by Georgia's ever-greater integration into the world community and the establishment of direct relations with leading international bodies in this field, in particular UNESCO. Previously, the work of the Office for the Preservation of Monuments had, as a rule, primarily concerned immovable architectural monuments and monumental painting. This shortcoming needed to be remedied promptly as the value of the movable cultural items of a nation's material and spiritual heritage came to be increasingly emphasised by UNESCO and other international cultural institutions.

To this end, the Ministry of Culture drafted a set of laws: the Law on Culture (passed by Parliament in 1997); the Law on the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (passed in 1999) and the Law on the Export and Import of Cultural Valuables (passed in 2001). These legal instruments are designed to facilitate the creation of an overall legal framework for the maintenance and development of cultural heritage. Prior to their enactment, the laws successfully underwent expert appraisal at the Council of Europe.

Auxiliary rules that will regulate heritage policy procedures in individual areas are now under consideration.

In order to raise the status of cultural heritage and enhance the policy-making process, the Georgian Ministry of Culture is drawing up principles for the establishment of a new organisation, although the Ministry will remain the essential policy-making institution in the heritage field. The new body will take over the job of classifying movable and immovable assets, in order to set up a database for cultural heritage preservation.

The Georgian Ministry of Culture is making efforts to meet modern cultural policy requirements in this respect: indeed, the transformation in the notion of cultural heritage from the preservation of heritage to its maintenance and enhancement has motivated a number of initiatives in Georgia. Most important, the development of the cultural industry has taken on more significance than ever before. This new emphasis in heritage policy is geared primarily to the development of cultural tourism. It has been proved by successful experiments abroad that the provision of cultural tourism amenities near monuments and the attraction of visitors

by modern means of communication is a profitable practice indeed. The introduction of such a practice by appropriate means and in acceptable forms is one of Georgia's cultural policy priorities.

The setting up of the Fund for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage exemplifies the above-mentioned change. The fund, which is subsidised by a World Bank programme, has carried out much-needed rehabilitation work on a large number of monuments over the last five years. Lately, the organisation has been more inclined to endorse projects which, along with restoration, envisage the provision of cultural tourism amenities.

As regards the controversial issue of trade in antiquities, such trade is regulated by the Law on the Export and Import of Cultural Valuables. The law is in fact very liberal when it comes to cultural valuables kept as private property, but very strict in the case of monuments or artefacts that can be considered as cultural monuments, whoever owns them: only the export from Georgia of monuments or artefacts bearing the hallmark of cultural monuments is prohibited. The laws on the preservation of cultural heritage provide for trade in antique valuables, in order to allow the state to identify more movable cultural property and monitor its movements more easily.

## 5. Strategies to boost employment in the cultural sector

Employment, one of humankind's biggest current concerns, is particularly problematic in the cultural sector.

During the Soviet era, the organisation of employment was extremely centralised: regardless of the quality of their performance, cultural personnel received their full salary as well as social benefits. The political transition and resulting economic crisis, however, reduced the number of jobs in the cultural sector. Modern market economy requirements made it necessary to review employment principles and ethics. It is interesting to note, that, alongside the shortage of jobs, there was a shortage of professionals in even the most traditional areas of cultural activity.

Even though minimum salaries are paid, much less money is still invested in cultural initiatives than is needed to retain professionals interested in working in the cultural sector.

Although the private sector is becoming increasingly involved in culture, relations between employer and employee are very poorly regulated. For example, there are no set rates for employment contracts and professional qualifications and merit are largely disregarded.

As a result, too many people have started to find it a disadvantage to work in the cultural sector. The number of people employed in the cultural field has decreased as shown below (the figures are in thousands and the percentage is given in relation to the total national work force).

1995	1996	1997
237.4	220.6	195.4
13.2%	13.7%	10.8%

Various strategies have been considered, especially by the Georgian Ministry of Culture, for curbing the migration of professionals from the cultural sector. For instance, the state support programme envisages aid for artists and incentives in the form of scholarships and other kinds of financial support. As stressed above, however, there have been serious obstacles to employment in the cultural sector, which need to be tackled from the outside, from a broader political and economic perspective.

## 6. Cultural management

Management is one of the most recently introduced concepts in the cultural sector in Georgia. The concept has therefore not yet been clearly defined and the profession of cultural manager is not yet widely established.

Before 1991, culture was managed entirely by the Soviet Government. Virtually every aspect of the management of festivals, shows, exhibitions, training, the number of tutors and students in arts education, programmes, repertoire, the size of subsidies and so on was planned well in advance by the supreme state agencies. Despite the fact that these agencies were far removed from the everyday reality of the cultural sector, systematic, guaranteed support for cultural activities made for the remarkable success of Georgian Soviet art.

In fact, one of the themes underpinning this whole review is that the entire cultural sector, which was greatly spoilt by the privileges and exclusive treatment it received under the Soviet regime, continues to prove highly reluctant, in comparison with other areas of society, to adopt modern methods and replace the old-fashioned approach (by modern methods we mean, with reference to cultural management, employment on a contractual basis, the development of profitable individual projects, and so on). A large number of artists and professionals working in the field of culture are proving basically unwilling and very slow to abandon the privileges to which they are accustomed. There is little acceptance of the competitive nature of culture in a market environment.

Unfortunately, neither the Georgian Ministry of Culture nor its territorial branches have been able to promote reforms concerning the introduction of cultural management. This is mainly due to the lack of skilled managers and the shortage of financial resources. In addition, the private sector has little interest in becoming involved, because the law on sponsorship is couched in very vague terms and does not therefore provide entrepreneurs with incentives.

The lack of cultural management in Georgia is borne out by the insignificant number of short-term and long-term projects designed to increase competitiveness in the cultural sector and make Georgian culture more competitive on a wider scale.

