

Committee of the Parties  
to the Council of Europe Convention  
on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings



CP(2023)05

**Report submitted by the authorities  
of Georgia  
on measures taken to comply with  
Committee of the Parties Recommendation  
CP/Rec(2021)03 on the implementation  
of the Council of Europe Convention  
on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings**

**Third evaluation round**

Received on 7 June 2023

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## **RESPONSE OF GEORGIA TO GRETA'S RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the following, Georgian authorities respond to the recommendations received from GRETA in accordance with Article 38, paragraph 1, of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (“the Convention”) dated 4 June 2021.

## 1. Facilitate and guarantee access to compensation for victims of trafficking

- introducing a procedure through which victims are entitled to obtain a decision on compensation from the offender as part of the criminal trial and requiring courts to state, where applicable, why compensation is not considered;
- ensuring that victims of trafficking are systematically informed in a language that they can understand of the right to seek compensation and the procedures to be followed;
- enabling victims of trafficking to exercise their right to compensation, by building the capacity of legal practitioners to support victims to claim compensation and by guaranteeing effective access to legal assistance and free legal aid;
- including compensation in existing training programmes for law enforcement officials and the judiciary;
- encouraging prosecutors and judicial authorities to make full use of the legislation on the freezing and forfeiture of offenders' assets and international co-operation to secure compensation to victims of THB;
- reviewing the procedure for awarding one-off compensation by the State Fund with a view to ensuring that it is not conditional on failure to obtain compensation from the perpetrator through court proceedings, and ensuring that in practice it does not depend on the victims' co-operation in the law enforcement authorities;
- increasing the amount of the one-off compensation payment with a view to meeting the reintegration needs of victims, and using confiscated criminal assets to finance the State Fund

Protection of the victims/statutory victims of human trafficking, including minors, remains as one of the key priorities for Georgian authorities. Since 2006 LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance to (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking (*hereinafter* - State Care Agency) provides the victims/statutory victims with the following state-run services:

- a) Shelters (in Tbilisi and Batumi) from 3 to 9 months<sup>1</sup>;

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<sup>1</sup> The victims of trafficking as well as statutory victims may stay in shelter for 3 months; however, this term might be extended in certain circumstances based on the will of (statutory) victim and order of the Director of the Agency for State Care;

- b) Child-tailored services and care-taker;<sup>2</sup>
- c) Day-care center service in Batumi for children in street situation<sup>3</sup>;
- d) Legal aid and representation to investigative bodies/judicial authorities;<sup>4</sup>
- e) Physiological and medical assistance;
- f) Rehabilitation and reintegration measures;
- g) One-off state compensation (1000 GEL)<sup>5</sup>.

Apart from the above-mentioned services, since 2021, 6 Crisis Centers for presumed victims of THB in Tbilisi (2), Kutaisi, Gori, Marneuli, and Ozurgeti have been operating. The shelter is available for those persons who have already been granted the status of victim and/or statutory victim, while Crisis Centers operate for presumed victims. The crisis center is mainly the day-care service (except Tbilisi crisis center that operates 24/7 and provides the presumed victims with accommodation). Crisis centers provide the presumed victims with legal, psychological and medical assistance.

In addition, due to the amendments made to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia on June 22, 2021, during the investigation process, the investigator has been authorized to appoint a Witness and Victim coordinator in the criminal case by his/her own decision before the case is taken to the court.<sup>6</sup> This is additional measure and illustration of victim-centered approach of Georgian Government.

All services of the State Care Agency are available and provided to victims/statutory victims and presumed victims without discrimination on any ground and regardless of his/her nationality, immigration status, the form of exploitation, etc. The State Care Agency also permanently monitors the functioning of shelters and crisis centers in order for the protection measures to be equitable and administered equitably.

