



Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society

Support to Civil Society Initiatives

**Third Regional Seminar:
Faro Convention for Concrete Action on Cultural Heritage**

Georgia, 10-11 June 2021

Levan Kharatishvili

What is the extent of Georgian civil society engagement in cultural heritage?

A key measure of democracy – understood as the population's involvement in decision making and their responsibility for the common good – is undoubtedly the degree to which civil society manifests itself through grassroots activities, its presence and visibility.

This presentation will attempt to provide an overview of the current situation through selected examples of activities run by civil society institutions, as well as highlight several opportunities to support future actions.



Legal Framework

According to the **Constitution of Georgia**, the right to participate in **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, or language. Various articles of the Georgian Constitution refer to its multiple meanings and the roles incumbent on society:

- The State shall take care of the protection of national values, identity and cultural heritage, and of the development of education, science and culture (Article 5).
- In accordance with the 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 (Article 11).
- Freedom of creativity, cultural heritage (Article 20):
- Freedom of creativity shall be guaranteed. The right to intellectual property shall be protected (Paragraph 1).
- Interference in the creative process and censorship in the field of creative activities shall be inadmissible (Paragraph 2).
- The dissemination of a creative work may be prohibited only based on a court decision where such dissemination violates the rights of others (Paragraph 3).
- Everyone has the right to take care of protecting cultural heritage. Cultural heritage shall be protected by law (Paragraph 4).

Legal Framework

- **The Law of Georgia on Culture (1997 with last amendment of 2013)** instills the priority of culture and cultural heritage in the harmonious upbringing and development, and unrestricted self-expression of a person, as well as expressing and enriching the cultural individuality of the people and every citizen, and the moral perfection and humanitarization of the whole society and it obliges the State to support the development of culture in every way, ensure the free participation of citizens in cultural life, the accessibility of advances in culture, the universal recognition of national and common values, and the deepening and expansion of international cultural relations, and creative integration;
- The protection of cultural heritage is regulated by the **Law of Georgia on Cultural Heritage protection (2007)**;
- **Organic Law of Georgia Local Self-Governance Code** – protection and development of local originality, creative activities and cultural heritage; maintenance, reconstruction and rehabilitation of local cultural monuments; ensuring the functioning of libraries, club-type institutions, cinemas, museums, theatres, exhibition halls and sports and recreation facilities, and the construction of new facilities (Article 16);
- Other legislation of relevance is the **Law on the Socio-Economic and Cultural Development of Mountainous Regions, the Law on Museums, the Law of Georgia on Export and Import of Cultural Properties**. Together these instruments regulate the right of association and active participation in public life.

The National Policy “Culture 2025” has been approved in 2016 by the Government of Georgia. The document foresees long-term strategic vision, goals and perspectives considering different challenges faced by culture sector in Georgia.

Culture Strategy 2025



- The main principles of strategy are: publicity, civic participation and transparency. It is based on collaboration with other government agencies and municipal authorities, NGOs, IGOs, business sector, educational institutions, independent cultural professionals and general public, while initiating institutional and legislative reforms, what in turn represent the pillars for the development of culture sector in Georgia.
- 2-year action plan was a next step in Strategy implementation containing detailed activities planned by government agencies. The process of implementing the strategy as well as the action plan of the strategy is being monitored by the group of civil society and culture professionals.
- Heritage related Goals of the Strategy: Establish an inclusive process while elaborating a Code on Cultural Heritage; Designate responsibilities and coordinate efforts of involved institutions and stakeholders aimed at the protection of cultural heritage; Contribute to the development of the clusters and networks between the organisations of cultural and natural heritage sector and support national and international events.

Civil Society Organizations

There are around **1284** civil society organizations registered in Georgia.

112 list “**culture and art**” as at least one of their areas of activity.



Government Support Schemes for CSOs

Non-governmental and voluntary activities related to cultural heritage are supported to some extent by central and local government through cultural institutions, open grant competitions and tenders.

Tbilisi Municipality support programs.

In 2020, former Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia together with its structural institutions have announced 19 open grant competitions (with the total budget of 850,000 EUR) and supported projects of up to 155 civil society and private organizations.

International Support Schemes for CSOs

- **U.S. Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation Grant (AFCP)** – Proposal solicitation for cultural heritage preservation project (\$10,000 – \$500,000). In Georgia, the AFCP has funded 19 preservation projects worth nearly \$1,5 million, including a 2013 grant for USD \$600,000 to preserve the Gelati Monastery, a registered UNESCO World Heritage site. Preservation projects have spanned large segments of Georgian cultural heritage from folk music to architecture and art to archaeology.
- **EU4Culture: ‘Support to non-capital cities and towns of the Eastern Partnership Region in Preparation of Cultural Development Strategies’.** The EU4Culture project, funded by the European Union, has launched its first call for proposals for ‘Support to non-capital cities and towns of the Eastern Partnership Region in Preparation of Cultural Development Strategies’. The project places culture, the creative industries and **cultural monument sites** at its core, which all carry a huge potential for sustainable policies with a broad impact.
- **USAID Zrda Activity in Georgia** supported activities aimed at strengthening protection and management of cultural heritages: allocated funds to elaborate a programme for strengthening the protection and management system of the Vardzia-Khertvisi-Oloda cultural landscape and to explore the potentials for international recognitions, and particularly for a World Heritage re-nomination in the future; implemented **“Handicraft and Artisan Sales and Marketing Support Activity”** program, which included two directions: 1. “Enhance Artisans/ Crafts Makers’ Business Skills (implemented by the GHCA/Georgian Heritage Crafts Association. 2. Pilot program "Artisan as Destination", grant competition (Grant financing to arrange workshops and marketing materials) for artisans from Zrda target regions.