Signs of a managerial approach to culture and the arts are, however, emerging with increasing frequency. For instance, the practice of programme funding is being introduced in some areas: projects selected out of a large number submitted are provided with some funds, although only on a very small scale. For example, only 100 000 Georgian Lari (\$50 000) has been allocated for programme financing in the theatrical sphere – barely sufficient for a single performance by the National Opera and Ballet Theatre, whereas there are 58 other professional theatre companies in the country.

## **7. Relations between the media and the cultural sector**

There is no longer any doubt that sophisticated modern means of mass communication have come to shape the modern age.

Generally speaking, the mass media are regarded in Georgia as part of the broader concept of culture. Relations between culture and the media are reciprocal: each has a defining impact on the other. As in other post-Soviet countries, however, a free press and free media are to a large extent a novelty in Georgia. There is therefore more emphasis on scandal and less attention is devoted to more humdrum events.

As pointed out at the beginning of this report, it is the Georgian Ministry of Culture that is chiefly responsible for achieving country-wide cultural policy objectives. In particular, the Ministry of Culture is one of the main parties responsible for making arrangements for interaction between the media and the cultural sector.

With this important goal in mind, the Department of Information and Communication was set up at the Ministry of Culture and has been involved in gathering information about cultural developments world-wide and in providing the Georgian public with news about ongoing reforms and emerging trends in the cultural sector in Georgia.

The ministerial department has used a number of tools: regular public opinion surveys, systematic analysis of the Georgian and foreign press, prompt replies to critical assessments and so on. The department also runs the Centre for Public Relations, which deals mainly with NGOs. The Centre periodically holds public discussions with them on issues related to reforms and policy objectives in the cultural sector.

The Ministry of Culture's favoured means of interaction with the mass media are press conferences, periodical briefings and specially convened meetings and interviews with ministry officials and ministerial institutions.

Of late, rapidly increasing importance has been attached to designing the Ministry of Culture's own website.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the time this document was being prepared, the Georgian Ministry of Culture was intensively engaged in designing the final version of its own website. The site will not only include a description of the work of the Ministry itself but will also highlight major Georgian cultural achievements since the beginning of Georgia's history. Information on the main cultural sites, monuments and institutions will also be provided. It is hoped that the website will be accessible to those interested by the time this review is submitted to the Council of Europe.

## 8. Equality issues and cultural policy

### Cultural minorities

Cultural minorities are mainly represented by national minorities living in Georgia, and cultural diversity has therefore long been a natural phenomenon in various regions of Georgia, particularly in the capital, Tbilisi, which is renowned for its unique synthesis of minority cultures and folkloric traditions.

Approximately 30% of the total Georgian population is made up of minorities, the largest of these being two other South Caucasian communities: Armenians (8.09%) and Azerbaijanis (5.69%), according to the most recent population census in 1989.

Although there are no special legal provisions governing the cultural activities of national minorities, the supreme legal authority of Georgia – the Constitution – protects and underlines the importance of individual and collective rights, with particular emphasis on minority rights. Traditionally, the Government of Georgia has, through the Constitution, presidential decrees and decisions of the Ministry of Culture, implemented a consistent policy of fostering the individual cultural achievements of national minorities. The Ministry of Culture has established a number of priorities in this respect:

- preservation, promotion and development of the cultural assets, languages and traditions of national minorities;
- collaboration and co-operation with the communities concerned and associations connected with minorities;
- strengthening of bilateral links with the countries of origin of the national minorities concerned;
- establishment of new cultural centres;
- enhancement of co-operation between diasporas with a view to their combined integration into the wider cultural environment of the country;
- provision of instant access to Georgian culture in areas inhabited by national minorities.

Co-ordination and co-operation between the Georgian Ministry of Culture and national minorities are greatly facilitated by the work of a Standing Council comprising members of the minorities' intelligentsia and through intensive cultural interaction with various national minority cultural associations operating in Georgia, the most distinguished being:

- the Russian Cultural Association;
- the Union of Armenians of Georgia;
- the Azerbaijani Cultural Association "Birlik";
- the Jewish Cultural Education Centre;
- the Polish Cultural Education Centre;
- the Greek Cultural Centre;
- the "Multinational Georgia" movement;
- the "Slavic House" Organisation;
- the Centre for Russian Culture in Georgia (subsidised by the state);
- the German Cultural and Educational Society "Ainung";
- the Cultural Centre of Azerbaijan (subsidised by the state).

Hundreds more agencies, institutions and organisations are involved in preserving and representing cultural minorities. Various communities and social groups are thus provided, to some extent, with access to theatres, the press, museums and schools in their national languages.

The A. Griboedov (Russian language) Theatre in Tbilisi and the P. Adamian Armenian Theatre are particularly popular examples of the diversity of minority community cultures in Georgia.

As regards the cultural life of the autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the region of Samachablo (formerly the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia), because of the political crisis and lack of information exchange during most of the 1990s, it has been practically impossible to identify major cultural trends or establish any facts and figures. Traditionally, a variety of festivals and other popular events have been held regularly to promote the exchange of cultural achievements and values. The Georgian Ministry of Culture has established direct bilateral links with its counterparts abroad, resulting in a series of official cultural events, the most successful and remarkable of which were:

- the Armenian Cultural Days in Georgia (1996);
- the Georgian Cultural Days in Azerbaijan (1996);
- the Cultural Days of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania (Russian Federation in Georgia) (1996);
- the Georgian Cultural Days in Armenia (1996);
- the Cultural Days of the Hellenic Republic in Georgia (1998);
- the Israeli Cultural Days in Georgia (2000);
- the Lithuanian Cultural Days in Georgia (2000) and many more.

The key feature of undertakings of this kind has been that the national minorities concerned were always directly involved and took an active part.