Under the recommendations issued by GRETA on 14 April, 2021 the legislative amendment with regard to one-off State Compensation (1,000 GEL) came into force simplifying the procedures for granting the state compensation. According to the amendment made in Article 16 of the Law on Combatting Trafficking in Person (Anti-Trafficking Law), THB victim/statutory victim can get the one-off compensation directly without referring to the court. Before, victims/statutory victims

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<sup>2</sup> The shelters for THB victims/statutory victims are child-tailored and sufficiently equipped to receive minor victims of human trafficking as well as dependent minors (aged under 18). In August 2015 Agency for State Care amended the internal regulations of each shelter (Tbilisi and Batumi) and introduced the service of babysitter/caretaker to further enhance the protective and assisting measures for the minor beneficiaries of the Agency for State Care;

<sup>3</sup> On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, a new Day-care center service was added in Batumi, Adjara region for children working and/or living in the streets. Apart from it, as already mentioned above, one new mobile group responsible for identification of children in street situations was set up in Adjara region in November, 2021;

<sup>4</sup> Apart from Agency for State Care, LEPL Legal Aid Service also provides free of charge legal consultations for victims/statutory victims of THB. LEPL Legal Aid Service is funded from the State's Budget.

<sup>5</sup> THB victim/statutory victim can get the one-off compensation directly without referring to the court;

<sup>6</sup> Article 58<sup>1</sup>, Criminal Procedural Code of Georgia

<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/90034?publication=137>

of human trafficking had the right to request one-off compensation from the State Care Agency in case it was impossible to get compensation from the perpetrator through the court. This amendment also applies to those victims and statutory victims who were granted the status before the new regulation came into force.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the mentioned amendment, on 28 April, 2021 Inter-Agency Council on Combatting Trafficking in Persons (Anti-THB Council) adopted the Rule on granting a THB victim and statutory victim one-off compensation (1000 GEL). Discussions on the issue of increasing the one-time compensation have entered an active phase among the responsible agencies.

Notably, the Georgian National Referral Mechanism ensures two possible ways to be involved in state-run services. The law of Georgia on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings differentiates the status of victim of trafficking and the status of statutory victim of trafficking. The status of victim of trafficking is granted to the person by a Permanent Working Group of the Interagency Council consisting of 3 NGOs and 2 IOs within 48 hours based on the questionnaire of the mobile group of the Agency for State Care while the status of statutory victim of trafficking is granted by Prosecutor in accordance with Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia. The victim/statutory victim enjoys the services (free legal aid, psychological and medical assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration measures, one-off state compensation, 2 shelters and 6 crisis centres) of the Agency for State Care after a person is granted the status of victim or statutory victim. The services are child tailored and provided based on the individual needs of the (statutory) victims.

The aim of the two existing statuses is to ensure a victim-centered approach and immediately assist victim and provide the services.

The Ministry of Justice of Georgia, with financial support from the EU and in cooperation with the ICMPD, elaborated a special THB handbook and updated identification questionnaire for mobile and permanent groups. A new handbook consists of two parts, one of which focuses on the legal aspects of trafficking, while the other part deals with the psychological aspects for establishing communication with the alleged victim and the overall relationship.

As already mentioned above, on 22 June, 2021 amendment was adopted in the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia based on which the witness and victim coordinators of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia can be involved in the criminal proceedings by the decision of the investigator as well. Before this novelty, only the prosecutor was entitled to involve the witness and victim coordinator of the Prosecutor's office in the THB case proceedings. Notably, witness and victim coordinator in the criminal case is considered by the prosecutor at any stage of the criminal proceedings, while based on the will of the victim and witness, the investigator can involve the coordinator before the case is transferred to the court. Witness and Victim Coordinator facilitates the victim's and witness' participation in criminal proceeding, assist the victim/witness to reduce

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<sup>7</sup> <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/26152?publication=17>

the stress caused by the crime, prevent him/her from re-victimization and secondary victimization and ensures victim's/witness' awareness during court hearing stage.

Georgian legislation does not punish the victims and statutory victims of human trafficking for committing any crime or administrative violation if they had to behave so because of their being victims or statutory victims of human trafficking.

