



Georgia's European Union Integration Roadmap

RoadMap2EU

Better Integration for New Opportunities!

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GEORGIA

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Structure of the Document

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Introduction

Georgia's aspiration to become a member of the European Union is based on the European choice of the majority of Georgian citizens¹ affirmed by conducted polls and studies. The European choice has been highlighted both in the Constitution² of Georgia and in the text of the Resolution of the Parliament³ of Georgia of 29 December 2016.

The EU-Georgia Association Agreement acknowledges European aspirations and European choice of Georgia as an Eastern European country. The Agreement recognizes the commonality of values between the EU and Georgia and "leaves open the way for future progressive developments in EU-Georgia relations". The purpose of the Roadmap is to set up an overall framework for Georgia's ongoing reforms to establish stable democratic institutions, functioning market economy and to ensure its capacity for continuous implementation of the EU acquis. The final goal of Georgia's European Integration is EU membership, based on the article 49 of the TEU.

The prospect of joining the European Union was an important motivator of democratic transformation and development for Central and Eastern European countries, which became members of the single European family in 2004 and 2007. Enlargement is still one of the powerful tools of EU foreign policy that promotes positive changes in the countries that are on the path to European integration. A good example of this is the Balkan countries. Pursuant to the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, "a credible enlargement policy is a strategic investment in Europe's security and prosperity".

At the same time, the European Union, as well as the entire world, faces serious challenges that directly affect Georgia and its European integration. Migration and economic crisis, the threat of terrorism and radicalisation, the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union (so-called 'Brexit') and the rise of Eurosceptic forces, have created a negative background in the European Union, which has necessitated putting the functional strengthening of the Community on the agenda of EU leaders. Against this background, a cautious attitude prevails in Member States about further enlargement. The resumption of enlargement by the European Commission, despite these challenges, with respect to the

¹ According to the studies of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), 83 % of the population of Georgia in 2018 share the goal stated by the Government of Georgia to join the European Union. Notably, following the restoration of independence, the percentage of supporters of integration with the European Union was always high in Georgia

² Chapter Eleven, Article 78: 'The constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization' <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4110673?publication=0>

³ Third paragraph, page 2: 'The key priority of Georgia's foreign policy is joining the European Union' - <http://parliament.ge/uploads/other/53/53453.pdf>



Western Balkans after 5 years of cessation, is a positive signal for Georgia and other European countries willing to join the European Union. The Rome Declaration of 25 March 2017, signed by the Leaders of EU institutions and of Member States, specifies that the European Union is open to those European countries that respect European values. Georgia should therefore take every opportunity at this stage to successfully implement the required reforms and to appropriately demonstrate progress.

In recent years, relations between the EU and Georgia have been characterised by particular dynamism. This is a result of the key achievements, including the effective implementation of the Association Agreement, the functioning of a visa-free regime, the joining of the Energy Community, the new formats of cooperation, such as a high-level dialogue between the Government of Georgia and the European Commission on sectoral cooperation issues and a high-level strategic dialogue on security issues. These achievements have demonstrated that Georgia is one of the leading reformer countries, which has been highlighted in many reports and statements of the European Union.

Despite this progress, Georgia's closer integration with the European Union than envisaged by the Association Agreement, as well as other agreements of a sectoral nature is of particular importance.

Effective implementation of the reforms envisaged by the Roadmap should ensure the readiness of Georgia for EU membership and respective political steps of European Integration.

This document incorporates the reforms planned by the Government of Georgia in the field of European integration, which, in addition to measures determined by the Association Agreement, will significantly contribute to the better political association and economic integration of Georgia with the European Union.

The document includes the main benchmarks of the Association Agreement and activities beyond the Agreement, as well as mechanism for further identification and implementation of these activities. In addition to the above, the Roadmap identifies opportunities for further enhancing cooperation with the European Union in the field of defence and security, involvement in EU programmes and expansion of cooperation with the priority EU agencies as well as the prospects of physical integration with the European Union and the areas of current and future cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

Implementation of the reforms determined by the Georgia's European Integration Roadmap will bring new dynamism to EU-Georgia relations and will ensure the maximum approximation of the national legislation to the EU acquis, and the achievement of better institutional and sectoral integration than envisaged by the Association Agreement.

The Roadmap will contribute to increasing the consistency, predictability and transparency of the country's European integration process.

The preparation of this document is important both for donor organisations and business representatives and investors, in terms of planning long-term activities.

Georgia's European Union Integration Roadmap was prepared in close cooperation with state agencies, with the active involvement of civil society, and was based on EU expertise.

This is a living document, which will be a subject of amendment on a systematic basis.



Part 1. Effective Implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement

1.1 Importance of the implementation of the Association Agreement

EU-Georgia relations over the last years have been characterised by historically unprecedented dynamism. On 27 June 2014, an Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union was signed, which includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area part¹. The Association Agreement represents the main legal basis for the EU-Georgia relations, aiming at Georgia`s political association and economic integration with the EU, by gradual approximation of the national legislation with the EU *acquis* and alignment of the national standards with the EU best practices.

The effective implementation of the Association Agreement is of particular importance for strengthening Georgia's European choice, preserving irreversibility of the European integration process and mobilising political support for Georgia by European partners, including in the areas where country`s sovereignty and territorial integrity are concerned.

The consistent and effective implementation of the Association Agreement contributes to and brings closer the country's accession to the European Union.

The Agreement envisages comprehensive transformation of the Country. This process involves further consolidation of democracy and boosting economic development in the country by implementation of comprehensive reforms in a wide range of sectorial domains.

The titles of the Association Agreement on trade and trade-related matters and on economic cooperation and sectoral cooperation (Titles IV-VI), together with the annexes, primarily aim at the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the EU *acquis*.

By effectively implementing the Association Agreement and its integral part – the DCFTA, Georgia gradually becomes the integral part of the EU economy. Thus, the DCFTA is extremely important for promoting national exports to the EU market, boosting trade, investments and capital inflow that has a particular importance for the long-term sustainable economic development of the country. The opening of the EU market will be implemented gradually. The effective implementation of DCFTA-related reforms and the subsequent signature of Agreements on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA) is the basis for the complete opening of the EU market.

The effective implementation of the Association Agreement will contribute to: the introduction of European standards and norms of production in agriculture and industry,

¹ A considerable part of the Association Agreement entered into force on 1 September 2014, whereas the entire Association Agreement became effective from 1 July 2016



and the establishment thereof in the EU market; the protection of property rights, including intellectual property rights, which in turn will facilitate the attraction of innovation-oriented investments; the approximation of Georgia's education system to European standards, and Georgia's full integration into the EU educational and research area; the protection of labour rights and safety; the forming of an economic system compatible with the EU economy; the approximation of regulatory legislation on the economy to the EU acquis; the creation of a transparent, stable business environment, an increase in the investment attractiveness of Georgia, the promotion of economic growth in general, the economic development of the country, etc.

1.2. Current mechanisms for the planning, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Association Agreement

The priority of the Government of Georgia is the consistent, effective and structured implementation of commitments under the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda.

Georgia's EU Integration Commission has been functioning since 2004, which is chaired by the Prime Minister of Georgia.¹ All the Ministers, as well as the State Minister, are represented in the Commission. Representatives from the Parliament of Georgia and heads of various state agencies also attend the meetings of Georgia's EU Integration Commission.² The General Directorate for European Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia performs the functions of the Secretariat of the Commission.³

The main functions of Georgia's EU Integration Commission are to facilitate the coordinated activities of the state structures of Georgia for the purpose of Georgia's integration with the European Union, to present recommendations to the Government of Georgia on strategic areas of EU-Georgia cooperation, to promote the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda and the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the EU acquis, etc.

A working group at the level of deputy ministers, as well as working sub-groups on various issues related to European integration (deep and comprehensive free trade, visa liberalisation, terminology and translations related to European integration, etc.), are functioning within Georgia's EU Integration Commission.

¹ Decree No 76 of 10 July 2004 of the Government of Georgia on Establishing a Georgia's EU Integration Commission

² Decree of the Government of Georgia of 2018 on Approving the Composition of the EU Integration Commission

³ This function was performed by the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, which joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia by Ordinance No 548 of 15 December 2017



From 2004, structural units responsible for European integration issues were set up in all major ministries, or the existing structural units were tasked with dealing with European integration issues. Each ministry has a deputy minister responsible for the field of European integration.¹

On 7 February 2014, the Government of Georgia adopted Decree No 186 on Measures to Be Implemented for the Effective Implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union, Including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area as an Integral Part. The said decree specifies the duties of individual state agencies for the effective implementation of the Association Agreement.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia carries out the horizontal coordination and monitoring of the executive authority of Georgia in relation to European integration issues. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia also coordinates, on behalf of Georgia, the activities of the institutions responsible for cooperation with the European Union within the framework of the Association Agreement (the Association Council, Association Committees, and Association Sub-Committees) and actively cooperates with Member States.

The EU Law Department functions within the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, which ensures the establishment of the legal compliance of legislative initiatives related to European integration.

On 13 June 2018, the Parliament of Georgia made amendments to the Law of Georgia on Normative Acts, according to which all the draft laws submitted to the Parliament of Georgia, prepared for the purpose of the implementation of the Association Agreement or other bilateral and multilateral commitments in relation to the European Union and for the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to EU legal instruments, shall be accompanied with a table of compliance with the instrument in question specifying the level of compliance.

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia ensures the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) part of the Association Agreement.

The LEPL Legislative Herald of Georgia under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia provides translations related to legislative approximation envisaged by the Association Agreement.

¹ Decree No 22 of 8 May 2004 of the Government of Georgia on Preparing a Unified Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Programme on the Harmonisation of the Legislation of Georgia with the European Union Acquis and a New Agenda for Cooperation with the European Union

On 10 May 2018, the Government of Georgia adopted Ordinance No 211 on determining domestic procedures related to the implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia, of the one part, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part. The said ordinance determines domestic procedures related to the adoption of decisions and recommendations by the institutions responsible for cooperation envisaged by the Association Agreement (the Association Council, Association Committees or Sub-Committees).¹

A guideline on the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to EU law has been developed with the involvement of international experts, which incorporates in detail the baseline characteristics of approximation methodology, approximation-related approaches and procedures, and actions to be taken at specific stages of the law-making process. The 2018 National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda includes the approval of the said guideline and the application thereof in practice.²

The Parliament of Georgia, which determines the priorities of the country's foreign policy and exercises parliamentary supervision over the activities of the executive authority, plays a crucial role in facilitating the country's European integration process. Shaping European integration policy and exercising control of the executive authority in relation to European integration issues falls within the competence of the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia. To support the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, the Committee on European Integration carries out the analysis of draft laws prepared with a view to fulfilling commitments undertaken under the Association Agreement and prepares respective opinions. Georgia actively cooperates in the framework of the Georgia-Ukraine-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Assembly, which represents an important institutional mechanism for cooperation at the parliamentary level.

To exercise parliamentary supervision, the Committee, together with other relevant sectoral committees, hears on a regular basis the reports of bodies accountable to the Government of Georgia and Parliament on the implementation of the Annual National Action for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, and on the progress of cooperation in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, on which basis the Committee prepares respective proposals and recommendations.

¹ See Ordinance No 211 of 10 May 2018 of the Government of Georgia on determining domestic procedures related to the implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia, of the one part, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part

² The 2018 National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda is available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia www.mfa.gov.ge

The Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia is actively engaged in the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy in the field of European integration. The Committee is in charge of the activities of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee established on the basis of the Association Agreement, and of the Delegation of Georgia to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly of the EU Eastern Partnership, and participates in the work of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).

The Committee on European Integration is actively engaged in informational, educational and analytical activities for the purpose of enhancing and developing European orientation and raising awareness on European integration processes. To this end, the Committee implements informational and educational projects, and cooperates with international organisations operating in Georgia, public schools, and higher educational institutions and non-governmental organisations.

To enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of the Association Agreement, internal coordination mechanisms have been improved in the state structures of Georgia, and the institutional capacities of state agencies have been increased. To facilitate the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, an electronic monitoring system has been introduced, which makes it possible to fully plan commitments to be implemented. The system also groups activities incorporated in the National Action Plan according to their types (policy framework, legal framework, institutional system, infrastructure, human resources development, public awareness raising, etc.). The software facilitates the fulfilment by state agencies of obligations under the Association Agreement and enables them to efficiently control online the fulfilment of obligations in parallel with the process.

A special web portal www.aa.ge functions for the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of parliamentary supervision, where information on commitments undertaken under the Association Agreement, regulations, directives, decisions and recommendations is available. The portal allows easy and flexible monitoring and enables all interested persons to monitor the time frames of activation of general priorities envisaged by the Association Agreement and to evaluate progress in each area.

An institutional mechanism of cooperation envisaged by the Association Agreement, which aims at the monitoring of the implementation of the Association Agreement and the discussion of current issues in EU-Georgia relations, is fully functional.