It can be considered that in general the promotion of cultural diversity has become part and parcel of the country's foreign policy, given that Georgia is seeking to preserve neighbourly relations and remain an integral part of the global community. Minority cultures have thus enjoyed as much attention and freedom in their cultural initiatives as has been permitted by current circumstances. In fact, the cultural traditions of national minorities have been firmly entrenched in Georgian culture throughout the country's long history.



## 9. Arts education: programmes and models

A widely recognised feature of culture and the arts in Georgia is that they are based to a large extent on the very traditional arts education, which in modern times has comprised three main levels: basic, intermediate and higher.

The basic level of arts education comprises over 200 schools and gymnasiums specialising in music, fine arts, dance and art, where children are taught basic standards of cultural aesthetics and ways of expressing their talents in one or other artistic field. Studies normally last five to seven years in music schools, four to five years in fine art schools, five years in dancing academies, seven years in art schools and 11 years in gymnasiums.

The second level of arts education comprises a system of specialised intermediate institutions (schools and colleges) which not only prepare candidates for further education and thus perform a transitional function but also, unlike most similar institutions abroad, train teaching and other staff for the basic level of arts education.

There are 24 specialised intermediate arts education institutions in the country, some in the capital and some in the regions. They vary in profile and curriculum and include 12 music schools, five fine art schools, three schools specialising in general cultural and artistic education, the Tbilisi V. Chabukiani Dancing Academy, which is the only establishment teaching the art of ballet, the Tbilisi E. Mikeladze Musical Performance College, which trains young performers for the conservatoire and various orchestras, the Tbilisi S. Milorava School of Circus and Performing Arts and the Tbilisi O. Taktakishvili Art College.

There are also seven higher arts education institutions in Georgia:

1. Tbilisi V. Saradjishvili State Conservatoire;
2. Kutaisi Branch of the Tbilisi V. Saradjishvili State Conservatoire;
3. Batumi Z. Paliashvili State Conservatoire;
4. Tbilisi A. Kutateladze State Academy of Fine Arts;
5. Tbilisi S. Rustaveli State Institute of Theatre and Film;
6. Batumi M. Abashidze Institute of Arts;
7. Tbilisi State Institute of Culture.

The curriculum in arts education institutions covers not only specialised artistic training but also a wider general education, for which the necessary subjects are taught.

The arts education system in Georgia, as described, has produced a number of distinguished professionals. However, the present economic crisis and other difficulties caused by the political transition present an immediate danger to the steady development of arts education. A number of problems have been identified:

- a shortage of textbooks, prescribed and auxiliary literature, infrastructure, tools and appropriate technical facilities because of the lack of subsidies;
- the need to bring the salaries of arts education tutors up to the level of those of teachers in the general education system;

- the budget funds and other financial resources allocated to the general education system do not cover the arts education system;
- arts education tutors and students are disadvantaged, in that there are no guaranteed opportunities for further training or participation in international festivals, exhibitions and other public events;
- the material and technical infrastructure has deteriorated drastically and, in most cases, been found unfit for further use.

Even more pressing is the problem of the chronic shortage of premises: too many specialised institutions are forced to use buildings inappropriate to their work.

Most young people living in the regions are deprived of the right to take advantage of an artistic education, because of either the lack of accommodation in the capital or the absence of suitable arts education institutions in their region.

A number of solutions to these problems are set out below. They are widely expected to encourage the maintenance of an effective arts education system in Georgia and its improvement.

1. To ensure effective integration of arts education into the wider education system, implementation by the state of certain specific measures: establishment of a relevant legal framework, state control of the maintenance of rare and priority aspects of arts education, provision of regular financial support.
2. Measures to devise a state programme to improve the integration of the Georgian arts education system into the wider global network of arts education institutions. This will entail making arrangements for the recognition of the equivalence of diplomas, setting up a database, establishing contacts with counterparts abroad, training tutors and students abroad, organising international masterclasses in Georgia and encouraging participation in masterclasses abroad, and liaison between individual education programmes and projects and international donor organisations.
3. The provision of proper facilities, in particular premises, for priority specialised institutions (if necessary, by means of comprehensive business plans).
4. The provision of the instruments needed by music schools (this might also be achieved by applying for international funds).
5. Reinstatement of the Special Production Unit in order to carry out the inventory needed and continue to produce and supply materials and facilities for arts education institutions.
6. Provision of the funds needed to produce textbooks and other books required.
7. Provision of catalogues for arts education libraries.
8. Provision of audiovisual and computer technology, ie timely use of modern technological methods as appropriate.

9. Organisation of training abroad for tutors and students on the basis of selection procedures run by the Georgian Ministry of Culture.
10. Reinstatement of the national department responsible for training arts education tutors.
11. Official recognition of the qualifications of tutors working in arts education.

To conclude, given the value and importance of a proper arts education, the latter will be given high priority and considered a major cultural policy objective by the Georgian Ministry of Culture. Arts education and the various institutions involved must continue to be governed and managed by the Ministry of Culture.

## **10. Cultural industries: development programmes and partnerships**

### *The book trade*

In general, the printing industry in Georgia has been enhanced by the rapid introduction of modern printing technology since the break-up of the USSR. It is, however, widely admitted that there is very little co-ordination of policy as regards books: the development of the book trade depends largely on individual policies pursued by a growing number of state and private publishing companies. There has, for instance, been a dramatic increase in the production of cheap, mass-market reading matter, which is bound to lead to a deterioration of the public's literary tastes. This impending danger has led most cultural policy-makers to argue that, although it is unreasonable and virtually impossible for the Ministry of Culture to have complete control over the development of the book trade in Georgia, individual publishing companies need to be convinced that it is increasingly important, and only fair, to provide the Ministry of Culture with information about the number of titles produced, print runs, market requirements and the resulting business trends and, most importantly, the thematic content of the books produced. Measures are being proposed to achieve some degree of aesthetic influence over the development of the book trade in the future.