International Support Schemes for CSOs

- The **World Bank Regional Development Projects for Georgia** aimed to improve infrastructure services and institutional capacity to support increased contribution of tourism in the local economy. The project comprises of two components. The first component, infrastructure investment financed urban regeneration of old towns and villages, including restoration of building facades and roofs, public spaces, museums, roads and water, and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage sites, including access and presentation. The second component, institutional development supported institutional capacity and performance of the Georgia national tourism administration (GNTA), national agency for culture heritage preservation of Georgia (NACHP), national museum, project implementing entity (municipal development fund (MDF) of Georgia), and other local and regional entities.



Civil Society Initiatives & Actions

In Georgia there is a clear trend of increased activity of heritage groups and evolution of a civil movement. Advocacy and public awareness organizations, and also spontaneously emerging groups are now more active.



- An important experience was accumulated by “Tiflis Hamqari” activity for protecting cultural heritage of Historic Tbilisi. Public rallies organized in 2012-2013 for saving Gudiashvili square, which attracted many individuals and organizations, were marked with a creative approach and versatility of expression and grew into a considerable counterpart for Tbilisi public authorities.
- In regions important public awareness campaigns were conducted by a student organization “Non-Governmental Monitoring of Cultural Heritage”. A flagrant interference into Batumi historic boulevard induced activity of local civil society, which manifested in a series of rallies “I’ll wait for you in Batumi Boulevard”.
- Unprecedented public activity followed developments around Sakdrisi-Kachagani archaeological site in 2013. Sakdrisi archaeological monument protection campaign united NGOs of different profiles, creative groups and individuals, in particular: Monument’s Friend, Green Fist, Green alternative, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network, GYLA, Davitiani, all monument protection NGOs and citizens.

Cultural Heritage and Education

Another area of civil society that needs to be considered in relation to cultural heritage is academia. There are 19 Public universities (with 101000 students) and 45 non-public ones (with 57000 students) in Georgia. 3370 students are involved in vocational education institutions throughout the country. Out of 347 PhD students 57 (16.4%) are involved in Humanitarian Sciences and Arts Program.

Today, education in the field of cultural heritage is offered by the following higher educational institutions in Georgia:

- **Tbilisi State Academy of Art** – Faculty of Restoration, Art History and Theory, - Bachelor, Master and Doctorate programmes. Bachelor's programme consists of following disciplines: art history, culturology, restoration of architecture, restoration of fine art pieces; Master's programme consists of: restoration of architecture, restoration of artefacts (glass, ceramics, metal), icon restoration, fine art restoration, restoration of monumental art works; The Doctorate programme is dedicated to heritage conservation. The strength of the Department of Restoration, Art History and Theory is in engagement of its students in international conservation projects taking place in Georgia. The students have the opportunity to obtain the first-hand knowledge from the leading international experts of conservation and gain specific skills. The Academy's department together with the Agency and the Department of wall painting of London Courtauld Institute of Art is a party to a trilateral agreement (2012) regarding conservation of wall paintings of St. Virgin's Church of Vardzia Complex. Students participate in the on-going project by Georgian Arts&Culture Centre - rehabilitation of Gelati Monastery, funded by USA Embassy in Georgia; namely, together with international experts from Lugano University (Italy, Switzerland) and „Artelab S.r.l.“ (Rome) they are engaged in conservation works of wall painting and stones.

Cultural Heritage and Education

- **Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University** offers a master's programme "cultural heritage and contemporaneity" consisting of 3 main modules: ancient art, new and contemporary art, and museology.
- **Ilia State University** offers a bachelor's course in culture management, as well as the higher vocational training course in Monument protection and rehabilitation (architectural heritage, icons, stone, wood and metal items); and a master's programme in Research of theory and practices of art theory and culture management.
- **Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgian State University** offers bachelor and master programmes in art history, mass communications, art management, cultural tourism, theatre research, film research and TV media - theory and practices. The institute also offers Doctorate programmes in media research, art history and art management.
- **GIPA – Georgian Institute of Public Administration** offers certificate programmes in cultural policy, consisting of following main topics: urban cultural heritage management, museum management, film management, and intangible culture management.

Informal Education Matters...