The institutional framework comprises the following formats:

- the Association Council, which meets once a year and is chaired by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union and by the Prime Minister on behalf of Georgia;
- the Association Committee, which meets once a year in Tbilisi and Brussels alternately (at the level of deputy ministers on behalf of Georgia), and the Association Committee in Trade Configuration, which meets separately for the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) part of the Association Agreement;
- the Parliamentary Association Committee, in which members of the Parliament of Georgia and the European Parliament take part. Unlike other Association institutes, the Parliamentary Association Committee meets twice a year, in Tbilisi and Brussels, alternately as well;
- the sectoral Association Sub-Committees, which meet once a year in Tbilisi and Brussels alternately, at expert level, and discuss the implementation of commitments made under the Association Agreement. Today, there are 6 Sub-Committees (justice, freedom and security; economic and other sectoral cooperation; geographical indications; sanitary and phytosanitary measures; customs issues; trade and sustainable development).

1.3. Cooperation with civil society

The Government of Georgia has actively cooperated with members of civil society in the European integration process. Georgia is the first country, among other countries that are parties to Association Agreements with the European Union, which has actively engaged the non-governmental sector in the preparation and the monitoring of the implementation of an action plan for the implementation of a Framework Agreement.

To promote close cooperation with the non-governmental sector, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Government of Georgia and the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (which unites about 180 non-governmental organisations) on 13 November 2015. The Memorandum envisages the holding of sectoral working meetings of the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and representatives of the executive authority in relation to certain issues of sectoral cooperation under the Association Agreement.

The said sectoral meetings on issues of the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda are held on a regular basis. In 2016-2017, the annual conference on issues related to the country's European integration and the implementation of the Association Agreement took place, in which the Prime Minister of Georgia and the Chairperson of Parliament participated.

The Government of Georgia also actively cooperates with the group of experts of the Open Society Georgia Foundation, which carries out the monitoring of the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda in individual thematic fields within the framework of the Increasing the Accountability of the Authorities of Georgia through the Monitoring of the Implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement project.

With a view to ensuring the active involvement of civil society, the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia introduced the practice of examining alternative reports prepared by civil society together with the sectoral committees and discussing them at the meetings of the Committee, which represents an additional means of monitoring the implementation of matters on the Association Agenda by the executive authority.

A draft of the Annual National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda is sent to interested non-governmental organisations for remarks and comments before it is submitted to Georgia's EU Integration Commission. Based on practice in recent years, a considerable part of the remarks, suggestions and comments of civil society have been incorporated in the annual national action plans.

The Government of Georgia and Parliament closely cooperate with the EU-Georgia Civil Society Platform envisaged by the Association Agreement which is an important forum for the discussion of issues related to European integration and the preparation of respective recommendations by representatives of the non-governmental organisations of the European Union and Georgia and by the members of the European Economic and Social Committee.

A Memorandum of Mutual Cooperation and an Action Plan have been signed between the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society and the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia, according to which the National Platform may participate in the law-making activities of the Committee.

1.4. Progress in the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda

From 2014, the Association Agreement, and the Association Agenda which contains the priority areas of the Association Agreement, are implemented on the basis of annual action plans¹.

Georgia is successfully implementing the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda. The progress achieved by Georgia in this respect has been highlighted by the European Commission in the published annual reports on the implementation of the Association Agreement.²

Since 2014, significant progress has been achieved in the fields such as: migration, border management, the security of documents, the fight against human trafficking, money laundering, organised crime and cybercrime, the protection of personal data, the approximation of anti-discrimination legislation to European standards, the security of documents and migration control, public sector reform, agriculture, environmental protection, culture, education, trade and trade-related matters. The following implemented reforms deserve special mention:

- On 5 March 2014, a new Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons was adopted.
- On 30 April 2014, a new Organic Law on Georgian Citizenship was adopted.
- In June 2015, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a Juvenile Justice Code that improved the norms regulating the participation of minors in justice procedure, and the mechanisms necessary for the resocialisation and rehabilitation of minors in conflict with law and for the protection of minor witnesses and victims from secondary victimisation and re-victimisation have been elaborated.
- In 2015 and 2017, the Anti-Corruption Strategy was updated and Actions Plans for its implementation (2015-2016 and 2017-2018) were prepared, and respective reports produced.
- In March 2015, a Labour Conditions Inspection Department was set up in the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, and on 8 March 2018 the Parliament of Georgia adopted a Law on Occupational Safety, which established a legislative framework necessary for the protection of the life and health of employees and a unified standard of occupational safety aimed at ensuring a safe and healthy working environment. On 19 February 2019, the Parliament of Georgia approved a new Organic Law on Occupational Safety, which will apply to all the sectors of economic activities from 1 September 2019.

¹ The reports of the implementation of the Annual National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda are available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia www.mfa.gov.ge

² The reports are available on the website of the European External Actions Service eeas.europa.eu



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- A new Law on Labour Migration was adopted in 2015, and an ordinance of the Government of Georgia on the Procedures for the Employment of Labour Immigrants (Aliens with no Permits for Permanent Residence in Georgia) by Local Employers and for Carrying out of Paid Labour Activities for Local Employers was approved.
- On 8 July 2015, the Parliament of Georgia adopted amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code to entrench the adversarial principle.
- On 18 September 2015, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a package of legislative amendments for the reform of the Prosecutor's Office to increase the independence of the Prosecutor's Office.
- In February 2015, an agreement was signed in Brussels, based on which Georgia became a member of the European Union's Creative Europe programme. The programme aims at the popularisation and internationalisation of European culture, enhancing the role of the cultural, creative and audiovisual sectors in the social and economic development of Europe, creating new jobs for sector representatives and ensuring their professionalism, as well as at institutional development.
- In October 2015, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a new Law of Georgia on Civil Service, which modernised the public sector and established effective public administration.
- On 29 April 2016, an agreement on joining Horizon 2020 as an associate member was signed between Georgia and the European Union. Within the framework of the said multi-million euro programme, researchers, universities, companies, and research and non-governmental organisations have an opportunity to receive financial support for research, inventions, and innovations and best ideas.
- In July 2017, Georgia became a full member of the Energy Community.
- On 1 June 2017, the Parliament of Georgia adopted an Environmental Assessment Code which established an environmental impact assessment system approximated to European standards.
- On 21 April 2017, a Law on Electronic Documents and Trusted Electronic Service was adopted.
- On 4 May 2017, the Parliament of Georgia adopted legislative amendments to harmonise national legislation and bring it in line with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).
- On 1 December 2017, the Technical Regulations on the Periodic Technical Inspections of Motor Vehicles and their Trailers were approved by an ordinance of

the Government of Georgia, and from 1 January 2018 compulsory technical inspections became effective.

- In May 2018, following intensive meetings and work with working groups of experts, the Ministry of Justice completed the revision of the Criminal Code of Georgia with the objective of the liberalisation of the Criminal Code of Georgia, increase of the discretion of judges, and the drawing up of clear and foreseeable criminal law provisions.
- On 21 July 2018, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a Law on the State Inspector's Service to create a thorough, independent and effective mechanism for investigating allegations of the use of torture and ill treatment in the penitentiary system, police and other closed facilities.
- On 22 May 2018, the Government of Georgia approved the 3rd National Environmental Action Program 2017-2021 (NEAP-3).
- On 4 September 2018, the Eastern Partnership European School was launched in Tbilisi.
- On 13 August 2018, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a Code of Spatial Planning, and Architectural and Construction Activities, which establishes a unified legislative and normative framework in the field of spatial planning and urban planning and construction activities in Georgia, which allows citizens to correctly interpret and apply legislative regulations in the said field.

1.5. Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) part of the Association Agreement

The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) is an integral part of the Association Agreement, which opens to Georgia the EU market of 500 million consumers. Owing to the DCFTA, Georgia is able to export its products to the EU market with zero customs tariff, which plays an important role in the development of EU-Georgia trade relations and is a precondition for the encouragement of exports of national products to the EU single market, and for the integration of the national economy into the EU market and for its development. By virtue of the DCFTA, the country is becoming more attractive for running businesses as, once investments are made in Georgia, foreign undertakings are allowed to take out products produced in Georgia to the EU market with a zero customs tariff. Consequently, this will contribute to the employment of the local population, an increase in the competitiveness of products produced in Georgia, an increase in budget revenue, and the improvement of the country's economy in general, especially in the long term.

From the signature of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement in 2014 until today, Georgia's exports to the EU market have increased by 15 %, and the European Union has become a key trading partner of Georgia, with a 31 % share in the country's foreign trade. The relative share of European direct investments in Georgia's economy increases annually.



In the long term, the objective of the Government of Georgia is not only the full implementation of commitments under the DCFTA, but also the further expansion of the Economic Area with the European Union, which is consistent with the objectives of the EU Global Strategy.¹

Achieved results:

- The 2018-2020 DCFTA Action Plan has been approved with a view to facilitating the effective coordination of commitments made under the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) part of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, and facilitating long-term cooperation with various donors. In addition to the said multi-year Action Plan, according to existing practice, Annual National Action Plans for the Implementation of the DCFTA are approved on an annual basis by orders of the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, which provide even more detailed information on the activities to be implemented in a specific year.

Technical barriers to trade

- The Government of Georgia continues to actively adopt international and European standards as national standards. In 2017, a total of 2157 European and international standards were adopted as Georgian standards. At this point, a total of 11 000 international and European standards have been adopted as Georgian standards.
- An important step was made towards the international recognition of the Georgian Accreditation Center, when on 23 May 2017 a Bilateral Recognition Agreement was signed between the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) and Georgia at the EA General Assembly. The recognition includes the international recognition of certificates and laboratory test reports issued by entities accredited in Georgia.
- Amendments have been made to the Product Safety and Free Movement Code to establish a system in Georgia consistent with European best practice in market surveillance for industrial and consumer products. Pursuant to the said amendments, it has become possible to carry out market surveillance for consumer and industrial products and prevent threats arising from such products, which ensures the protection of human life, health, property and environment.

¹ EU Global Strategy, Annex B (Shared vision, common action: stronger Europe), page 140 - https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/eugs_review_web.pdf



- To promote the development of the capacities of the Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia in the field of food safety, veterinary and plant protection, new methods of diagnostics have been approved and the accreditation scope has been expanded. The Laboratory obtained international accreditation for the diagnostics of plant pests in various fields, and the Laboratory has been equipped and its employees have been retrained.

Sanitary and phytosanitary measures:

- Georgia has committed to gradually approximate, from 2015 to 2027, the legislation of Georgia in the field of food safety, veterinary and plant protection to 272 EU sanitary and phytosanitary laws. As of today, the legislation of Georgia has been approximated to 80 EU regulations and directives.
- In addition, in accordance with the legislation of Georgia that has been approximated to the EU acquis, various activities (trainings) are being implemented for business entities to assist them in adapting to the requirements of the legislation, as well as information campaigns conducted for non-governmental organisations and business representatives.
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the legislation, numerous programmes for the support of the private sector are being implemented. In addition, a transitional period of an average of 1 to 3 years has been determined for the entry into force of acts that have been approximated to the EU acquis, in order that the public sector and executive/controlling bodies have additional time to be able to meet the new requirements of the legislation.
- Furthermore, the Laboratory is being re-equipped and new research methods are being introduced, in particular to promote the development of the capacities of the LEPL Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia in the field of food safety, veterinary and plant protection, and new methods of diagnostics have been approved and the accreditation scope has been expanded. The Laboratory obtained international accreditation for the diagnostics of plant pests in various fields, and the Laboratory has been equipped and its employees have been trained. In addition, the qualifications of employees of the Ministry and of the legal entities under public law operating within the system of the Ministry are being upgraded.

Customs and trade facilitation

- Legislative amendments have been adopted, as a result of which the institution of Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) was introduced in Georgia. Work on the further improvement of the legislation continues.
- On 21 April 2017, the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin, and on 1 July 2017 Georgia formally became a party to the said Convention. Respective amendments were made to Protocol No 1 to the Association Agreement, after which the Convention rules became effective between the European Union and Georgia.

Intellectual property rights

- On 11 January 2018, the legislative amendments drafted by the Sakpatenti entered into force, according to which the protection of intellectual property rights was facilitated. In particular, the amendments concerned the following legislative acts: the Patent Law of Georgia; the Law of Georgia on Trademarks; the Law of Georgia on Copyright and Related Rights; the Law of Georgia on Design; the Law of Georgia on Medicines and Pharmaceutical Activities; the Law of Georgia on Pesticides and Agrochemicals; and the Civil Procedure Code of Georgia. As a result of the amendments, the legislation of Georgia in the field of the protection of intellectual property rights was brought into compliance with European standards, which means a higher standard of protection of intellectual property rights and enhanced enforcement mechanisms.
- A new version of the Law of Georgia on Border Measures Related to Intellectual Property has been adopted. The said law was thus brought into compliance with the relevant EU regulation (Regulation (EU) No 608/2013). The new version of the law provides for a mechanism for the suspension of goods before registration, pursuant to which the relevant service is authorised, in the case of reasonable doubt, to suspend the movement in the customs territory of Georgia of goods that have been produced through the infringement of rights to a registered object of intellectual property protected in Georgia. This will facilitate the establishment of a high standard of protection of intellectual property rights in the country.