According to Article 15 of the anti-Trafficking law victims and statutory victims of human trafficking shall be discharged from liability for committing actions under Article 344 (Illegal crossing of the state border of Georgia) and Article 362 (Making, sale or use of a forged document, seal, stamp or blank forms) of the Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 172<sup>3</sup> (Prostitution) and Article 185 (Residing in Georgia in violation of the registration rules established for Georgian citizens and aliens residing in Georgia) of the Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia. Nor shall they be held liable for participating in illegal acts, if they had to behave so because of their being victims or statutory victims of human trafficking.

## **2. Additional efforts to prevent and combat THB for the purpose of labour exploitation**

- ensuring that the new Labour Safety Law is fully implemented in practice, and that sufficient resources are made available to labour inspectors to fulfil their mandate in the prevention of THB;
- training labour inspectors throughout the country, as well as law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges, on combating THB for the purpose of labour exploitation and victims' rights, taking into account an extensive interpretation of THB for labour exploitation, and considering potential groups at risk;
- building strategic partnerships with civil society, including with trade unions and the private sector

Particular attention is also paid to the identification of labour exploitation and forced labor cases. To address this issue, Labour Inspectorate Department was established in 2015 under the Ministry of IDPs from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia (hereinafter – Ministry of Healthcare) to check public and private organizations and reveal the alleged cases of THB, including among foreign workers. Later on, the mandate of the mentioned Department was upgraded and since 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2021 the Labour Inspectorate Department has been formed as a separate LEPL Labour Inspection Service under the same Ministry. LEPL Labour Inspection Service is the successor of the Labour Inspectorate Department that carries out scheduled and unscheduled visits to the companies and in case of any suspicion on forced labour or labour exploitation refers the case to the Central Criminal Police Department of MIA.

According to the Labor Inspection Law<sup>8</sup> and the amendments introduced to the Labor Code<sup>9</sup>, the Labor Inspectorate has been given a mandate to supervise labor rights (before they inspected the issue of labor safety). It means that the labor inspector can request labor contracts, payroll records and other information. In case of disobedience, the labor inspector is entitled to sanction the employer. The latter provides an additional opportunity to detect signs of forced labor at the workplace.

The role of the Labor Inspection Service is important in detecting forced labor and/or labor exploitation cases. During the inspection of public and private companies, the labor inspectorates check employees' identity, citizenship, in case of foreigners the date of arrival, the country the employee comes from, identified documents and the terms of the employment contract. In case of the absence of any mentioned documents, the case will be immediately referred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

In 2020 the Memorandum of Understanding has been updated with the Central Criminal Police Department upon the joint order of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Minister of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The aim of the amendment is to make it possible for labor inspectors and police mobile groups to check jointly different organizations for detection of forced labor and labor exploitation cases.

To date, the number of labor inspectors has been increased to 123. An increase in the number of labor inspectors is still planned.

In 2021 in collaboration with IOM, a guidance document for labor inspectors has been also developed. Its purpose is to assist the labor inspector in combating one of the most common forms of the crime of trafficking - forced labor and labor exploitation. The guide is based on the International Labor Organization conventions and recommendations, THB-related treaties Georgia is a party to and EU regulations. The guidance document has already been printed in 150 copies and distributed among labor inspectors.

Apart from the inspections the labor inspectors conduct public outreach activities and holds information meetings with employers and employees on labor rights and labor security, risks related to forced labor and labor exploitation, existed legal mechanisms and services available for THB (statutory) victims. During the information meetings, the Labor Inspection Service disseminates brochures regarding their functions. Relevant information about the identification of forced labor and labor exploitation and the hotline of the Ministry of Helathcare (15 05) is also indicated in the brochure.

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<sup>8</sup> Law of Georgia on The Labour Inspection Service  
<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/5003057?publication=0>

<sup>9</sup> Organic Law of Georgia, Labour Code of Georgia  
<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/1155567?publication=21>

Additionally, National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan for 2023-2024 commits the Government of Georgia to strengthen cooperation with the business sector for the prevention of forced labor. One of the main directions of the cooperation and improvement will be the prevention of forced labor in public and private supply chains. In close cooperation with the ICMPD Ministry of Justice of Georgia analyzed the legislative and institutional framework on the role of business sector in Georgia. The analysis will be used for a basis for further development of cooperation in private sector.