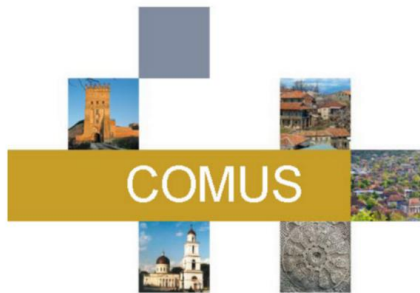
- **National Museum of Georgia:** 97 educational programs - Courses for traditional Georgian craft, Summer Schools, various lectures and workshops, etc.
- **National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia:** Youth Archeology, Cultural Heritage for kids, etc.
- Various educational programs in museums across the country.



Voluntarism in Georgia

Voluntarism is not well-developed in Georgia. According to one of visualizations of CSO "Jumpstart" (17.02.14), among 135 countries, where over the last month the population had carried out volunteer activities for some other organization, Georgia is on the 68th place. The same visualization illustrates that 36 percent of population on average in the US, United Kingdom and Norway pursue volunteerism on a monthly basis. Their activities constitute approximately 4 percent of the countries' Gross Domestic Product. In case of 36-percent volunteerism in Georgia, according to visualization by "Jumpstart", volunteers would annually perform work worth of 581 344 000 GEL. Under the organization's data, 81% of the Georgian population have not served as volunteers (2013 data).

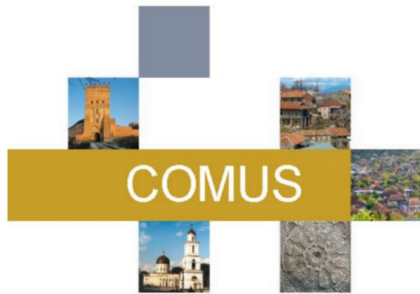




FARO & The COMUS Project

Community-led Urban Development Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)

- COMUS was instigated in Georgia as a result of decades-long cooperation in the field of heritage-led development, involving local, national and international partners, led by the Ministry of Culture of Georgia and the Council of Europe.
- COMUS aimed at fostering urban (social and economic) development using cultural heritage as a driver in 2 historic pilot towns in Georgia:
 - ✓ Chiatura
 - ✓ Dusheti
- COMUS invited local communities into the process of developing a strategy for the use of local resources. This inclusive approach echoed a broad spectrum of actions of all three components of Strategy 21: the promotion of social participation and good governance (S1, S6, S8), economic and territorial development (D1, D2, D4, D5, D6, D10), and increasing knowledge and education (K2, K4).



FARO & The COMUS Project

- The COMUS methodological approach was in line with the strategic framework offered by the Council of Europe conventions and recommendations.
- A distinctive element of this process was the collaborative platform of the local authorities and citizens – the local stakeholder groups – which played a key role in proposing and validating strategic development actions based on local heritage resources. The international partners assisted the process by offering expertise, on-the-job training, and study visits, improving the skills and competencies of local professionals and awareness of elected representatives.
- The steering and coordination platform established at the national level facilitated the inclusion of Dusheti historic town into the comprehensive regional development programme funded by the World Bank. As a result, in 2017-2018, the Dusheti historical park was renovated.
- COMUS triggered transformative change for Chiatura, by highlighting its industrial and engineering infrastructure as invaluable national heritage. The project contributed to the increased attention of Georgian heritage professionals to 20th-century heritage as well as engineering and industrial heritage in Georgia.

Key observations and challenges...

- Legislation has a very classical, historical and monumental approach to cultural heritage: **IT SHOULD FORMALIZE THE CIVIL SOCIETY RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL LEVELS OF ITS GOVERNANCE AND ENHANCEMENT.**
- Citizens and associations are key to defend cultural heritage and to assess its problematics. **RECOGNITION OF HERITAGE COMMUNITIES AND AN APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK TO FACILITATE THEIR TASK AND NETWORKS IS NEEDED.**
- Bearing in mind the multiculturalism of the Community of Georgia, it is essential that legislation **SPECIFICALLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE CONTRIBUTION OF MINORITIES TO ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE.**
- Legislation hardly recognizes cultural heritage crucial contribution to life quality, economic income, employment, healthy leisure, territorial and ecologic balance, landscape maintenance and adaptation to climate change. It should promote a **HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CULTURAL HERITAGE BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY, INCLUDING SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT GROUNDED ON ITS WISE AND SENSIBLE VALORIZATION.**
- Legislation barely deals with the relationships between cultural heritage, education and training systems: **IT MUST PROMOTE HERITAGE AWARENESS & ENHANCE ITS POSITIVE EFFECTS ON AND FROM EDUCATION.**

FUTURE CHALLENGES...

Improving the living environment and quality of life

- **Faro Convention principles :**

“Parties to the Convention should aim at reinforcing people’s sense of belonging, by fostering shared responsibility for the common environment in which they live” (article 8).

- The Faro Convention aims at raising the awareness of Faro communities on the importance of tackling the effects of climate change on their environment and reflect this aspect in their own work.
- Climate change, often the source of increased frequency/intensity of disasters, is exposing cultural heritage to new threats and/or increasing the vulnerability of sites already at risk.
- In addition to endangering their visitors, heritage degradation has a negative socio-economic impact on local communities, involving a loss of identity-generating values and cultural diversity



*Cultural heritage is a value connecting us with the **Past**, giving us a firm footing for the **Present** and showing us the way to the **Future**.*

Thank your for your attention!

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