Public procurement

- In accordance with the commitments under the DCFTA, a Guideline on the Fulfilment of Commitments on Amendments to Be Implemented in the Field of Public Procurement Made on the Basis of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement has been approved.

It includes a time schedule for the fulfilment of commitments made under the DCFTA in the field of public procurement.

- Amendments were made to the Law of Georgia on Public Procurement, which implemented the commitments under the DCFTA (Article 144 of the Association Agreement). As a result of the said amendments, the principles of elimination of discrimination, equal treatment, and transparency and proportionality, have been incorporated in the procurement legislation. In addition, the Parliament of Georgia has adopted legislative amendments providing for a new set up of a body dealing with the resolution of disputes related to public procurement, and the enhanced transparency thereof.

Trade and sustainable development

- The Fishing Electronic Monitoring System has been introduced in the Georgian waters of the Black Sea, and the compliance of its parameters with European standards will be ensured on the basis of GFCM technical assistance.
- Based on reforms implemented in Georgia, Georgia has been included in the list of third countries from where honey, Black Sea fish and sea-fishing products may be imported into the European Union. In 2016-2018, enterprises/business operators which export wool, the skins of animals and bee venom to the European Union were authorised and published on the relevant website.

1.6. Measures planned to facilitate the effective implementation of the Association Agreement

The implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda and, in general, the further increase in the effectiveness of the European integration process, requires the strengthening of the planning, coordination and monitoring of implementation and of the capacities of state agencies, and requires the further improvement of the institutional European integration mechanism.

In 2019, financial resources necessary for the implementation of individual activities have been included in the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, which will considerably contribute in future to the effective planning and implementation of the Action Plan.

From 2020, a unified annual European Integration Action Plan of Georgia will be prepared instead of the existing annual National Action Plans for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda. The European Integration Action Plan of Georgia will include measures planned for the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, as well as additional measures incorporated in this

Roadmap and activities planned for the achievement of the objectives set in the Eastern Partnership - 20 Deliverables for 2020 document.

The 2019 National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda already include the commitments within the framework of the objectives set in this Roadmap and the 20 Deliverables for EaP 2020 document.

From 2019, in order to increase the effectiveness of the planning of the European integration process, a mid-term (three-year) European integration plan will also be drawn up and will be updated on annual basis. The main purpose of a mid-term plan is to ensure the effective planning of the implementation of the EU integration commitments and the further strengthening of a predictable business environment for the business sector. The mid-term plan will set forth important reforms to be implemented within 3 years and actions planned for legislative approximation.

The structure of a mid-term plan will include a relevant article of the Association Agreement and/or Association Agenda, a planned reform/legislative approximation, a responsible institution and an implementation period(s). A budget for the implementation of an activity and indicators will be specified in a mid-term plan only in the first year. Activities intended for the 2nd and 3rd years will be mainly of an indicative nature. The activities of the last 2 years in the mid-term plan will be provided in more detail in future one-year action plans and will specify a budget for the implementation of an activity, indicators and other details.

The effective implementation of the European integration process also considerably depends on the existence of a unified, consistent and systemic approach. Consequently, it is important to ensure a high level of compatibility and complementarity between strategies and actions plan in individual fields, on the one hand, and a national European integration action plan, on the other. Thus, commitments envisaged by the Association Agreement, by annexes to the Agreement and by the Association Agenda, as well as additional measures incorporated in the Roadmap, will be fully included in respective sectoral strategies and action plans.

To increase the effectiveness of the monitoring of the planning and implementation of the European integration process, the electronic monitoring web platform will be improved. The measures planned under the Eastern Partnership – ‘20 Deliverables for 2020’ document and the Roadmap will be integrated into the electronic monitoring system. An integrated web platform will therefore be created, where all information on measures planned and implemented for the country’s integration into the EU, including on the objectives set forth in the Association Agreement and the ‘20 Deliverables for 2020’ document, as well as

information on legislative approximation, will be placed. The system will allow mid-term planning.

The drawing up of a mid-term (three-year) European integration plan and the planning of EU assistance will be synchronised. This will facilitate the timely identification of the need for appropriate EU assistance and, thus, the effective planning of assistance.

A meeting of Georgia's EU Integration Commission is held once a quarter to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda. In addition, the meetings of working groups (at the level of deputy ministers) set up within the Georgia's EU Integration Commission will be held on a regular basis, at which the progress of the European integration process, including the issues of the implementation of EU assistance and legislative approximation, as well as the progress of visa liberalisation with the EU, will be discussed. As of now, the following working groups have been established within the Commission:

- a working group on the coordination of EU assistance and the implementation of the Association Agreement;
- a working group on the further monitoring and coordination of visa liberalisation.

It is planned to set up a working group on the prevention of fraud in EU assistance projects and the protection of EU financial interests in Georgia. In addition to the above, an appropriate staffing for the European integration process is important. For this reason, the further enhancing of structural units dealing with European integration in individual line ministries will be supported through carrying out relevant trainings, study visits and other qualification upgrading activities. The assistance of EU experts and other international donor organisations will be mobilised in terms of trainings for relevant public officers and financial support, on the basis of which specific activities will be determined, target groups will be formed and topics will be identified based on European experience. Detailed activities of trainings will be included in annual European integration action plans.

1.7. Future plans in the field of DCFTA

The Government of Georgia actively continues working on the smooth and effective implementation of the DCFTA, which includes the fulfilment of commitments undertaken to the European Union in terms of both legislative approximation and institutional approximation. In this respect, the Government of Georgia plans to implement important activities:

- It is planned to adopt a Forest Code of Georgia, which aims at establishing the legal bases for the sustainable management of forests. This will ensure the conservation of the biological diversity of the forests of Georgia, and the preservation and improvement of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics

of the properties and resources of forests in order for them to perform their ecological, social and economic functions. The Forest Code should create a firm legal basis for the adoption and smooth functioning of subordinate normative acts in the field of forest management.

- It is planned to adopt a Law on Post, which incorporates the commitments made under the DCFTA in the postal sector and aims at establishing legal bases and basic principles for activities in the field of postal services in the entire territory of Georgia, and at providing natural and legal persons with reliable and efficient postal services and ensuring the compliance by postal operators with necessary requirements in providing postal services.
- Legislative activities in the sanitary and phytosanitary field will continue. The Government of Georgia will continue working on approximation to EU legal instruments included in the approximation list of the Association Agreement (approximation time frames are prescribed in the veterinary field until 2027, and in the field of food safety and plant protection, until 2026).
- Dialogue with the EU will continue with respect to new animal products, for which the market will be opened once the relevant reforms are implemented (for instance, aquaculture, etc.).
- Accession to the Convention on a Common Transit Procedure (CTC) and to the Single Administrative Document (SAD) Convention and the implementation of a New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) are planned.
- Pursuant to the commitments made to the European Union, new customs legislation is being prepared. According to Annex XIII to the Association Agreement, Georgia was to carry out approximation to the so-called Community Customs Code, which was replaced by a new document, the so-called Union Customs Code (it was agreed on 17 May 2017, within the framework of the 4th meeting of the Customs Sub-Committee envisaged by the Association Agreement, that the customs legislation of Georgia would be approximated to the so-called Union Customs Code).
- The approximation of the legislation of Georgia on public procurement to the EU acquis on public procurement and the process of respective institutional reforms continues, as envisaged by the DCFTA part of the Association Agreement.

Part 2. Cooperation with the European Union in the Field of Security and Defence

Introductory Part

Georgia is one of the main partners of the European Union in terms of cooperation in the field of defence. The European Union is actively involved in the process of the promotion of peace and stability in Georgia through instruments and mechanisms such as the Geneva International Discussions and the Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia, the Monitoring Mission and the recognition and engagement policy. Georgia, for its part, also makes a contribution to EU-led crisis management operations which serve to ensure security and stability in various regions of the world.

In the light of the current unprecedented political, economic and security challenges, one of the main objectives on Georgia's EU integration agenda is increasing the resistance of the country and society to such challenges.

The security challenges that the world faces, a difficult geopolitical environment and instability, global threats of terrorism, potential risks of the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction, serious regional conflicts and migration crises, widespread organised crime and cybercrime, and hybrid threats, require joint efforts and cooperation. The European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy published in June 2016 thoroughly analyses the said challenges and, in addition to joint actions and enhanced cooperation with partners, underlines the strategic importance of increasing the resistance of neighbouring partner countries. The Strategy makes emphasis in this process on a more effective application of the EU's 'soft force' instruments, but underlines at the same time the importance of enhancing the EU's defence capacities, including administrative capacities. Georgia is the only country among neighbouring countries that has made a contribution to the elaboration of the said Strategy.

Against significant developments ongoing in the European Union in the field of security and defence, the main objective of the Government of Georgia will be to enhance cooperation with the European Union in the field of security in the wake of democratic and economic reforms. This will serve to increase the civil security and defence capacities of the country, to further enhance the role of the European Union in peaceful conflict resolution, and to continue supporting the EU's efforts in promoting peace and stability in the world. Georgia follows with interest the development by the European Union of new initiatives for the intensification of cooperation in the field of security and defence, both within the Community and with neighbouring countries, including, for example, the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) in the field of defence¹, which aims at integrating armed forces, increasing the defence budget, carrying

¹ PESCO was established in 2017 and currently unites 25 EU Member States. In March 2018, 17 projects were approved, which envisage trainings, capacity building and operational readiness in the field of defence. By the end of 2018, the Council of Europe should also make decisions on the participation of third countries in PESCO and elaborate relevant criteria.



out joint acquisitions of armaments, enhancing military capacities and making investments in the field of defence in a coordinated manner.

Notably, cooperation with the European Union in the field of security and defence will complement the ongoing cooperation with NATO and EU Member States in this field. As a NATO aspirant country, Georgia is interested in participating in joint projects in various fields in the context of NATO-EU cooperation, for the purpose of sharing best European practice.

Further enhancement of the legal and institutional framework

Security and defence is an important topic in the Association Agenda, and the specific areas of cooperation and action are also included in the Association Agenda. In addition, in November 2013 a framework agreement was signed between the European Union and Georgia on the participation of Georgia in EU crisis management operations, and on 23 June 2016¹ an Agreement on Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information was signed.

Georgia has implemented significant legislative, structural and institutional reforms in respect of a number of aspects of the security field, with the support of the European Union and its Member States and other international partners. Having regard to the progress achieved and the dynamics of cooperation, the European Union considers Georgia a main ally in the area of security.²

Security issues are discussed together with other topics of bilateral cooperation within the framework of institutions established under the Association Agreement, namely the Association Council, the Association Committee and the Parliamentary Association Committee. Having regard to the increasing importance of a security topic on the EU-Georgia bilateral agenda, and to the interests of the parties in enhancing cooperation in this field, the Strategic Dialogue between the European Union and Georgia was established from 2017, in the framework of which common challenges, ways of responding to such challenges and of cooperation, and the issue of peaceful conflict resolution, are discussed.

In addition to bilateral formats, Georgia is also actively involved in the Eastern Partnership multilateral cooperation meetings and events on security topics, including in the work of the Panel on Security, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Civil Protection.

The dialogue in the said formats concerns existing innovations in the field of European security and defence, as well as specific initiatives with respect to partner countries, such as the improvement of strategic communications, countering hybrid threats, the development of the capacities of security sectors in partner countries, etc.

¹ The practical enactment of the agreement requires the execution of implementation rules pursuant to Article 12 of the Agreement on Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information, on which the Parties are actively working.

² Association Implementation Report on Georgia, published on 25 November 2016



Further steps:

- The effective application of the existing institutional and legal framework will continue with a view to enhancing cooperation and identifying new directions.
- The implementation rules will be executed in line with Article 12 of the Agreement between Georgia and the European Union on Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information.
- The dialogue on the opportunities for Georgia to participate in new initiatives with the European Union, for example in PESCO, once the European Union adopts a decision in this specific case on the participation of third countries in projects developed in the framework of PESCO and on the criteria.

Cooperation in the field of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)/Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

Since 2007, Georgia has actively acceded to the EU's foreign and security policy statements. Over the years, Georgia has shared the majority of EU positions.

Combating terrorism, violent extremism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Georgia actively cooperates with the European Union in the field of combating terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction within the framework of international formats, conventions and agreements. In 2016, Georgia obtained the status of a nuclear-free country and became a member of the G7 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Georgia is actively involved in the EU Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Risks Mitigation Centre of Excellence Initiative, and performs the function of one of the eight regional secretariats, which covers Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Armenia, Ukraine, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. Georgia is also the first country among the Member States of the Council of Europe to have prepared a National Action Plan (NAP 2015-2019) on CBRN issues.