According to the AA/DCFTA obligations, the State Procurement Agency of Georgia has elaborated new draft law on Public Procurement, which was adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in February 2023. The new law is fully in line with EU directives and will come into force in 2025. Among numerous novelties, the new law has a special provision on fighting against human trafficking. Subsequently, an economic operator shall be subject to being registered in the Black list in the cases of trafficking, juvenile trafficking, enjoying the service of the victim of trafficking.

Above provision is also subject of exclusion of economic operator from public procurement. Namely, a contracting authority shall exclude a candidate/tenderer from participation in a procurement procedure in the cases of trafficking, juvenile trafficking, enjoying the service of the victim of trafficking.

To address the challenges with regard to detection of labor exploitation and child-forced begging cases, a special working group is also functioning under the Office of the Prosecutor General of Georgia. The working group is composed of all relevant Governmental Agencies, including the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry Healthcare (Labor Inspection Service and State Care Agency).

The Law on Labor Migration<sup>10</sup> regulates the following issues: obligations of legal entities and individuals related to provisions in recruitment and placement in Labor markets outside of Georgian territory; provision relating to recruitment and placement in Labor market; to meet the requirements stated in the contract about the provision in recruitment and placement; meeting the requirements determined in labor agreement between two parties: a labor emigrant and a foreigner employer; regulations which provide for penalties and administrative responsibility within its jurisdiction. By-laws have also been approved, such as: “Recruitment and Placement Rules between Labor immigrant (alien residing in Georgia without a permanent residency) and a Local Employer about Execution of Paid Labor Activity”; “Accessibility of Data among Administrative Bodies in the Sphere of Labor Migration”, “Submission of a Report on the Activities Implemented in the Sphere of Foreign Labor Migration by an Accountable Legal Entity, Individual Entrepreneur or a Foreign Enterprise and non-profit (non-commercial) Legal Entity Branch (Representative Office, Permanent Establishment)” and etc.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2806732?publication=3>



According to the same law, intermediary companies are obliged to register their activities in a special economic register. Activities without registration are subject to a fine of 1,000 GEL. In case of repetition, the fine is 2000 GEL. Also, agencies are required to submit an annual report on their activities over the past year. In case of non-submission of the report, the law provides financial penalties (300 Gel). In case of repetition, the fine is 600 GEL.

According to Article 11, Paragraph 2 of the Law of Georgia on Labor Migration, it shall be prohibited to require any fee (honorarium) from persons under the contract signed for assistance in the provision of employment.

At present, according to the legal framework regulating labor immigration in Georgia, a foreign citizen does not need any special type of employment permit.

Within the framework of bilateral agreements in the field of circular migration, the Georgian side is in constant contact with the partner state in order to successfully implement the agreement and ensure the rights and obligations set out in it.

According to Article 11, Paragraph 2 of the Law of Georgia on Labor Migration, it shall be prohibited to require any fee (honorarium) from persons under the contract signed for assistance in the provision of employment.

The Government of Georgia pays particular attention to the capacity development of the officials working on THB issues. The line ministries closely cooperate with each other as well as US Embassy to Georgia/INL, NGOs and international organizations (EU, IOM, ICMPD, OSCE/ODIHR) to identify training needs on THB issues. The cooperation foresees well-structured training planning including analyzing the needs for trainings, identification of the topic, relevant target group, cooperation and communication with relevant agencies and trainers, developing training modules/curriculum/agenda and implementing such trainings on later stage. Every year the trainings are delivered by Georgian and foreign experts focused specifically on the one target group or several target groups through joint capacity building activities (e.g. investigators, prosecutors and staff responsible for provision of services to victims are trained together to build capacity and strengthen coordination between themselves). Despite the COVID-19 related restrictions the Government of Georgia managed to conduct trainings through online platforms or in-person for different target groups.