It should also be pointed out that publishing companies are being set up to respond to, or are specialising in, the narrow interests and demands of increasingly diverse sections of the reading public, producing, for instance, scientific literature, books for the mass market, children's books, fiction and medical books. Companies producing general-interest books are at a disadvantage in comparison with those that specialise. So policy-makers tend to conclude that, if cultural policy with regard to books is ultimately to succeed, these two trends should be combined: the production of both specialist and general literature should be evenly developed and encouraged.

### *Music*

Professional music in Georgia has changed and improved remarkably over the last half century. A number of companies and institutions have emerged that have had a decisive role in shaping music in Georgia: the State Instrumental Ensemble, State Trio and State Cappella of Batumi, the State Symphony Orchestras in Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi and Sukhumi, the National Opera and Ballet Theatres in Tbilisi and Kutaisi, the Grand Concert Hall of Tbilisi (the so-called Philharmonic Hall), the Centre for Musical Culture, the Evgeni Mikeladze State Orchestra, the Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra, the Iliko Sukhishvili and Nino Ramishvili Georgian National Ballet, and so on.

The Georgian Ministry of Culture has always been a driving force for the development of the music sector, one of its main objectives being to foster traditional national folk music, which was the starting point for most musical undertakings.

The Ministry of Culture makes an effort to support young, talented musicians, who are expected to respect the unique traditions of Georgian music as well as partake of the experience of other countries and acquaint themselves with classical music from the rest of the world.

### Film and the cinema

Before 1990 there was only one film production company - "Georgian Film" - operating in Georgia. It produced seven or eight feature films a year as well as a number of short films, cartoon films, documentaries and popular science films. There was also a television film studio that was able to produce a large number of interesting, high-quality short films and feature films. Both "Georgian Film" and the television film studio had their own budgets and annual programme.

Film production in Georgia was thus quite stable and consistent. "Georgian Film" became internationally known for its uniqueness, originality, creativity, general approach and skilled actors. This is clearly reflected in the large number of prestigious prizes and awards received at various international film festivals.

There also used to be a satisfactory tradition of film education. Numerous prominent film and theatre professionals graduated from the Shota Rustaveli State Institute of Theatre and Film. The persistent economic and financial crisis is, however, causing serious problems in various sectors, including the film industry. The shortage of subsidies and material assistance makes it virtually impossible to maintain the strong tradition of film production and cinematographic culture. The state is no longer able to fund the film industry, and there is also a lack of sponsorship. These are in fact the main reasons why "Georgian Film" cannot function properly any more. The same is true of the television film studio.

In March 2001 the National Film Centre was set up. It now comes under the Ministry of Culture and will be mainly responsible for considering new production projects submitted, the best and most attractive of which will be selected by its committee of experts.

Only after this procedure has been completed will selected film projects ultimately qualify for funding. It is widely believed that the introduction of this procedure will serve the crucial purpose of solving the problems currently faced by the Georgian film industry. This new institution will not, however, be able to solve all the problems on its own. Further efforts are required to attract more sponsors and support for a comprehensive review of national film production, to ensure better conditions and make it easier to make a profit.

## 11. Cultural policy: general objectives and principles

The general objectives and principles of Georgia's current cultural policy are outlined in a very important document, the Strategy for the Development of Culture in Georgia, which was approved by the government last year. The wide-ranging principles set out should help to preserve, secure, enhance and popularise the heritage and traditions of Georgian culture in all their diversity.

The main features of the strategy are as follows:

Cultural economics: the document envisages a smooth transition from Soviet-style subsidies to market-style financing. It emphasises the effectiveness of the contract system and the need to reduce unconditional subsidies, giving priority to investment in projects and programmes more compatible with its objectives and to the development of joint financing arrangements. The aim is also to set up specialised funds to support particular aspects of culture. Significantly, the Ministry supports the idea of setting up a Tenders Board and an Advisory Council, which will provide advice on how to allocate the budget and assistance to the more promising and sound initiatives.

Incentives designed to promote donations and sponsorship are also part of the strategy.

Management of cultural activities and partners involved: the strategy highlights the immediate need to classify and approve all major organisations and individuals connected with cultural life and the culture industry in order to increase the effectiveness of national cultural policy. In addition, the strategy seeks to strike the right balance between the powers of centralised and local institutions and between state and private initiatives.

The Ministry of Culture refers, in the document, to the need to set up an information centre and database to overcome the problem of the shortage of information. The centre would be responsible for collecting data on major cultural trends and events abroad and making comprehensive information about cultural activities in Georgia available to interested parties throughout the world.

While reaffirming the priority of protecting and promoting the national cultural heritage, the Strategy for the Development of Culture in Georgia will ensure a continued commitment to the interests of national and ethnic minorities, because multiplicity and diversity have been key features of Georgian history. The document also recognises the crucial importance of interacting regularly with relevant international organisations, such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the EU, the World Bank, the UNDP, UNICEF and the SOROS Foundation.

The intention is also to make every effort to enhance the development of the various branches of the culture industry (which, in return, promises to plough more profits back into the system) and to support the development of cultural tourism. The latter depends, however, on broader political aspirations not only in Georgia but in other countries in the southern Caucasus.

Overall, the Strategy for the Development of Culture in Georgia seeks to establish the foundations for **comprehensive, all-embracing cultural development**, with the emphasis on the wide spectrum of national cultural heritage, adherence to democratic principles and a social balance.

## 12. Main legal provisions in the cultural sector

If Georgia is to pursue its cultural policy successfully, the state must encourage the development of the cultural sector, provide for public participation in the country's cultural life on an equal and unrestricted footing, support cultural diversity and processes whereby communities define themselves and forge an identity, acknowledge national and international cultural values and engage in international cultural co-operation.