Georgia follows the relevant international recommendations (FATF, Moneyval) and implements the approximation of the law preventing money laundering and terrorism financing to the EU Fourth Directive. On the basis thereof, a draft Law of Georgia on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing was prepared in accordance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations, the Moneyval report and Directive 2015/849 of the European Parliament and the Council of 20 May 2015. In 2013-2015, in terms of combating terrorism, important amendments were made to the Criminal Code, including an amendment according to which actions such as recruiting a person as a member of a terrorist organisation, supporting terrorism, participating in international terrorism, inciting to acts of violence, and actions related to the activities of illegal formations,



became punishable. Notably, Georgia is one of the first countries among the UN Member States which in 2015 criminalised actions related to so-called foreign terrorist fighters, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014). As a result of the legislative amendments, the said code determined criminal liability for actions such as crossing or attempting to cross the state border of Georgia for the purpose of carrying out, preparing for or participating in terrorist activities or trainings. Within the framework of the Standing Inter-agency Commission set up by an ordinance of the Government of Georgia, under the coordination of the State Security Service, a National Strategy of Georgia for Combating Terrorism and its Action Plan were prepared, and the Government of Georgia approved them in January 2019.

Georgia is actively involved in international efforts and combats terrorism and all its manifestations alongside the international community. Georgia became an active member of the Global Coalition against IS and, through its participation in multinational operations, makes a significant contribution to maintaining peace and security in the world. Georgia actively cooperates within the framework of international formats, is a member of the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT), and participates in activities planned under the guidance of the EU, NATO, the UN, the OSCE and the GUAM and other international organisation in the field of combating terrorism.

In the bilateral cooperation format, Georgia has signed agreements with partner countries on cooperation in the field of combating crimes, including terrorism. Notably, on 4 April 2017, by having signed an Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation with Europol, Georgia became Europol's operational partner. The important part of the said agreement is cooperation in the field of combating terrorism. In addition, on 9 March 2018 an Agreement on a Safe Communication and a Liaison Agreement were signed with Europol. The signature of the said international agreements with EU and NATO Member States, as well as with other partner countries, represents a particular priority for Georgia. This process is ongoing and the State actively continues to further enhance the bilateral international legal framework.

European Union crisis management operations. Since 2014, Georgia has been involved in crisis management operations within the framework of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. Georgia thus affirms that the European Union is a reliable partner, is actively involved, in the wake of NATO missions, in common European efforts aimed at promoting peace and stability in the world. The participation of Georgia in EU missions increases, apart from the contribution that is considered extremely positive by the European Union, professional opportunities for Georgian human resources, as well as compatibility with EU security and defence mechanisms.

It should be noted that Georgia successfully completed its participation in 2 EU missions in the Central African Republic, in particular: from June 2014, one light infantry battalion (156 military service persons) of the Armed Forces of Georgia participated in the EU's mission in the Central African Republic (EUFOR RCA), which was replaced by two platoon size units (85 military service persons) in December 2014. The main task of the units was to defend the airport of the city of Bangui. Georgia completed participation in the mission in March 2015. In addition, one liaison officer was performing assigned duties from March to September 2014, in an EU military operations headquarters in Larissa, Greece.



From October 2015, 5 military service persons were engaged in the European Union Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA) (an immediate response team (IRT), with an immediate response task). Georgia successfully completed participation in the EUMAM RCA in July 2016.

In addition, from September 2015 to May 2016 a civil representative of the Ministry of Defence of Georgia successfully participated in the European Union Advisory Mission in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) in the field of human resources management.

Currently, Georgia is involved in the European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic and in the Republic of Mali, in particular: 35 military service persons from Georgia have been participating in the European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) since January 2017, with the task of defence of forces. One military service person from Georgia has been participating as a liaison officer in the European Union Training Mission in the Republic of Mali (EUTM Mali) since January 2016.

Georgia's participation in the said missions is planned until the expiry of the mandates of the missions (2020), in particular: until September 2020 in EUTM RCA (the end of the 2nd mandate of the mission), and until May 2020 in EUTM Mali (the expiry of the 4th mandate of the mission).

The representatives of the relevant agencies of Georgia participate in trainings and simulated operations organised by EU Member States and by the Academy of the European Security and Defence College, which assists experts with relevant qualifications willing to participate in EU missions in developing their capacities. In particular, the representatives of the relevant agencies participate in general orientation courses, which aim at raising awareness on CSDP issues, and in mission preparation trainings. Mission preparation trainings include both crisis situation simulation tactical trainings and the sharing of theoretical and practical knowledge on CSDP issues. Their goal is to equip participants with necessary practical and theoretical knowledge that will be helpful to potential experts while on missions.

A special unit, the Division for the Facilitation of the Employment of Georgian Citizens in International Organisations, has been set up in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, whose one of the goals is 'to coordinate participation in the EU's CSDP missions, including the ensuring of sending qualified public officers to missions and the facilitation of the employment of Georgian citizens under contracts in EU missions'.

Further steps:

- The dynamics of accession to the EU's Foreign and Security Policy statements will continue;
- Active cooperation in international formats on combating violent extremism and terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction will continue;
- Cooperation with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) will develop in the field of combating terrorism;

- Active cooperation between Georgia and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) will continue with a view to signing a Memorandum of Understanding on Confidentiality and Information Assurance;
- With a view to preventing radicalisation, the sharing of experience and cooperation will be activated through the introduction and promotion of educational, social, cultural and economic programmes for vulnerable groups;
- Consultations with the European Defence Agency (EDA) will start for the purpose of determining relevant cooperation modalities;
- Participation in EU missions will continue;
- Participation in trainings on CSDP issues organised by the European Union for the purpose of increasing professional knowledge and skills will be activated;
- In cooperation with the European Security and Defence College, a CSDP training module was introduced in the Defence Academy, which will ensure the broad spread of knowledge of CSDP and the preparation of necessary human resources for the EU's military, civil and police missions;
- The Division for the Facilitation of the Employment of Georgian Citizens in International Organisations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia will continue working on ensuring the successful participation of Georgia's representatives in CSDP missions, as well as in the field of training personnel and developing opportunities for them.

Countering hybrid threats

Hybrid threats are one of the most important challenges of today's world. This is a priority which has a significant role in the Global Strategy of the EU Global Foreign and Security Policy.

Since the 1990's, Georgia has suffered many effects of a hybrid war initiated by Russia. The support of the occupation regimes in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, including financial and military support, Russian military posts in Georgia, energy dependence, and economic blockades were all factors which preceded the occupation of the territories of Georgia by Russia. Before and during the Russian-Georgian War of August 2008, Russia used almost all the elements of hybrid war, including cyberattacks on the internet websites of the official structures of Georgia. Today, under these conditions, while Russia continues to occupy the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali in the territory of Georgia, and its gradual annexation on the basis of the enforcement of "Agreements" on so called "Integration" signed with the occupation regimes, Russia had opened a wide front in the form of propaganda and disinformation for the purposes of discrediting the West and western values within Georgian society, stirring European and Euro-Atlantic strife, and, as a result, changing the foreign policy of the country for the benefit of the interests of Russia. Propaganda usually provokes hostility and conflict between different groups in society, and the radicalisation of

positions inside the country, which is directed at undermining the stability of the country and is aimed at weakening the state.

Despite the fact that the majority of the population of Georgia strongly supports the choice of Europe, and as long as there is no alternative to integration into European structures, it is important that the hybrid threats which Georgia is facing are well evaluated, and ways of improving relations with partners are found. In light of this, a joint framework document prepared by the European Union on countering hybrid threats is worth mentioning, in which the European Union offers its partner countries the opportunity to improve their relations, and offers its support in strengthening the resistance of relevant sectors against threats.

Further steps:

- Analysis of hybrid threats will be conducted.
- In close collaboration with the European Union, including with the support of the European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP), the following shall be carried out: a) development of procedures for identifying, granting status to and determining categories of critical infrastructure; b) laying down of appropriate standards and reporting procedures for the safe and continuous operation of critical infrastructure; c) development of an investment policy related to critical infrastructure; d) Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) of the critical infrastructure system and its protection.
- A critical infrastructure protection strategy will be developed.
- Relations with the European Union will be improved for the purposes of developing the opportunities of the country in the context of countering hybrid threats, and European best practice will be implemented.
- The technological means for countering hybrid threats will be improved and the qualification of staff employed in this field will be upgraded.
- Opportunities for collaborating with the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell¹ will be surveyed/determined.
- Cooperation within the context of reforming the security field² will be enhanced;

¹ The cell was set up in the European External Action Service, which receives and analyses information. The Cell will thus be expanded with specialised Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN), Counter Intelligence and Cyber analytical components.

² On 5 July 2016, a joint communication of the European Commission and EU High Representative to the European Parliament and the Council was published, which relates to the facilitation of stability, security and development in partner countries through the Security Sector Reform (SSR). In January 2018, EU experts visited Georgia to identify basic needs within the scope of the reform in Georgia.

- New opportunities for the facilitation of cyber-security, and for cooperation in field of combating terrorism, will be studied.
- Appropriate steps will be taken for the improvement of technological and institutional capabilities for countering hybrid threats and the qualification of staff employed in this field will be improved.

Strategic communication in relation to matters of European integration

With a background of anti-Western propaganda, one of the most important tasks of the government is effective communication with the population of the country about the priorities of the foreign policy of Georgia, including on matters related to integration into the European Union and NATO.

The Russian information machine is becoming more and more engaged in aggravating anti-Western attitudes, both inside and outside the country. As a matter of course, Russian disinformation campaigns are tailored to particular political events, and accordingly are of an organised nature.

In the current circumstances, of special importance are the powers of state institutions on the one hand, and the resilience of the Georgian population to disinformation on the other. With the availability of modern technologies, whereby information can be disseminated rapidly and smoothly, permanent communication with the general public, and the timely provision of impartial information about on-going processes in the country, are essential.

In order to address this situation, the Government of Georgia has carried out many significant reforms and made institutional changes. As a result of changes in government in 2017, and the joining of the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Strategic Communication Department was set up as a separate subdivision within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. Thus, an effective interagency unit for strategic communications was established in the administration of the Government of Georgia.

The head office and regional representation offices of the LEPL Information Center on NATO and EU were strengthened. The 2017-2020 Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia for Georgia's EU and NATO Membership was prepared with the active participation of the non-governmental sector, which is being implemented under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. Large scale information campaigns have been planned and carried out in relation to European integration of the country. In order to combat anti-Western attitudes, meetings are actively held throughout the country with different target groups.

Further steps:

- More intensive actions are planned, inside and outside the country, to improve the image of the country. On the one hand, the general public will be informed of the consequences and benefits of European integration, and on the other, partner countries will be informed of the reforms carried out in Georgia.
- Large scale information campaigns are planned to raise the awareness of the general public in the field of European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia. The work will be performed with target audiences selected in advance, which are particularly vulnerable to Russian propaganda.
- Collaboration with foreign academic circles will be intensified, as well as with research and non-governmental organisations, who will provide overall and complete information;
- The coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the 2017-2020 Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia for Georgia's EU and NATO Membership will continue.
- The third wave of the information campaign on the visa-free regime to the EU and Schengen countries will continue.
- The monitoring and analysis of disinformation and anti-Western propaganda will be enhanced.
- Active communications with the Georgian diaspora operating abroad will continue;
- Cooperation with a special EU unit named East StratCom Task Force will continue;
- Required capabilities for the monitoring of the information space will be improved based on cooperation with the European Union.

Cybersecurity

On the background of globalisation, internet connections are gradually growing in the contemporary world, which, in addition to benefits, has brought serious challenges to the international public. Nowadays, without cyber-security it is almost impossible to ensure a desirable level of security.

The process of the enhancement of cyber-security in Georgia was initiated in 2013, when the first cyber-security strategy was adopted. Many important reforms have been carried out since then in Georgia, which have helped to establish an effective



legislative and operational framework. Georgia is among a few countries where the development of cyber-security has preceded the development of the information, communication and technology fields. On the basis of the 2017 global cyber-security index, Georgia meets 82% of the general criteria and occupies 5th place among 190 countries. In accordance with the national cyber-security index of the E-Governance Academy of Estonia, Georgia's capabilities are maximally developed in such fields as policy development and analysis of threats.

The key components of the adjusted cybersphere of Georgia are: the second national cyber-security strategy and its action plan, which is being implemented; the law on information security, which represents the main legal framework for information and cyber-security; cooperation between public and private sectors in the form of a cyber-security forum, which integrates all key actors and is summoned twice a year; services rendered by the state for identifying and preventing cyber threats; training of specialists in the cybersphere; awareness raising about the information society; boosting regional and international cooperation, including cooperation with international organisations (NATO, EU, UN, OSCE, CoE, ITU, OECD). An authorised national and governmental Computer Emergency Response Team, which is a member of the analogous association of the European Union (EU CERT), operates in Georgia.