Basic trainings are conducted for the new labor inspectors of the LEPL Labor Inspection Service with the support of ILO within the Twinning project. Within the training labor inspectors were explained their mandate and responsibilities, inter alia, regarding the identification of forced labor and labor exploitation cases. In addition, organized by the Ministry of Justice, Labor Inspection Service and IOM, with the financial support of INL, Training for Labor Inspectors was held on 7-8<sup>th</sup> of April 2022.

On November 7-11, 2022, the first national simulation-based training on human trafficking was held in Georgia. The project was conducted under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice, with the financial support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Swiss Embassy in Georgia, and about 40 investigators, prosecutors, labor inspectors, psychologists, social workers and staff working with victims took part in it. Simulation training is planned to be held in 2023 as well.

As already mentioned the Inter-Agency Council is the main policy-shaping body, which coordinates and monitors the implementation of anti-trafficking responses in Georgia and brings together all relevant stakeholders from government and civil society. In order to improve inter-agency cooperation and ensure efficiency, the responsible agencies periodically hold online or face-to-face meetings. The main purpose of such meetings is to identify existing challenges and plan close cooperation on response steps.

Georgia pays special attention to cooperation with non-governmental organizations for their active involvement in anti-trafficking policies. The collaboration includes active consultation in the policy planning process and consideration of their recommendations, as well as the provision of services to victims, joint planning of awareness-raising and training activities. Interagency Council includes representatives not only from all line ministries and agencies but NGOs and international organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the missions of EU and CoE to Georgia are the invited members of the THB Council.

Apart from the Interagency platform, thematic working groups under the THB Council are periodically established, where relevant NGOs and IOs are also invited for their involvement in drafting legislative amendments, strategic documents, guidelines, etc.

Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia has also a close cooperation with the non-governmental organizations working on human rights protection issues. Due to the cooperation, several joint projects were implemented successfully. Law enforcements with partner NGOs conducts public awareness campaigns in order to raise awareness of the population on the THB issues.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice of Georgia also annually holds grant contests for NGOs aiming at the prevention of THB and the protection of the victims. Notably, in 2015-2018 Ministry of Justice of Georgia issued in total 89,000 GEL<sup>11</sup> to different NGOs for conducting awareness-raising activities on THB, as well as on the protection of children in street situations. The culture of grant programs continued in 2021-2022 – Ministry of Justice of Georgia financially supported local NGOs to conduct human rights protection activities.

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<sup>11</sup> Official Currency – Georgian Lari

The importance of inter-agency activities is evident in a number of procedural issues in the fight against trafficking. For instance, in case of detection or self-identification of the alleged victim, the state agency is obliged to immediately refer the case to special mobile group. Mobile groups of State Care Agency are also responsible for identification of potential victims among children in street situations and for referring the alleged THB case to MIA.

### 3. Further steps to proactively identify victims of THB

- improving the selection and training of the members of the Permanent Group and guaranteeing that the Permanent Group’s working procedures are victim-oriented, in particular that the burden of proof is not shifted on the victim;
- increasing their efforts to proactively identify victims of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation;
- paying increased attention to detecting victims of trafficking amongst foreign workers, asylum seekers and persons placed in immigration detention centres;

As the fight against human trafficking is one of the key priorities of the Government of Georgia counter-trafficking policy is entirely based on so-called “4P” principles and Government of Georgia is committed to take efficient measures to enhance Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership.