In order to achieve these goals, which are fundamental, legislation has been introduced in connection with activities in the cultural sector.

The Georgian laws in the cultural field comprise:

1. the Law on Culture;
2. the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage;
3. the Law on Theatres;
4. the Law on State Promotion of National Cinematography;
5. the Law on Libraries;
6. the Law on Museums;
7. the Law on the Export and Import of Cultural Valuables.

1. The Georgian Law on Culture was passed on 12 June 1997. It is based on the Georgian Constitution and takes account of the wealth of age-old traditions in Georgian national culture and the experience of civilised nations in the cultural sphere. The law gives greater priority to culture as part of an all-round education and a factor contributing to personal development and fulfilment, the achievement of cultural awareness in every human being and the moral development of the public at large.

In accordance with the Georgian Constitution, the Law on Culture obliges the state to support the development of culture by all available means, encourage unrestricted public participation in the cultural life of the country, promote access to cultural assets, recognise national and international values, step up and broaden international cultural relations and encourage artistic integration.

The Georgian Law on Culture provides a legal framework for the development, preservation and maintenance of the country's cultural sector. On 28 May 1999 certain changes were made to the law, and the interpretation of some sections of it was clarified.

2. The Georgian Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage was passed on 25 June 1995.

The purpose of the law is to ensure the protection of cultural heritage and provide a legal framework in this area.

- a. The following are governed by the law throughout the country: immovable cultural monuments, moveable parts of immovable monuments, moveable cultural monuments, objects classified as cultural monuments and protected areas of immovable cultural monuments, regardless of who owns them.
- b. The law does not cover monuments erected by the municipalities.

3. The Georgian Law on Theatres was passed on 22 June 1999.

The law regulates the social, economic, financial and legislative aspects of the establishment of professional and amateur theatres, their operation and the conditions under which they may be reorganised or shut down. It also sets out the rights and duties of natural persons and legal entities involved in this field.

The law covers every professional and amateur theatre, whether privately owned or state-owned, and theatre companies operating in Georgian territory.

The purpose of the law is to encourage and support the work of national theatres and theatre companies in Georgia, and to develop national dramatic art, maintain the literary traditions of the language by promoting dramatic art, consolidate national awareness, revive and develop traditions, promote ideals common to the entire human race, and support the integration of Georgian dramatic art into the global cultural environment. The Georgian Ministry of Culture has prepared amendments to the Law on Theatres, which will be discussed with persons working in the theatre and then submitted to the Georgian Parliament.

4. The Georgian Law on State Support for National Cinematography was passed on 5 December 2000.

The law sets out arrangements for state support, gives the film industry national status, makes legal provision for the funding of the production and hire of films, sets out a legal framework for the organisations concerned and lays down rules and conditions for state funding for cinema.

The law is based on the Georgian Law on Culture, the Law on Copyright and Related Rights and the Law on Artists and Artists' Unions.

5. The Georgian Law on Libraries was passed on 11 June 1996.

The law governs the organisational aspects of library management and the relations of natural persons and legal entities with libraries, in accordance with international legal standards and principles.

6. The Georgian Law on Museums was passed on 22 June 2001.

The main objectives of the law are the organisation of legal relations in museum management and the protection of museum funding.

In particular, it:

- specifies how museums should be managed and sets out the main principles for their use;
- provides state guarantees for museum management;
- provides for a system of museum management funding;
- classifies museums;
- provides for a degree of private participation in museum management;
- sets out the main rights and duties of natural persons and legal entities involved in museum management.



7. The Law on the Import and Export of Cultural Valuables was passed on 22 June 2001.

The law governs the import and export of cultural valuables within the country and abroad. It aims to preserve Georgian cultural heritage and prevent the illegal export of Georgian cultural valuables and illegal archaeological excavations.

### 13. Financing of Culture

It is widely accepted that culture is quite expensive and that without permanent financial support it will be difficult to preserve the cultural heritage or ensure steady progress of the cultural sector in general.

Given that the Georgian Ministry of Culture is the main representative of state involvement and interest in the cultural sphere, the Ministry's budget figures for recent years, shown below, illustrate the marked decline in the state's financial support for culture:

	Approved total expenditure budget (million GL)	Share of the central state budget
1998	14,495.0	1.54%
1999	10,249.8	0.84%
2000	9,713.7 <sup>2</sup>	
2001	9,126.6	0.81%

Public investment in the cultural sector has been declining drastically for years. Special revenue allocated to the Ministry and other institutions is insufficient, although crucially important in covering, to some extent, the recurrent budget deficit.

The Georgian Ministry of Culture has devised a number of measures to deal with the variety of problems involved in financing the cultural sector. The measures encompass areas beyond the Ministry's competence, however, and the Ministry has therefore approached the President and higher executive and legislative bodies to ensure that they are gradually implemented. The Ministry of Culture and the other central institutions involved are arguing that financial regulations governing the renting of buildings and premises owned by organisations that come under the Ministry of Culture and depend on the central budget need to be altered in favour of the owners and, more specifically, that 80% of income from rent should remain at the disposal of the cultural institutions owning the premises concerned so that they can invest in the improvement of technical facilities and provide effective financial incentives for local staff. Only 20% of revenue from rent should be paid into central budget funds.

It is also argued that the licensing of entrepreneurship in the cultural sector is highly important and that the government should introduce rules on the subject. Licensing should eventually apply to entrepreneurial activities in the spheres of arts education, film and video production, the renting of audio and video material, printing and publishing, the restoration of moveable and immovable cultural monuments, the antiques trade, show business and copyright in the cultural sector.