Further steps:

- Sharing of EU experience and introduction of EU best practice;
- Facilitation of the cooperation with the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) for receiving assistance in participating in trainings, instructions and different activities organised by the Agency, mobilising the assistance from the Agency in the process of strategic development and policy making in the field of cyber-security in Georgia, approximating the Georgian legislative framework with the EU Directive on Network and Information Security, etc.

Energy security

The energy security of Europe is a sphere of interest which Georgia and the European Union have in common. Considering geographical location and transit potential, Georgia is one of the key partners of the European Union in terms of the development of alternative energy resources and supply routes. Georgia is an active member of the EU energy initiative on the Southern Gas Corridor and is one of the main participants of such strategic energy projects, as the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) and the Baku–Tbilisi–Supsa Pipelines, and the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline. Georgia is also a



member of the European Energy Community, which facilitates the making of European policy in the field of energy, and the integration of the country in the common European energy market. Latest developments related to the status of the Caspian Sea have stimulated the implementation of new strategic projects for the further diversification of energy resources, in particular the transportation of rich gas resources from Turkmenistan to Europe via an alternative route (through the Black Sea).

Further steps:

- Participation of Georgia in the Southern Gas Corridor extension project, which will increase the energy security of both Georgia and Europe, will continue.
- In view of the latest developments with regard to the status of the Caspian Sea, consultations with the European Union in relation to including the White Stream Project in the list of priority projects and for its further realisation, will continue.
- Consultations with regard to the AGRI project, which involves the transportation of liquefied natural gas to Romania, Hungary and Western Europe through a Black Sea port in Georgia.¹
- Work will continue in the field of energy to strengthen resistance and safety. This will contribute to the implementation of commitments made under the Protocol on joining of the European Energy Community. In particular, the implementation of the following EU directives and regulations will continue:
 - Council Directive 2009/119/EC imposing an obligation of Member States to maintain minimum stock of crude oil and/or petroleum products;
 - Regulation (EC) No 715/2009 on conditions for access to the natural gas transmission networks;
 - Council Directive 2004/67/EC concerning measures to safeguard security of natural gas supply;
 - Directive 2009/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas.

Peaceful conflict resolution

The European Union plays a key role in the peaceful resolution of Russia-Georgia conflict. The EU is a mediator of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between Russia and Georgia and to a great extent a guarantor of the fulfillment of the obligations by the parties. The European Union strongly supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and Georgia's peaceful conflict resolution policy, which is clearly and unambiguously expressed in the EU's statements and official documents.

¹ The AGRI project is complementary to the projects White Stream and Trans Caspian Gas Pipeline, TCP.



Application of a number of instruments and formats to the resolution of Russia-Georgia conflict confirms EU's special support and engagement in ensuring sustainable peace and security in Georgia. Namely: the EU has appointed a **Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia** to facilitate EU's effective involvement in the peaceful conflict resolution; the EU is the **co-chair of the Geneva International Discussions¹ (GID)** and the **co-facilitator and participant in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs)** established under the GID framework; EU has deployed a **Monitoring Mission (European Union Monitoring Mission)** in Georgia with the mandate of monitoring the implementation of the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between Russia and Georgia. Despite the fact that Russian Federation does not allow the European Union Monitoring Mission to access the occupied territories and fully implement its mandate the mission plays an important role in preventing escalation on the ground. The EU has adopted and unequivocally pursues the policy of **"non-recognition and engagement"** towards the occupied regions of Georgia. In the frames of this policy, the EU is making an active effort aiming at, further strengthening and consolidating the non-recognition policy towards the occupied territories of Georgia on international arena on the one hand and facilitating engagement and confidence-building between the communities divided by the war and occupation lines on the other hand. The EU strongly supports the policy of reconciliation and engagement of the Government of Georgia, *inter alia*, through financial assistance for confidence-building process. Over the years, by means of a number of financial instruments (including COBERM, ENPARD, CSF, IfSP) the European Union has been implementing various programs and projects aiming at facilitating peace process in Georgia, improving the conditions and providing humanitarian assistance to the population residing in the occupied territories, facilitating confidence and dialogue, and promoting people-to-people contacts.

The Government of Georgia firmly pursues the policy of peaceful conflict resolution. Georgia has fully implemented the EU-mediated 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between Russia and Georgia. Besides, Georgia has repeatedly reaffirmed its adherence to the international commitment of non-use of force on the executive and legislative levels (2010 — unilateral declaration by the President, 2013 — bipartisan parliamentary resolution), as well as in the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union. Georgia is constructively engaged in the Geneva International Discussions (GID) and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms created under the framework of GID. The Government of Georgia unwaveringly implements the reconciliation and engagement policy among the population divided by the occupation lines. The new peace initiative of the Government of Georgia — "A Step to a Better Future" serves the abovementioned goal. The initiative is aimed at improving the humanitarian and socio-

¹ Geneva International Discussions is the only format of negotiations between Russia and Georgia where with the engagement of international actors (EU, UN, OSCE as co-chairs and the US as a participant) Russia and Georgia discuss the issues related to the conflict, fulfilment of the ceasefire agreement and the security and humanitarian problems of conflict-affected population. The format was created by EU mediation on the basis of the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between Russia and Georgia.



economic situation of the population living in the occupied territories of Georgia, including through sharing the benefits of European integration as well as at promoting people-to-people contacts and confidence building among the divided societies. The initiative got extensive support from international partners, including the EU. In parallel, the Government of Georgia spares no effort on the international arena to further strengthen and consolidate the policy of non-recognition with regard to occupied territories in order to prevent illegal attempts of the Russian Federation to legitimize ethnic cleansing in and ongoing occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

Next steps

- Cooperation and coordination of efforts will be strengthened with the European Union in order to take concrete, result-oriented steps towards peaceful resolution of Russia-Georgia conflict; work will be continued to further intensify cooperation with the European Union on high and working levels on the issues related to peaceful conflict resolution;
- The efforts will be continued to strengthen and make effective use of existing instruments of peaceful conflict resolution in order to deter the steps directed towards the factual annexation of Georgia's occupied territories by the Russian Federation, achieve de-occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, prevent the escalation of the conflict, and ensure sustainable peace and security and protection of human rights on the ground;
- The efforts will be continued to include the issue of Russia-Georgia conflict on EU's agenda at high-level consultations with the Russian Federation;
- Cooperation and joint efforts will be continued with the aim of effective use of the Geneva International Discussions to reach tangible results for solving the security and humanitarian problems stemming from the Russia-Georgia conflict and to facilitate comprehensive peaceful conflict resolution in line with 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement;
- Cooperation and joint efforts will be continued to ensure the uninterrupted and result-oriented functioning of Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in Gali and Ergneti in accordance with the founding principles and ground rules in order to improve security and human rights conditions of conflict-affected population;
- Efforts will be continued to extend the mandate of the European Union Monitoring Mission; cooperation and joint efforts will be directed at allowing the access of the Mission to the occupied regions with the aim to fully implement the mandate of monitoring the fulfillment of 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement;



- Partnership and joint efforts will be continued in order to ensure full implementation of 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement by Russia, including withdrawal of Russian military forces from and establishment of international security arrangements in the occupied territories of Georgia;
- Continued cooperation and joint actions will be directed to ensure the relevant conditions for safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees expelled from the occupied regions as a result of several waves of ethnic cleansing;
- Cooperation and joint effort will be continued with the aim to prevent grave human right violations and ethnic discrimination in the occupied territories of Georgia as well as ending further isolation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions from the rest of Georgia;
- Coordination of effort will be continued in order to allow the access of international human rights mechanisms to the occupied regions of Georgia and ensure improvement of humanitarian and human rights situation of the people living in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions as well as in the vicinity of the occupation line;
- Effort and cooperation with the EU will be continued to ensure imposition of restrictive measure against the individuals included in “Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili” List, charged with and convicted of killings, abductions, torture and inhuman treatment, grave health damage of the citizens of Georgia in the occupied territories, as well as concealing of those crimes, in order to prevent human rights violations;
- Cooperation and coordination will be deepened between Georgia and the EU on the issues related to the non-recognition and engagement policy;
- Efforts and joint steps will be continued to bolster the process of reconciliation and confidence-building between the divided communities;
- Active cooperation with the EU will be continued with the aim of mobilizing its comprehensive support in implementation of the peace initiative of Georgian government “A Step to a Better Future”;
- Efforts will be continued to create opportunities for access of goods originated or produced in the occupied regions to internal Georgian markets as well as to the markets abroad within the frame of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the EU;
- Efforts will be continued in order to share the benefits of the visa-free regime in the Schengen area with the people living the occupied regions.



Part 3. Political Criteria - Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law

3.1. The Judiciary

Achievements:

Georgia has completed the third stage of the institutional reform of the judiciary, which was aimed at facilitating the independence of the courts and boosting the confidence of the public in the judiciary. As a result of the reform the following was achieved:

- The guarantees of independence of judges were improved and the engagement of judges in the activities of courts was increased.
- The criteria for selecting candidates for judges were determined on the legislative level, as well as procedures for their appointment, and the guarantees of non-interference with activities of judges were more clearly set forth.
- The principle of automated distribution of cases was put into effect and the scope of criteria of admissibility of the cassation appeal in the Court of Cassation was widened.
- The institution of independent inspector has been put into effect and disciplinary proceedings have been improved;
- Based on the constitutional changes which have been made since the end of 2018, the lifetime appointment of a judge, without a probation period, was determined. The mentioned rule applies to judges of the Supreme Court.

Clear evidence of the success of the reforms of the judiciary, and of the confidence of the public in courts, is the fact that the number of appeals to the European Court of Human Rights has significantly decreased: in 2011 there were 395 appeals filed against Georgia, and in 2012 - 367, but in 2017 there were only 89 appeals filed. The statistics show that the trust of the citizens of Georgia and other persons staying in the territory of Georgia in national bodies, including the judiciary, has risen.

Future plans:

During the process of implementing the given road map, the Government of Georgia plans to continue intensive reforms in the judiciary, which aims to insure the complete independence of judges, and the enhancement of the accountability, efficiency, impartiality, fairness and professionalism of the judiciary. The plan of reforming the judiciary contains the following components:

- reform of the High Council of Justice, the appointment of judges based on the principle of transparency and the principle of merit, accountability of courts, training of judges, strengthening institutional structure of courts, effective

electronic case management system, legal assistance and services, alternative mechanisms of dispute resolution (mediation, arbitration).

- continuation of the increase of accountability and democratic oversight of law enforcement agencies that are free from any undesirable interference.
- improvement of the Criminal Code of Georgia for its further liberalisation and modernisation, including ensuring its compliance with international standards.
- the target of the government is to ensure access to justice with the help of an adequately financed legal assistance service.
- the maintenance of effective pre-trial and out-of-court mechanisms for resolving disputes and protecting human rights.

3.2. Prosecutor's office

Achievements

Important reforms were carried out to increase the independence of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, in particular:

- there was an entry made in the Constitution that the Prosecutor's Office shall be independent in its activities and shall comply with law only.
- an organic law on the Prosecutor's Office came into force.
- the functions of the Minister of Justice as a member of the Prosecutorial Council were abolished and the position of the chairperson of the Prosecutorial Council became elected.
- the role of the Government in the election of the head of the Prosecutor's Office (the Chief Prosecutor before the changes were made, and the General Prosecutor after the changes were made) was abolished.
- the criteria for appointing and promoting prosecutors, and for initiating disciplinary proceedings against prosecutors, and those for the assessment of their activities, were prescribed in the Organic Law on Prosecutor's Office.
- the strategy for 2017-2021 of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia was approved, which aims to facilitate the development of the Prosecutor's Office, increase its level of independence and the effectiveness of its activities. Among the activities planned within the scope of the strategy, the following are envisaged: enhancing standards of professional ethics and the mechanisms of disciplinary liability of prosecutors, increasing transparency during the appointment and promotion of prosecutors, improving the quality of prosecutorial activities and investigations, and raising the qualification of the staff of the Prosecutor's Office.
- the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia has determined the criteria for assessing the activities of prosecutors and has started to assess the activities of prosecutors based on the said criteria.

Future plans:

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia will continue its efforts to comply with the recommendations of relevant organisations (the European Union, the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) with regard to matters under its competence. Moreover, the Prosecutor's Office will continue to work on raising the qualification of its staff members.

3.3. Criminal justice and judicial reform

Achievements:

Criminal law policy in Georgia is based on liberal values and is oriented to the protection of human rights. The drafting of proposals, recommendations and concepts, and the preparing of draft laws on criminal justice reform throughout the country, falls within the authority of a council implementing criminal justice reform. The council will develop the strategy and the action plan for reforming the criminal justice system, and will coordinate activities between agencies in the field of criminal law.