In this context, the Inter-Agency Council on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter – Inter-Agency Council)<sup>12</sup> set up in 2006 remains indispensable in adopting serious and sustainable measures on combating THB. The Inter-Agency Council is the main policy-shaping body, which coordinates and monitors the implementation of anti-trafficking responses in Georgia. Inter-Agency Council is chaired by the Minister of Justice of Georgia and brings together all relevant line-ministries, governmental and non-governmental<sup>13</sup> agencies and ombudsman’s office. In particular, the following governmental stakeholders are participating in the working process of Inter-Agency Council:

- Administration of Government;
- Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- Ministry of IDPs from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs and its subordinate bodies;<sup>14</sup>
- Ministry of Education and Science;
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development;
- General Prosecutor’s Office;

<sup>12</sup> <https://justice.gov.ge/?m=articles&id=J8SepS4H8u>

<sup>13</sup> EU Delegation to Georgia, Council of Europe Delegation to Georgia, UNICEF, USAID, IOM, ICMPD, NGO Tanadgoma, NGO Civil Development Agency, NGO Anti-Violence Network;

<sup>14</sup> Agency for State Care and Assistance to (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking, Labor Inspectors Service;

- Public Defender's Office;
- Parliament.

The Secretariat of the Inter-Agency Council is the International Relations and Legal Cooperation Department of Ministry of Justice of Georgia, which provides the technical and substance wise support to the Council. 5 employees of the Department are working and dedicated to THB related issues. The Secretariat is financially supported by the overall budget of the Ministry of Justice.

**- Ministry of Internal Affairs**

Ministry of Internal Affairs has a key role to proactively identify the human trafficking cases. Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, the Division for Fight against Trafficking and Illegal Migration was established in the Central Criminal Police Department, in 2005. The main purpose of the Division is fight against trafficking, which is one of the forms of the organized crime, having an international character and belonging to especially serious crimes.

According to the Statute of the Central Criminal Police Department<sup>15</sup>, the main functions of the Division are:

- Detection and investigation of trafficking facts;
- Identification of victims of trafficking;
- Implementation of operative-search activities/measures;
- Arrangement of preventive measures;
- Detention of individuals involved in trafficking related crimes;
- Coordinated cooperation with the State Care Agency;
- Detection and investigation of facts of illicit migration;
- Raising awareness of society;
- Interviewing of deported nationals at the border check point of Tbilisi International Airport 24/7;
- Relevant consultation of the citizens via 24/7 hotline, obtaining the information with regard to the human trafficking crime and taking relevant response measures.

Furthermore, since 2013, mobile groups, comprised of two employees each, have been functioning in Trafficking and Illegal Migration Division for the purpose of improving the work efficiency of the Division. Similar unit was created in the Police Department of Adjara AR in 2014, as the region is in close proximity to the border and may be particularly attractive for traffickers.

In addition, on February 27, 2014 Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Office of the Prosecutor General and the International Organization for

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<sup>15</sup> Order N71 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia on “Approval of the Statute of the Central Criminal Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia”, Available in Georgian at: <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4636731?publication=0>

Migration on the principles of cooperation in the area of capacity building of law enforcement agencies in combating trafficking of human beings. On the base of the memorandum, the Task Force consisted of investigators and prosecutors has been established in Adjara region. The Task Force proactively checks the risk places, interviews the employees there and in case of any suspicion, investigates and prosecutes human traffickers.

Ministry of Internal affairs of Georgia defines necessary annual budget for the units/divisions responsible for investigation of crimes. Investigations of the trafficking cases are supported with proper amount of funds. Ministry of Internal affairs is fully equipped with essential transportations, fuel, relevant equipment, office facilities to carry out investigation of trafficking cases.

**- General Prosecutor's Office**

The General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia carries out criminal prosecution in cases of human trafficking within its competence and supports the state prosecution in court. The Department of Procedural Guidance of Investigation at the General Inspection and the Central Criminal Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is a structural unit in the Office of the Prosecutor General which conducts procedural supervision over the investigative body dealing with the cases of human trafficking. Prosecutors working in this department supervise investigation of human trafficking cases, bring charges against human traffickers and at later stage represent prosecution party at the trial. In total, there are 6 specialized prosecutors in the prosecution service of Georgia who are dedicated to and deal with THB cases.

In the Division of Human Rights Protection of the Office of the Prosecutor General there is a multidiscipline working group operating on revealing, preventing and suppressing facts of labor trafficking. Apart from Office of the Prosecutor General the multidiscipline group involves the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, Agency for State Care and Labor Inspection Service of the Ministry of IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs.