Privatisation is a huge issue as well, and the cultural sector has been keen to embrace it. Accordingly, the Georgian Ministry of Culture has sought to establish a degree of control over the process in order to prevent cultural sites from being destroyed without its knowledge and consent, premises and institutions from being privatised and improperly used, cultural clubs and "palaces", libraries and museums from being unlawfully owned, and obstacles from being placed in the way of cultural establishments with the aim of converting them into

<sup>2</sup> Under the legislation on the State Budget for 2000, the budget of the Ministry of Culture was subsequently reduced to 6,546 GL, ie by 33%.

establishments of a different kind. This task proved highly problematic, however, during the social and political transition of the 1990s: there have been repeated instances where libraries or other cultural institutions were privatised without the permission of the Ministry of Culture and transformed into commercial undertakings. For instance, in 1995 the Gurjaani District Central Children's Library was privatised by one of the banks; the local executive authority in the Marneuli District, without obtaining permission from the Ministry of Culture, transferred the district's municipal library to the ownership of the district court, and so on.

Although privatisation is an important source of income for the cultural sector, the Georgian Ministry of Culture has therefore sought consistently to establish certain restrictions and introduce regulations governing the process in order to avoid the otherwise inevitable adverse consequences.

## **14. Cultural institutions and new partnerships**

### Archives

Archives in Georgian have an interesting, age-old history. They are closely connected with the advent of a literary culture and with the beginnings of Georgian statehood. The collection and preservation of significant documents began in ancient times. As far back as the 6th century AD, according to the famous historian and ambassador Prokop(h)y of Caesaria, the ambassadors of the King of Kolkheti (Kolkhida) were quoting legal documents from the archives of what is now western Georgia, Lazika (Kolkhida), during their talks with the Persian Shah Khasro. There is strong evidence from Georgian sources that archives existed at the royal court of Georgia at least as far back as the 10th century.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, the Georgian archive system and its constituent institutions no longer came under the Soviet central archives authority ("Glavarchiv"); they were rapidly consolidated under the State Archives Department of Georgia. The department's main tasks are to organise the work of the state archives, set up and develop a national archives fund, register and classify documents, preserve and restore damaged material and set up microfilm archives. It also administers and uses resources available from the National Archives Fund, within the limits prescribed by law.

The Georgian archives network is made up of five central state archives. In Tbilisi alone, there are operational historical, modern history, literature and art archives. There is also a film, photo and sound recordings archive, as well as an archive of scientific and technical documents. There is a central state archive in Kutaisi, and Tbilisi has a central municipal archive. There are five urban and 57 regional state archives, an insurance fund state archive in Dusheti and auxiliary services. There is a State Department of Archives of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, in charge of the central state archives of Adjara and a network of regional archives. The central department responsible for administering the archives of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic is temporarily represented in Tbilisi.

On 2 May 1995 the Georgian Parliament introduced legislation governing the National Archive Fund of Georgia, which defines the tasks of the highest archive authority of the country - the State Archives Department - and its subordinate organisations.

In 1995 an international association - Friends of the Georgian National Archives - was set up in the United States. The association has drawn up a special project to set up a database for the State Historical Archives of Georgia and link it to the worldwide web. The association is also drawing up projects with other state archive institutions in Georgia and with the K. Kekelidze Manuscripts Institute. It is also planned, in the context of this co-operation, to send Georgian archivists to leading American universities and libraries to improve their professional skills.

The President of Georgia met the people in charge of the Friends of the Georgian National Archives in July 1998 and decided that the society's work was historically important to the country. The government's support for the achievement of their important goals was explicitly expressed at the meeting.

The Georgian State Archives Department has been accepted as a member of the International Council on Archives. In 1996 the head of department himself was elected a member of the International Federation for Information and Documentation. Membership of this prestigious international institution provides Georgia with access to archives worldwide. The Georgian Archives Department has also signed co-operation agreements with nearly all the countries of the CIS and with Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany and France. The parties involved will encourage the sharing of experience and information, provide one another with copies of documents and other material on request and organise joint exhibitions.

Since 1925 the Archives Department has published a journal called "Historical News", containing articles and scientific research findings concerning the National Archives Fund of Georgia, relevant legislation, methodological information, historical sources, collections of documents, etc. In all, 72 volumes have already been published. The State Archives Department's Exhibition Hall systematically organises exhibitions of documents illustrating Georgia's relations with other countries. Particularly successful examples of such exhibitions were those on "Georgia and France", "Georgia and Germany", "Georgia and Israel" and "Georgia and Turkey".

A presidential decree of 19 January 1999 introduced a public celebration day in Georgia in honour of archivists. It is normally held every year on the first Sunday in March.

The President of Georgia also enacted a decree on the further development of the archive system in Georgia in August 1998. On 21 February 1998 a decree was issued on the state archives establishment and reorganisation programme (1999-2003).

The above-mentioned legislation and measures are widely expected to facilitate the work of the archive institutions with regard to the classification, organisation and use of documents for broader scientific or social purposes.

### Libraries

Libraries in Georgia have long reflected the nation's intellectual requirements and aspirations. There are currently up to 5 000 functioning libraries in the country (including the Georgian Academy of Sciences, secondary and higher education libraries and scientific/technical and other specialised libraries). Two thousand one hundred and sixty-nine libraries come under the Ministry of Culture (including general public libraries and children's libraries). The Ministry also administers the Lado Asatiani State Children's Library and the Mirza Gelovani State Youth Library, which, most regrettably, is no longer subsidised from the Ministry's central budget because of the recurrent shortage of resources.