Under the guidance of the council implementing criminal justice reform, reforms were carried out such as the adoption of a Juvenile Justice Code, the increase of the independence of the Prosecutor's Office, the enhancement of the jury institution, etc. As a result, most of the reforms in the field of justice planned on the basis of the Association Agreement have been successfully carried out.

- The review of the Criminal Code of Georgia: the Ministry of Justice has completed the process of reviewing the Criminal Code for its further liberalisation, for the increase of the discretion of judges, in order to form clear and foreseeable criminal law provisions. The draft legislative amendments have been updated several times based on comments provided by local and international experts. As of today, a full set of draft legislative amendments has already been completed, which was approved by the Council on Criminal Justice Reform on 31 May 2018, and it will be submitted to the Government for approval in 2019.
- Regulation of admissibility of evidence: work on draft amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia is ongoing, based on which procedures for the admissibility of evidence will be newly developed, and clear criteria for the admissibility of indirect evidence will be determined. The draft legislative amendments will be submitted, by the last round of consultations, to agencies who will express their interest in the future.

- Improvement of the existing legal framework in the field of prevention of violence against women and domestic violence, and protection and assistance of the victims of violence: for the purpose of harmonising national legislation and bringing it in line with the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), a package of draft legislative amendments was prepared, which envisages the implementation of the requirements of the Istanbul Convention through approximately 25 legislative acts. The said legislative amendments were adopted by the Parliament of Georgia on 4 May 2017. The Istanbul Convention entered into force on 1 September 2017 in relation to Georgia. Notably, on 24 May 2018 the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention elected a candidate from Georgia for the first time as a member of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) for a term of 4 years.¹
- Jury reform: the Ministry of Justice prepared a detailed study of the comparative law of jury models in Council of Europe member countries, based on which a package of legislative amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code was prepared, which was adopted by Parliament in June 2016.
- State Inspector: to create a thorough, independent and effective mechanism for investigating allegations of the use of torture and ill treatment in the penitentiary system, or the police or other closed facilities, a package of legislative amendments was prepared and submitted to the Criminal Justice Interagency Council. Consultations were held with interested parties upon the decision of the Council, and based on the obtained opinions, a renewed package of legislative amendments was adopted by Parliament in July 2018. The entry into force of the mentioned law is envisaged to be by 1 July 2019.
- Juvenile Justice Code: In 2014-2015 a draft Juvenile Justice Code was prepared, which was adopted by Parliament on 12 June 2015. A multidisciplinary working group was established immediately after the adoption of the Code to identify problematic matters in the process of the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Code. The working group determined recommendations based on challenges identified during two years, and prepared legislative amendments based on such

¹ The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), which is composed of 15 members, is a specialised and independent body of the Council of Europe. The Group of Experts aims to monitor the implementation of commitments undertaken by the Parties to the Istanbul Convention.

recommendations. Amendments to the Juvenile Justice Code were adopted by the Parliament of Georgia on 30 May 2018.

- Entrenchment of the adversarial principle: the Ministry of Justice prepared amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code, which will entrench the adversarial principle during the review of matters related to measures of restraint, and will regulate matters related to the burden of proof during applying, changing or lifting a measure of restraint. The legislative amendments were adopted by Parliament on 8 July 2015.

Future plans

- Coherent implementation of reforms in criminal justice and periodic reporting with international organisations will continue.
- Legislative amendments prepared for the liberalisation of criminal legislation and for the improvement of standards of admissibility of evidence will be adopted and implemented;
- For crime prevention, an interagency mechanism for the socialisation and rehabilitation of children with difficult behaviour will be determined and introduced.

3.4. Fight against corruption, public service and administrative reform

Achievements:

- Georgia is considered to be one of the successful countries in fighting against corruption in the region. Like the democratic states of Europe, the key guiding principles of the country are to achieve a high level of transparency and accountability, to improve mechanisms for the prevention of corruption, and to ensure the efficiency of state governance.
- As a result of reforms, Georgia has significantly succeeded in international ratings: according to the Corruption Perception Index of the International Transparency, following the assessment of 2017, Georgia ranks 46th with 56 points among 180 states; according to the data of the Global Corruption Barometer 2015-2016, Georgia is a rare positive exclusion in the region, where the practice of taking bribes has decreased to 7 per cent, which equals the standard of EU countries; according to the Rule of Law Index of the World Justice Report (2017-2018) Georgia was ranked first in the East Europe and Central Asia region, and 38th in the world; according to the Worldwide Governance Indicators of the World Bank, Georgia has achieved historically the maximum indicator in terms of controlling corruption.

- For the facilitation of the establishment of anti-corruption state policy and the coordinated fight against corruption, the Anti-corruption Interagency Coordination Council (the Anti-corruption Council) has been established, where, in addition to the public sector, non-governmental and business sectors are represented. The Anti-Corruption Strategy has been updated and Actions Plans for the implementation thereof (2015-2016 and 2017-2018) have been prepared by the Council.
- The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) positively evaluated the steps taken by the Government of Georgia within the scope of the evaluation of the completion of the third round. As a result, in the report on the assessment of the completion of the third round, there are no recommendations that have not been fulfilled by the Government of Georgia. For the given stage, the fourth round of the assessment of Georgia by GRECO is ongoing.
- The fourth round of the assessment of Georgia by the Anti-corruption Network of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-ACN) is progressing successfully.
- Georgia adopted a new Law on Civil Service, and a model for the verification of a declaration of property completed by an official was introduced.
- New legislation on Remuneration in Public Institutions was adopted, which regulates the legal grounds for issuing the components of remuneration and the procedure for the calculation of remuneration.
- The verification model of property declarations completed by officials was introduced.
- Georgia developed a new draft law on Freedom of Information.

Future plans:

- Effectively implement the National Anti-Corruption Strategy and the relevant Action Plan to prevent, detect and address corruption.
- Introduce a methodology for the assessment of corruption risks in different sectors for the better identification of anti-corruption risk factors and risks.
- Continue work on the draft law on Freedom of Information, and introduce relevant changes to improve access to public information.
- Continue work on the establishment of an efficient system to effectively investigate corruption cases and to prevent conflict of interest.
- Update the Public Administration Reform Roadmap and underlying strategies, in accordance with public administration principles.
- Strengthen the governance and public administration reform at the local level in line with European standards.

- Strengthen existing key anti-corruption institutions in accordance with the 2018-2019 Open Government Georgia Action Plan, which will be aimed, in terms of fighting against corruption, at strengthening their institutional structures on the basis of the analysis of corruption risks assessment in anti-corruption divisions of key anti-corruption bodies, and at increasing accountability of the Anti-corruption Council.
- Minimise exceptions from the open tendering procedures under the Law on Procurement in order to ensure the reduction of total volume of direct (non-competitive) contracts.

3.5 Fundamental human rights and freedoms

Achievements:

- Georgia has developed and is implementing the National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plans.
- On the basis of legislative amendments, the representatives of the Public Defender's Office and members of the special preventive group have the right to take photographs in penitentiary facilities.
- Georgia adopted the Juvenile Justice Code, which is being implemented.
- The Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination.
- The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was ratified. The commitments under the Convention are reflected in the national legislation of Georgia.
- An independent investigation mechanism was created.
- The Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was established.
- In 2018 the Human Rights Protection Department was established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- A Labour Conditions Inspection Department was set up in the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, the function of which is to ensure the safe working conditions of employees at work places and to prevent and eliminate discrimination in labour relations.
- The Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law on Occupational Safety.

Future plans:

- To continue work on improving the availability of healthcare for convicts through a penitentiary healthcare system, including improving mental healthcare.
- Capacity building of personnel working in closed facilities or of those working with accused/convicted persons, and granting appropriate rights to encourage the censure and reporting of ill treatment by personnel in such institutions.
- To further strengthen the effective internal and external monitoring of the penitentiary system, police, military and other closed facilities for the early detection and prevention of abuse and ill-treatment.
- Approximation to European standards in such fields as: healthcare and safety rules, rules for protecting mother's rights, rules for ensuring the compatibility of parental and professional obligations, in accordance with the Association Agreement.
- To take active steps to increase the representation of women in the making of political decisions.
- To increase the necessary measures to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children (including children with disabilities and children working and/or living on the street) by way of improving and expanding social protection mechanisms, as well as by supporting children with disabilities in having territorial access to habilitation/rehabilitation programmes, and the taking of relevant steps to eliminate child labour.
- To continue juvenile justice reform.
- To continue working towards deinstitutionalisation of children.
- To improve procedures for the hearing of collective labour disputes, including conciliation procedures and dispute resolution procedures, in order to develop the culture of negotiations.
- To ensure the effective functioning of the Tripartite Social Partnership Commission and to continue to improve social dialogue through cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
- To introduce amendments to the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination, aimed at improving and strengthening law enforcement mechanisms.
- To implement legislative amendments on the clear and unambiguous banning of punishment involving bodily injury, and other degrading and cruel punishment.
- An annual increase of budgetary allocations to develop social services and to make their implementation more effective.
- To offer opportunities to children with disabilities to obtain quality education and protect their right to education through legislation.
- To increase the labour inspection mandate, which involves the carrying out of inspection of work places without the preliminary permission of a court.



3.6 Personal data protection

Achievements:

The Office of the Personal Data Protection Inspector was created on the basis of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan and the Association Agreement, which regularly carries out inspections of the legality of data processing in both the private and the public sectors. The legislation of Georgia was approximated to the EU Directive on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data.

Future plans:

To continue the strengthening of capacities of the data protection body (the Inspector's Office) and to oversee compliance with data protection standards. To continue the introduction of the legal framework in the field of personal data protection in all sectors to ensure a high level of protection of data, and one which complies with the indicators set down in European instruments and standards. To approximate data protection legislation applicable in Georgia to the latest European standards of data protection.

3.7 Migration and asylum

Achievements:

- Georgia successfully implemented the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan, which was a precondition for abolishing the need for a short-term visa to EU and Schengen zone countries for those citizens of Georgia who held biometric passports.
- The management of migration in the country has been carried out since 2010 by a commission method which is currently of interest both to the EU and UN.
- The Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorisation is being implemented effectively, as well as the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy adopted in 2015.
- A migration profile was developed and is systematically being updated, which was acknowledged as an innovatory model within the Prague Process. The Unified Migration Analytical System was put into effect, which will enable the country to discuss strategic topics related to migration on the basis of analysed data, and to make decisions based on such data.
- Labour circular migration schemes are actively being worked on, which will enable the country to maximally use the positive outcomes of migration and ensure legal migration.

- Asylum legislation has been significantly improved. Asylum seekers and internationally protected persons enjoy social assistance, healthcare services and the right to have access to education. They also have access to free legal aid with regard to matters related to their status.

Future plans:

- Georgia will continue the effective implementation of the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy and the accompanying Action Plans.
- The migration profile of the country will be regularly updated.
- Practical work for the sustainable implementation of the long-term tasks of visa liberalisation will continue.
- Work will continue to maximally use the opportunities existing within the scope of circular migration.

3.8 Border management

Achievements:

Negotiations on the new draft Working Agreement on operational cooperation between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), are underway. Electronic surveillance systems were installed on four sections of the border sector to be guarded (Kirnati, Vale, Kartsakhi and Sarpi). Georgia adopted the Integrated Border Management Strategy for the period of 2014-2018.

Future plans:

Georgia will continue the effective implementation of the Integrated Border Management Strategy for the period of 2014-2018 and its accompanying Action Plan. A high level of border inspection and border surveillance will be maintained with the help of the Border Migration Administering and Reporting System (BMARS) and the implementation of the project of Border Operations Management System (BOMS). Progress has been achieved in the process of the demarcation of boundaries with neighbouring states.

3.9 Combating organised crime

Achievements:

An Agreement on operational and strategic cooperation was signed between Georgia and European Police Office (EUROPOL), which has been in force since 2017. There is also an effective Agreement between Georgia and the European Union on Security Procedures



for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information. A package of legislative amendments on combating organised crime and preventing the illegal circulation of weapons was adopted.

Future plans:

Georgia will strengthen its efforts in the field of preventing and combating organised crime. Moreover, to combat organised crime effectively, the further development of employees will be enhanced, an agreement between EU Member States and Georgia, including the Agreement on Cooperation with the European Police Office (EUROPOL) will be implemented, and cooperation with the European Police College (CEPOL) will continue to train employees of law enforcement bodies. Cooperation in terms of combating cybercrime will be intensified and capacity building for relevant law enforcement bodies of Georgia in cybersecurity will be ensured. Cooperation will be enhanced and an agreement will be signed between Georgia and European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (EUROJUST).