Herewith, Victim and Witness coordinators, who are employees of Prosecutor's office of Georgia and participants of the criminal proceedings according to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia, can be involved in human trafficking cases and offer psychological help to the victims in order to make their communication with the law enforcement agencies more convenient. They are involved in National Referral Mechanism.

As a priority, the coordinators are engaged in particular sort of cases, including human trafficking. In addition, they are engaged in cases in which a victim and/or a witness is a juvenile or a person with disabilities, in which a victim/witness suffered grave physical or mental damage and/or in cases when stress induced by the crime complicates communication with a victim/witness.

The Office is constantly prepared to fulfill its obligations under national law in the field of human trafficking. For instance, the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, since March 22, 2020, has been actively involved in the remote hearings of criminal cases in the common courts for the purposes of preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the country. All offices of the Prosecutor's Office of

Georgia have been equipped with the appropriate technical equipment and software, allowing prosecutors to remotely engage in criminal proceedings and support state prosecution from prosecution offices.

Reinforcing proactive identification of the victims is one of top priorities for Government of Georgia. Therefore, Task Force consisted of qualified investigators and prosecutors and operating in the Adjara Region of Georgia and 6 mobile inspection groups<sup>16</sup> installed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia continues to regularly operate in the high risk areas to proactively identify human trafficking, effectively investigate THB cases and prosecute perpetrators within the defined geographic area. Furthermore, in order to increase efforts to proactively identify victims of sexual exploitation, mobile groups of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Task Force keep inspecting different organizations including venues used for prostitution - hotels, bars, night clubs, and interviewing persons, working in the areas that represent high risk for sexual exploitation. They also monitor persons and organizations which offer employment in or outside of the country; organizations which ensure transportation for persons leaving the country; travel agencies; enterprises which employ foreigners, organizations and persons provided visa assistance. The mobile groups and Task Force interview those persons which have been employed outside of the country through employment agencies operating in Georgia. The aim of the interview is to ensure, that each worker has identity cards, they exercised their right to freedom of movement, they have been receiving the full remuneration for their work, and they were engaged in work voluntarily.

Notably, on 19 December, 2017 the Inter-Agency Council approved the revised Guideline for the Law Enforcements on the Investigation and Prosecution of Trafficking Cases and Treatment with Victims and Statutory Victims of Trafficking in human beings, which was adopted by the Inter-Agency Council in February, 2014. The main aim of the revision was to reflect the legal amendments introduced to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia and respond the current trends of human trafficking.

Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) adopted in 2015 is also actively used by the investigators, patrol police officers, staff of migration department and mobile groups of Agency for State Care and Assistance to (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking to proactively identify potential THB victims and collect all relevant information related to THB case.

In addition, aiming at proactively identification of THB victims among the migrants and asylum seekers, on 19 December 2017 the THB Council also approved the Guidelines on Identification of Victims of Trafficking in human beings at the Border of Georgia (border crossing and customs crossing points, land and coastal border). These Guidelines were adopted for border police officers and Customs officials and sets forth indicators of alleged victims and standards of

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<sup>16</sup> Mobile groups are composed of detective-investigators;

interrogation/interview of THB victims, including minors and to whom to refer for assistance of alleged victim.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has effective cooperation with relevant agencies of Georgia and partner states, through detection of trafficking facts and exchange of case related materials.

With regard to the transboundary, regional and international coordination structures, the role of the International Law Enforcement Cooperation Center (ILECC), within the Central Criminal Police Department of MIA, responsible for international law enforcement cooperation should be highlighted. Within the investigation of criminal cases in the field of human trafficking, ILECC supports relevant investigative unit through obtaining the intelligence from Foreign Countries, Interpol and Europol databases. International cooperation within the frameworks of the investigation of trafficking cases is carried out through the International Law Enforcement Cooperation Center, on 24/7 basis.

Topic of training and capacity development of permanent group has already been discussed above.