The political and social crisis from 1992 to 1994 severely damaged many libraries. Furthermore, in some cases the incompetence and lack of interest of the local authorities have led to a considerable decline in the role of libraries locally and, as a result, a deterioration in the conditions under which they operate in practice.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Culture has sought to offset the difficulties faced by libraries by means of technical and financial support, although this remains far from adequate and, indeed, insufficient to improve the situation. The Ministry has therefore been only too ready to welcome individual initiatives by the corporate library services of Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Telavi, Khashuri, Ambrolauri and Poti, which obtained grants by taking part in national or

international programmes. The grants have primarily been invested in the modern technology needed for a library to function effectively. As a result, the Ministry has started to encourage libraries all over the country to seek support from sources other than the central budget.

The Ministry of Culture has devised a special programme for the development of the library system, which is designed mainly to achieve cultural policy objectives and provides for the role of the state in pursuing this important goal.

In 1996, the Georgian Parliament passed a law concerning libraries, which has opened up new prospects for the sector. Developments since then and current circumstances have, however, prompted cultural policy-makers to make a number of amendments to the law: changes include the introduction of paying services in libraries, the maintenance of library networks and funds, the definition of state standards, the provision of extra funds to facilitate the payment of staff salaries and so forth.

### Museums

There are two hundred fifty museums of different types in Georgia – historical, natural history, art, literature, memorial museums, etc. One hundred and twenty of these are under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Museums generally are consistently faced with difficulties common to most post-Soviet nations during the transition period and socio-political reforms.

The Ministry of Culture recently held information and dissemination seminars in Telavi for museums in the eastern region of Georgia and in Kutaisi for museums located in the western parts of the country. Serious problems were identified in both cases, particularly with regard to the introduction of modern technology, the preparation of educational and information programmes and the development of the necessary managerial skills.

Nevertheless, positive changes are also taking place, more often and rapidly than ever before. A number of museums have, in co-operation with the Ministry of Culture, devised projects for the purpose of obtaining grants from the relevant agencies. This practice, sometimes known as "programme funding", has proved quite effective in many cases. The S. Amiranashvili State Museum of Art in Tbilisi is an example: it has successfully negotiated with the World Bank mission to obtain funds for rehabilitation work in the museum's treasure section. The financial agreement allowed the museum administration and the Fund for the Protection of Cultural Heritage to modernise the section's air-conditioning and heating systems, set up a new inventory and install computer technology. Furthermore, a delegation from the "Open Society" Foundation has undertaken to provide the museum with appropriate furniture and an Internet service. A museum association in the United States invited a specialist from the museum for further professional training, while the Dutch Arts Centre has carried out free restoration work on damaged exhibits and agreed to continue to provide assistance in the future.

Similar programme funding and assistance arrangements have also been applied in a number of other places. The effectiveness of the end-results has prompted the Ministry and the museum authorities to seek new partnerships as well as maintaining old ties and business relations.

Policy-makers in the cultural sector, especially at the Georgian Ministry of Culture, have also sought to develop a more flexible legal framework in this field. As a result, in 2001 the Georgian Parliament passed the Law on Museums and the Georgian Law on the Export and Import of Cultural Valuables, which are quite modern in approach and content.

Despite the progress mentioned above, it is still felt that further reforms are needed. More specifically, a new model for the management and administration of libraries needs to be introduced in order to bring the work of museums into line with the common cultural policy and, at the same time, resolve a number of practical issues. Plans to set up this largely new model already exist. They provide for:

- a new museums charter;
- instructions on further classification, registration and protection of valuables kept in museums;
- co-operation with counterparts abroad in order to share experience and make for an open climate of communication;
- seminars and retraining courses for museum staff;
- preparations for the establishment of a database of the wealth of diverse information kept in Georgian museums, which should, in turn, encourage more systematic arrangements for museum funding and, ultimately, the establishment of a state register of Georgian museum contents;
- the production and publication of a periodical on museums and their work;
- a plan to enhance the educational function of museums.

### Visual arts

Since the early 1990s, the visual arts have been characterised by the increasing number and frequency of exhibitions, despite a wide range of obstacles resulting from current social and economic circumstances.

Whereas the only exhibition spaces available to artists before 1990 were provided by the National Art Gallery, the State Museum of Art and the Tbilisi History Museum, there are now twenty-two private galleries and six exhibition halls in the capital alone, the latter being managed in conjunction with various cultural centres and institutions.

Although most of these are administered privately by individuals or companies, the financial problems are still great. National and international arts projects all too often lack financial support. Nor is the legal framework for such activities sufficiently comprehensive – there are no appropriate laws on sponsorship or regulations governing relations between artists on the one hand and art dealers, collectors, gallery owners and the relevant agencies on the other. The copyright law is also relatively recent, so it has not yet had sufficient effect in practice.

### Performing arts

When we speak of the performing arts in Georgia, we are referring primarily to the theatre.

According to current statistics, there are 58 professional theatres in the country. Twenty-three of them are located in the capital, Tbilisi, and the remaining 35 in other cities or regions. As for genres, 39 of the 58 are geared to drama, five to music, three cater for young people, five are puppet theatres, one is a mime theatre and one a marionette theatre, one is

concerned with satire and humour, one is a masks theatre and one a finger puppet theatre. The theatres also differ in terms of working language: 53 theatres work in Georgian; two companies use Russian, one Abkhazian, one Ossetian, and one Armenian (preliminary arrangements are under way to set up an Azerbaijani state drama theatre in Tbilisi).

The theatres in Georgia are funded in increasingly diverse ways: six depend solely on the central state budget for financial resources and support; seven are managed and funded privately and the remainder, ie the majority, are funded locally, with subsidies from local authorities.

Salaries and subsistence and production expenses are covered by state subsidies. Theatres submit projects to various foundations and private sponsors and, if successful, they receive grants to put on performances. The programme funding system at the Ministry of Culture also provides additional funds to theatres.