3.10 Combating illegal drugs

Achievements

State policy and actions related to drugs aim to prevent the use and spread of illegal drugs, to strengthen the structures for combating illegal drugs, and to minimise the delivery of, trade in and demand for illegal drugs. The State Policy for Combating Drug Addiction applicable in the country is based on balanced institutional and legislative mechanisms, founded on the principle of the protection of human rights:

- To create an efficient and coordinated institutional mechanism, the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Drug Addiction was established by the edict N751 of 22 November 2011 of the President of Georgia, and is directed by the Minister of Justice.
- To introduce an innovative approach and balanced policy in combating drug addiction, in December 2013 the Council approved the National Strategy on Combating Drug Addiction, which is based on a 4-pillar approach: prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, harm reduction, and the fight against drug-related crimes.
- Criminal liability was differentiated between the illegal possession of drugs and illegal marketing of drugs. In 2014 the Law of Georgia on New Psychoactive Substances was adopted, which has proved to be an effective mechanism in combating new substances and related crime.
- An important change is that emergency medical services are no longer obliged to report cases of overdose to the police.



- On the basis of the decision of 24 October 2015 of the Constitutional Court of Georgia, a package of legislative amendments was prepared within the framework of the Council, according to which a liberal approach was established in relation to the purchase and storage of small and large amounts of marijuana/hemp plant, its carriage and resending, and/or its use without a doctor's prescription. In particular, administrative arrest and restriction of liberty were abolished as a type of criminal punishment. The amendments entered into force on 26 July 2017.
- As a result of legislative regulation pursuant to the decision of 30 July 2018 of the Constitutional Court of Georgia, a new legal framework was established in relation to the consumption of small amounts of marijuana.

Future plans:

- Georgia will continue to ensure a balanced, evidence-based and integrated approach to matters related to narcotic drugs, in order to cope with health and social problems as a result of the consumption of narcotic drugs; in addition, more effective prevention will be ensured and efforts will be made to minimise the delivery of, trading in, and demand for narcotic drugs.
- Engagement will continue within the framework of the dialogue with Eastern Partnership countries on matters related to narcotic drugs.
- Cooperation and exchange of information will continue, including on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding between the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the Ministry of Justice.

3.11 Judicial cooperation

Achievements:

The Ministry of Justice has developed a draft mechanism for the referral and enforcement of cases related to the return of a wrongfully removed child or a wrongfully retained child, and to the exercise of the right to communicate with a child, and a practical guide.

Future plans:

- Judicial cooperation will be facilitated by way of integrating judicial cooperation on civil cases related to civil and commercial matters with multi-lateral conventions, and through their implementation, in particular: conventions in the field of judicial cooperation adopted within the framework of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, and conventions on the protection of children, in particular the 1965 Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial



Matters, the 1970 Convention on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters, the 2005 Convention on Choice of Court Agreements, and the 2007 Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance and the Hague Protocol on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligations.

- Judicial cooperation will be developed by way of integration with relevant conventions on criminal cases, especially with the Council of Europe's conventions.
- An agreement will be signed between Georgia and the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (EUROJUST).

3.12 Policy of combating trade (trafficking) in human beings

Achievements

Combating trade (trafficking) in human beings is one of the priority directions of state authority. Active measures are being implemented in Georgia to prevent trade (trafficking) in human beings, to investigate such crimes effectively, to ensure criminal prosecution against such crimes, to give effective assistance to victims and affected persons, and to support them in their complete rehabilitation and integration into, and cooperation with, society:

- To ensure the implementation of a unified and coordinated policy in combating trafficking, a special inter-agency coordination mechanism called the Inter-Agency Coordinating Council was created to implement measures to combat trade (trafficking) in human beings, and is directed by the Minister of Justice.
- Based on the report of December 2015 of the European Commission, Georgia's anti-trafficking policy was assessed positively, and it was clearly noted that the obligations undertaken by Georgia within the visa liberalisation regime with the European Union were being completely and accurately fulfilled.
- According to the US 2016, 2017 and 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report, Georgia held a leading position among various EU states in the so-called 'Tier 1'.
- Georgian policy on combating trade in (trafficking) of human beings and the referral mechanism was reckoned to be an exemplary model by the OSCE, which decided to reflect this in their guidelines for best practice in national referral mechanisms for combating trafficking.

- The measures taken by the State were positively evaluated by the Council of Europe's Group¹ of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, based on the report published in June 2016.
- On 9 November 2018, in elections of seven members to vacant positions in the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), a candidate from Georgia was elected for the first time as a member of the Group of Experts, who, together with other newly elected members, will be exercising functions during the following 4 years, from 1 January 2019 until 31 December 2022 inclusive.
- According to the 2016 report on international research on the global slavery index, as a result of effective measures against trafficking and modern forms of slavery taken by the State, according to GDP Georgia ranks 2nd in the world, and in general it ranks 17th, and in the region it ranks 1st. According to the 2018 report on international research on the global slavery index, Georgia was ranked 15th, and in the region it still ranks 1st in world ratings of effectively combating trafficking.

Future plans

- Cooperation with the European Union will continue, and the taking of preventive measures and the measures for protecting victims, as well as effective investigative actions, and cooperation in terms of raising the qualifications of representatives of relevant agencies involved in combating trafficking.

3.13 Cooperation in combating terrorism

Achievements:

The Agreement on Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information was signed between Georgia and the European Union, and the Agreement is still effective. In addition, the Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation between Georgia and the European Police Office was signed and is still effective.

Future plans:

To fully use the Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation between Georgia and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) to facilitate cooperation in the field of combating terrorism; and to intensify cooperation with the European Union and its Member States in capacity building and sharing best practice in the field of preventing and combating terrorism.

¹ The group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), which consists of 15 members, carries out the monitoring of the requirements of the Convention on combating trade (trafficking) in human beings once in 4 year and regularly publishes the assessment reports.



3.14 Financing of money laundering and terrorism

Achievements:

Georgia implemented the approximation of the law preventing money laundering and terrorism financing to the EU Fourth Directive. Amendments were introduced to the Law of Georgia on Organising Lotteries, Games of Chance and other Prize Games, and it was approximated to the EU Directive 2005/60/EC, which concerns the use of financial systems for money laundering and terrorism financing.

Future plans:

Georgia will continue to take efforts to prevent money laundering and terrorism financing and to develop a legislative and institutional framework in matters related to combating money laundering and terrorism financing. This involves, inter alia, the approximation of the legislation of the country to the relevant EU legislation preventing money laundering and terrorism financing. The introduction of standards envisaged in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations on terrorism financing will continue. Cooperation on confiscation, asset recovery and asset management through effective communication and exchange of best practice between the Georgian authorities and the EU Asset Recovery Offices will be improved.



Part 4. Economic Criteria - Improving Sectoral Integration with the EU

4.1. Environmental protection

Environmental protection nowadays is one of the most important and highest priority areas for the country, as it ensures the creation of an environment which is safe for human health, the rational use of natural resources, and the stable development of the country, considering the interests of existing and future generations. The environmental protection section of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia mostly involves approximation to EU acts and international instruments in the field of environmental protection (Annex XXVI to the Agreement).

Implementation of the Association Agreement in the field of environmental protection

In accordance with Article 304 of the Association Agreement, one of the main objectives of Georgia-EU cooperation is to develop the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP). Accordingly, *the 3rd National Environmental Action Program 2017-2021 (NEAP-3)* was prepared and approved by Decree No 1124 of 22 May 2018 of the Government of Georgia, which is the main strategic document of the country in the field of environmental and natural resources protection, and which contains a long-term view of the field, its priorities and an Action Plan for the next five-year term (2017-2021).

In accordance with Article 306 of the Association Agreement, Georgia undertook to approximate its legislation to the EU acts and international instruments referred to in Annex XXVI to the Agreement in accordance with the provisions of that Annex. To fulfil the said undertaking, in 2014-2018 a series of legislative/subordinate normative acts were adopted, and work on drafts of other relevant legislative acts was initiated and is continuing.

- On 26 December 2014 a new Waste Management Code was adopted, which is based on the *EU Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on Waste* and the *Council Directive 1999/31/EC of 26 April 1999 on the Landfill of Waste, as amended by Regulation (EC) N1882/2003*. In accordance with the new legislation, on 1 April 2016, the Government of Georgia approved the 2016-2030 National Strategy of Waste Management and its Action Plan for 2016-2020.
- On 1 June 2017 the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Environmental Assessment Code, and the main commitments within the scope of the Code came into force from 1 January 2018. The Code is based on *Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment* and *Directive*

2003/35/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on Certain Plans and Programmes on EIA, providing for public participation in respect of the drawing up of certain plans and programmes relating to environmental protection. The Code expands the list of activities which are subject to environmental impact assessment, extends the periods of procedures for environmental impact assessment, and ensures the provision of effective mechanisms for public consultations. For the first time in Georgia, a sectoral strategic environmental assessment system will be introduced, which will assist in considering environmental protection interests in the spatial and economic planning of the country.

- To implement approximation to Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive), an amendment was introduced to the Law of Georgia on the Marine Space on 23 March 2018, following which the Government of Georgia will, before 1 September 2022, develop the National Marine Strategy of Black Sea Protection and the Action Plan for Achieving Good Qualitative Environmental Status in a Marine Region.
- In accordance with the *Council Directive 1999/32/EC of 26 April 1999 relating to a Reduction in the Sulphur Content of Certain Liquid Fuels*, as amended in accordance with N 1882/2003 (EC Regulation and Directive 2005/33/EC), the Technical Regulations on Approving the Rules for Determining Threshold Values of Sulphur Content in Certain Liquid Fuels was adopted by Ordinance N256 of 25 May 2017 of the Government of Georgia.
- In accordance with Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on *Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe* and Directive 2004/107/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 relating to *Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury, Nickel and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Ambient Air*, the Technical Regulations on Approving Ambient Air Quality Standards was adopted by Ordinance N383 of 27 July 2018 of the Government of Georgia. The Ordinance sets out threshold values of concentration of pollutants in the ambient air, their types and lists, compliance with which will ensure human health and the prevention and/or mitigation of negative effects on the natural environment.

Reforms carried out beyond the Association Agreement

- An amendment was introduced to the Waste Management Code on 20 April 2018, following which the Government of Georgia approved the Technical Regulations

on the Rules for Regulating Plastic and Biodegradable Carrier Bags. The mentioned draft Ordinance of the Government of Georgia was drawn up in accordance with the European Parliament and Council Directive 94/62/EC of 20 December 1994 on Packaging and Packaging Waste, and in particular the addenda to the Directive introduced in 2015 (EU Directive 2015/720) as regards the measures to reduce the consumption of lightweight (to 50 micron thickness) plastic carrier bags. The Draft envisages the determination of requirements towards the production, import and sale of plastic carrier bags, (including the so called ‘oxo-degradable’ plastic carrier bags), also bio-degradable and compostable plastic carrier bags. The commitment to implement approximation to the said Directive is not envisaged by the Association Agreement.

Future plans:

- To adopt the prepared Law on Biodiversity, which will be aimed at approximating the legislation of Georgia to the Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, in accordance with the amendments made by Directives 97/62/EC, 2006/105/EC and Regulation (EC) N 1882/2003, and the Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
- To adopt the Law of Georgia on Environmental Liability Directive, with the aim of implementing legislative approximation to the Directive 2004/35/CE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on Environmental Liability, and to establish an environmental liability system based on the ‘polluter-pays principle’, and targeted in order to prevent and eliminate/mitigate environmental damage.
- To adopt the Law of Georgia on Water Resources Management in order to establish a fundamental basis for the protection and sustainable use of inner waters, transitional waters and coastal waters, in accordance with the integrated water resources management principles, to create a safe environment for human health, in accordance with the Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, as amended by the Decision 2455/2001/EC, and by way of approximation to other directives in the field of water quality and water resources management, as envisaged by the Association Agreement.
- To complete the drafting of and adopt the Law on Prevention of Major Accidents Caused by Chemical Substances or Chemical Mixtures, which is aimed at preventing major accidents and mitigating their impact on human health and the environment, in accordance with the Directive 2012/18/EU of the European



Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on the Control of Major-Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances.

- To adopt the Law of Georgia on Industrial Emissions, which aims to introduce an integrated permit system and the best available technology in accordance with the Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on Industrial Emissions.
- To adopt an ordinance of the Government of Georgia on Access to Environmental Information, which considers the requirements of the Directive 2003/4/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2003 on Public Access to Environmental Information and defines matters related to making environmental information accessible for the public by means of administrative bodies.
- To adopt the Law of Georgia on Making an Amendment to the Law of Georgia on Ambient Air Protection, which aims to establish an ambient air quality management system in agglomerations and zones. It also aims to improve the ambient air monitoring system by means of its approximation to the Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 May 2008 on Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe and the Directive 2004/107/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 relating to Arsenic, Cadmium, Mercury, Nickel and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Ambient Air.

4.2 Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the priority fields in Georgia, and the maximal and targeted use of its potential are vital for the economy of the country. An important part of the Georgia-EU Association Agreement is dedicated to agriculture, especially in the sanitary and phytosanitary fields, which involves its approximation to the EU acts and international instruments.