It is widely believed that, despite the virtually uninterrupted success of Georgian theatre and drama, the repertoire has become noticeably poor and dull. It is twelve years since the last annual competition for the best Georgian play was held. The lack of financial incentives and of contemporary foreign script translations has inevitably isolated Georgian professionals from wider global practices and achievements.

One definite but controversial change is the introduction of employment based on contracts. In the major cities, especially the capital, where there is a greater choice of actors, directors, playwrights and stage managers, it is believed that the introduction of contractual employment has made the companies more competitive and strengthened their resources, particularly their human resources.

In more outlying areas, however, contractual employment has been slow to come, because of problems connected with the professional training of actors and directors and the fact that the audience are often unable to afford tickets, even though they are sold at a nominal price. Financial obstacles make it virtually impossible for the S. Rustaveli Institute of Theatre and Film to train target groups for future work in regional theatres, whereas this was a regular practice until recently.

Theatre companies in general face a chronic shortage of funding and deteriorating facilities.

The plan is to solve this problem by devising and implementing short-term and long-term state support programmes and projects for the rehabilitation of the sector, involving a maximum number of partners: the Ministry of Culture, the Union of Theatre Employees, municipal and district authorities and, most importantly, private sponsors.

Regular festivals are also necessary if the sector is to flourish. "Golden Mask" in Rustavi and "Gift" in Tbilisi have become particularly prominent lately as means of presenting and publicising the achievements of Georgian theatre and bringing foreign performers to Georgia. However, lack of finance has made such festivals rather sporadic events.



## 15. Fostering creativity

Fostering creativity is normally one of the primary objectives of policy-makers in the cultural sector. In contemporary Georgia, creativity is fostered mainly through a variety of honours, awards and competition prizes. The most prestigious of these include the "Order of Honour" and "Medal of Honour" for distinguished achievement in culture, the arts and literature. Candidates are usually nominated by the Ministry of Culture or relevant cultural institutions. Nominations are then examined by the State Commission for Awards to Citizens of Georgia, which is attached to the State Chancellery. Orders and Medals of Honour are conferred on a regular basis.

The Presidential Committee on State Prizes for Literature, the Arts and Architecture awards the prestigious Shota Rustaveli state prizes and Georgian State Prizes. The final decisions are taken by a highly qualified jury. The Shota Rustaveli prize is awarded every three years in literature, music, fine arts, architecture, theatre, cinema (each prize amounting to 15 000 GL). Georgian State Prizes are awarded annually for literature, fine arts, music, theatre, publicistic writing, film and television, architecture, works designed to put across a particular message (each prize amounting to 7 000 GL).

Three awards are also made regularly in the field of theatre: the K. Marjanishvili Prize, awarded every two years by the Union of Theatre Employees (amounting to 500 GL), the S. Akhmeteli Prize awarded by the Union of Theatre Employees (500 GL) and the M. Tumanishvili prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture (500 GL).

A number of awards are also made for outstanding achievements in the field of music:

1. The D. Anghuladze International Competition for Tenors held every five years in Batumi has a prize fund of 45 000 GL;
2. The International Competition for Pianists held in Tbilisi every four years has a prize fund of 50 000 GL;
3. The S. Tsintsadze Competition for Music Ensembles held by the Georgian Music Society every three years has a prize fund of 5 600 GL;
4. The Z. Paliashvili Prize awarded by the Georgian Music Society every four years has a prize fund of 1 000 GL;
5. The Ministry of Culture awards:
  - a) The Ishkhneli Sisters Prize for Vocal Ensembles once every two years; the prize amounts to 1 000 GL;
  - b) The Z. Anjaparidze Prize for Vocalists every three years; the prize amounts to 1 500 GL;
  - c) The G. Dolidze Prize for Singers every year; the prize amounts to 1 000 GL;
  - d) The D. Arakishvili Prize for Folk singers every three years; the prize amounts to 1 000 GL.

A couple of awards are also available for visual artists:

1. The "Best Work of the Year" competition (painting, graphics, sculpture, applied arts, posters) and the "Best Gallery of the Year" competition. Both are organised by the Georgian Artists' Union and prizes vary according to the Union's current financial situation;
2. The Pirosmani Prize awarded every four years by the Georgian Ministry of Culture, which amounts to 1 000 GL;
3. The Ministry of Culture recently organised an International Biennial of Modern Avant-Garde Art; unfortunately, however, it has been unable to renew this initiative for financial reasons.

All winners of prizes awarded by the Ministry of Culture are selected by the Ministry's Department of Arts and Museums. It should be stressed that the Ministry of Culture also has tenders boards in the various sectors, which ultimately award grants to selected projects. These grants have, however, been largely inadequate, in realistic terms, for the selected projects.

## **16. Participation**

Broadly speaking, public participation in the cultural sector in Georgia has been decreasing in quality, not so much because of a decline in public interest in culture as because of the prolonged social and economic crisis. This is particularly evident during free and charity cultural events, which in most cases attract large audiences, whereas fee-paying cultural activities, for example commercial events, are accessible to only a small fraction of the public. The situation is even more drastic in the regions, particularly in the outlying parts of the country.

A look at the profile of those who take part in cultural activities in terms of age and gender shows that it is becoming considerably younger and more female. This trend suggests certain developments among the public, but is being subjected to a more rigorous study.

Young people and children are particularly keen on cultural activities in Georgia, as is borne out by the growing number of art clubs, studios and associations of various kinds catering for them.

The predominant feature of the cultural sector has been a relative decline in professionalism, matched at times by the interaction of culture and sub-culture: broader cultural trends interact with and are pervaded by sub-cultural offshoots. Sub-culture, in turn, has been undergoing remarkable progress and enjoying ever-greater support from the younger generations. It is believed, however, that its assimilation to a more general concept of culture is only temporary and is the result of broader social trends, stemming most probably from the political and social transition that has been taking place since the early 1990s.