Implementation of the Association Agreement in the field of agriculture:

- Decree N 167 of 11 February 2015 of the Government of Georgia on Approving the 2015-2020 Strategy for the Development of Agriculture in Georgia was adopted, which aims to create an environment in the country such as to ensure food safety, and the raising of competitiveness in the field of agriculture, and to facilitate the improvement of agricultural products, and poverty reduction in villages, and which is based on the principles of sustainable development of agriculture.
- Ordinance N 631 of 30 December 2016 on approving the 2017-2020 Development Strategy of Villages of Georgia and the 2017 Action Plan was adopted, which aims to develop local businesses, ensure civic engagement and improve the lifestyle of

the rural population. The natural and cultural heritage values of Georgia are especially emphasised in the Strategy.

- The 2017-2019 Strategy of Agricultural Extension was approved by the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, which aims to raise the competitiveness of agriculture of Georgia by way of introducing new technologies for farmers and the sharing of knowledge.
- Agricultural cooperatives are being actively supported, which involves the facilitation through different governmental programmes of such fields as growing nuts, bee-keeping, milk production, viticulture and the support of high mountain regions.
- Governmental programmes for supporting those who are actively engaged in agricultural activities are being successfully implemented, namely the Preferential Agrocredit project, the Produce in Georgia project, the Co-financing of Agro Processing and Storage Enterprises project, the Agroinsurance project, the state programme Plant the Future, the programme for supporting young entrepreneurs in villages Young Entrepreneur, and the Tea Plantation Rehabilitation programme.
- An extension programme is being carried out, through which there are information and consultation centres operating in all municipalities of Georgia. Their aim is to raise awareness among farmers in such matters as the use of agricultural land, the protection of flora and fauna, the use of new technologies, etc.

Measures taken in the field of agriculture beyond the Association Agreement:

- The Technical Regulations on Approving Fruit Juice and Other Similar Products Intended for Human Consumption (Decree N 536 of the Government of Georgia) was adopted. The Decree was drafted in accordance with the Council Directive 2001/112/EC of 20 December 2001 relating to fruit juices and certain similar products intended for human consumption and regulates the conditions for the production of fruit juice and similar products by a business operator and for their placement on the market. It aims to determine unified regulation principles and to protect the rights of consumers at the stages of the production, treatment and distribution of fruit juice, concentrated fruit juice, fruit juice from concentrate, fruit juice water extracted (diffusion juice), dehydrated/powdered fruit juice (by the physical removal of virtually all the water content), fruit nectar, and drinks with fruit juice/fruit juice drinks.
- Decree N 152 of 3 April 2015 of the Government of Georgia on Approving the Technical Regulations on Milk and Milk Products, which was drafted in accordance with the EU directives and Regulations (EC 853/2004; EC 97/80; EC

2001/114; EC 98/582; EC 2991/94; EC 2799/1999; EC 445/2007), which determines the requirements towards milk, milk products and milk containing products, and regulates the production of milk, milk products and milk containing products by a business operator and the conditions for their placement on the market. The Technical Regulations aims to determine unified regulation principles and the protection of the rights of consumers during the production, treatment and distribution of milk and milk products, and milk containing products.

Future plans:

- To work towards the fulfilment of obligations undertaken by the Association Agreement, institutional approximation and law enforcement will continue.
- The Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia will continue to develop the agricultural field and encourage operating business entities by different target programmes and projects, including by extension, to facilitate the implementation of commitments undertaken in the Association Agreement.

Measures planned in the field of agriculture beyond the Association Agreement:

- From 2020 the Strategy for the Development of Agriculture in Georgia will be updated.
- Support for cooperation in the field of agriculture will continue.
- To increase areas of land with a water supply, or drained areas of lands, irrigation and drainage systems will be developed and improved. The introduction of modern irrigation systems will be facilitated.
- For the rational management of agricultural land resources, the Farmers' Registry and Land Use Geo-informational System will be established.
- The legislative framework for regulating wind break belts will be established. A new law will delimit competence and management-related responsibilities between the relevant agencies, and rules and procedures for constructing/restoring, maintaining and owning wind break belts will be determined, and construction/restoration of wind break belts will be initiated.
- Georgia will continue cooperation in terms of expanding the scopes of the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) in order to ensure that during the following stage the measures taken in the sanitary and phytosanitary fields are reflected together with other aspects of agricultural development.

4.3 Energy

The energy situation in Georgia is characterised by fast growing consumption, but the capacities existing in Georgia cannot meet the demand of this consumption, and the implementation of new capacities does not comply with the dynamics of such demand. In addition, seasonal factors affect capacities operating on the basis of local resources (mainly hydropower plants). The aforementioned causes an increase in demand for imported energy, and accordingly energy dependence.

In response to the above said challenges, work is underway in the following basic areas: the facilitation of private investments for ensuring the implementation of new capacities operating on the basis of local resources, and of the connection of the energy systems of Georgia to the systems of neighbouring countries, including through the initiation of the construction of new transboundary interconnectors and regional projects (including, physical connection projects with the European Union), which will facilitate the diversification of the fields of import and export of energy (during the summer season), not only in the neighbouring countries, but also at the regional level. In this context, the process for the rehabilitation and consolidation of transmission and dispatching systems of the country is continuing in parallel with facilitating importation and exportation, which aims to increase their conducting capacity, and which is reflected in the Ten Year Network Development Plans.

Implementation of the Association Agreement in the field of energy

On the basis of the Association Agreement, matters related to the transposition into Georgian legislation of EU directives and regulations in the field of energy will be regulated on the basis of the conditions and periods determined by the Protocol of Accession of Georgia to the Treaty Establishing the European Energy Community. In accordance with the requirements of the Protocol, the following progress has been achieved:

- A draft law of Georgia on the Energy Performance of Buildings was prepared, which envisages the transposition of the Directive 2010/31/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 on the Energy Performance of Buildings.
- A draft law of Georgia on Energy and Water Supply was prepared together with its ensuing draft laws concerned with the transposition of the following EU legal acts into the legislation of Georgia:
 - a) Directive 2009/72/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 Concerning Common Rules for the Internal Market in Electricity and Repealing Directive 2003/54/EC;



- b) Regulation (EC) No 714/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 on Conditions for Access to the Network for Cross-border Exchanges in Electricity and Repealing Regulation (EC) No 1228/2003;
- c) Directive 2005/89/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 January 2006 Concerning Measures to Safeguard Security of Electricity Supply and Infrastructure Investment;
- d) Directive 2009/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 Concerning Common Rules for the Internal Market in Natural Gas and Repealing Directive 2003/55/EC;
- e) Regulation (EC) No 715/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 on Conditions for Access to the Natural Gas Transmission Networks and Repealing Regulation N1775/2005 (EC);
- f) Council Directive 2004/67/EC of 26 April 2004 Concerning Measures to Safeguard Security of Natural Gas Supply;

It should be noted that the draft Concept Design of the Electricity Market Model was approved by an order of the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, which envisages key measures, in which relevant terms are specified, which should be carried out stage-by-stage, after the adoption of the law, to ensure the opening of the electricity market and its transparency, which represents one of the basic requirements of relevant legislative acts of the European Union listed above.

- A draft law of Georgia on the Promotion of Electricity Production from Renewable Energy Sources and of its Use, which considers the transposition of Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources and Amending and Subsequently Repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC.
- A draft law of Georgia on Energy Efficiency which envisages the transposition of the Directive 2012/27/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on Energy Efficiency, Amending Directives 2009/125/EC and 2010/30/EU and Repealing Directives 2004/8/EC and 2006/32/EC.
- A draft law of Georgia on Energy Labelling, which envisages the transposition of the Directive 2010/30/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 on the Indication by Labelling and Standard Product Information of the Consumption of Energy and other Resources by Energy-Related Products (the Directive which was considered in the Protocol, was repealed by Regulation (EU) 2017/1369 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2017 setting a framework for energy labelling and repealing Directive 2010/30/EU, and for the given stage the draft law is in compliance with the said Regulation).

Apart from this, on the basis of the Association Agreement, a draft law on Ecodesign Requirements for Energy-Using Products and by-laws are being prepared for the transposition of the Directives 2005/32/EC and 2009/125/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and ensuing regulations, whose implementation in the legislation of Georgia is not regulated by the Protocol of Accession of Georgia to the Treaty Establishing the European Energy Community. The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) implemented the requirements of the Regulation (EC) No 1099/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on Energy Statistics and the Regulation (EU) 2016/1952 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on European Statistics on Natural Gas and Electricity Prices and Repealing Directive 2008/92/EC (the Directive was included in the Protocol). All relevant information and data (consumers' prices, energy statistics indicators) are being systematically published on the website of Geostat and sent to Eurostat and International Energy Agency. Geostat closely cooperates with the experts of such organisations to raise the quality of energy statistics.

Future plans:

- To approve the above draft laws by the Parliament of Georgia and to take relevant measures to implement their requirements.
- To approve the energy and natural gas market model concepts, which will involve the stages for opening markets and the measures to be taken.
- To approve and implement plans for the separation of transmission and dispatch system operators.
- To determine a universal service provider and a last alternative service provider.
- To approve electricity and natural gas market rules.

Reforms carried out beyond the Association Agreement:

By a decision of the Energy Community Ministerial Council, the EU regulations, except for those considered by the Association Agreement, were made applicable in the Energy Community area, with regard to the rules of electricity as well as gas networks:

- Regulation No 2016/631 establishing a network code on requirements for grid connection of generators;
- Regulation No 2015/703 establishing a network code on Interoperability and Data Exchange Rules in the field of gas;
- Regulation No 2016/1388 establishing a Network Code on Demand Connection;
- Regulation No 2016/1447 on Requirements for Grid Connection of High Voltage Direct Current Systems and Direct Current-Connected Power Park Modules;
- Regulation No 1099/2008 was replaced by a new EU Regulation No 2016/1952;



- Directive 2010/30/EU on the Indication by Labelling and Standard Product Information of the Consumption of Energy and Other Resources by Energy-Related Products was replaced by Regulation No 2017/1369.

Reforms planned beyond the Association Agreement:

- Systematic negotiations are being held for the JSC Georgian State Electrosystem, a transmission system operator of the country, to obtain the status of an observer member of the European Network of United/Synchronous Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E), which will improve the process of implementing technical requirements in the field of grid operation, applicable in the EU, in the Georgian electricity system.
- Work for the transposition of other EU directives and regulations is also underway, which is to be approved by the decision of the Ministerial Council, in particular:
 - Regulation (EU) No 1227/2011 on Wholesale Energy Market Integrity and Transparency;
 - Areas related to the natural gas network rules: on capacity allocation mechanisms in gas transmission systems (Regulation No 2017/459) on harmonised transmission tariff structures for gas (Regulation No 2017/460), although the articles related to transboundary relations do not apply to Georgia, so with regard to such articles relevant clauses and provisions will be made.

4.4 Education and science

Education is one of the fundamental rights of a human being and is a significant precondition for the sustainable development of the country. A high quality and available education system oriented to the economic growth of the country, the establishment of fairness and job positions, are priorities of the Government of Georgia and are declared as cornerstones of the country's development.

Within the cooperation with the European Union, Georgia has achieved significant progress in the field of education and science. Within the framework of the Association Agreement, there are successful steps being taken in terms of the approximation of Georgian education with European education.

The priority of the Government of Georgia is to promote cooperation with the European Union in terms of the modernisation of all stages of education, quality enhancement and internationalisation. Of most importance is the intensification of cooperation in the areas of facilitating lifelong learning and introducing inclusive education.

In addition to the promotion of the education sector, the priority of the Government of Georgia is to make contributions to the science sector, which involves promoting cooperation with the European Union in all fields of civil scientific research,



development and demonstration of technology (RTD), and the introduction of European best practice.

Implementation of the Association Agreement in the field of education and science

- To implement the recommendation of the Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on A Single Community Framework (Europass) for the Transparency of Qualifications and Competence, legislative amendments were made, namely on 5 October 2018, the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education entered into force, based on which the form of a diploma, the form of a certificate, and the form of a supplement to the diploma and the certificate were developed.
- To implement the Council Recommendation N 98/561/EC of 24 September 1998 on European Cooperation in Quality Assurance in Higher Education, a new transparent system is being implemented, as well as procedures for higher education quality assurance, since 2018. As a result, the higher education quality assurance system applicable in Georgia and the quality assurance methodology became more approximated to European higher education quality assurance standards and guidelines.
- To implement the Council Recommendation N 98/561/EC of 24 September 1998 on European Cooperation in Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement made an official statement in February 2018 with regard to joining the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). The membership of the association will be a progressive step towards higher education quality assurance and improving cooperation in this field, for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Georgia EU Association Agreement.
- To implement the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, key competences were reflected in approximately 90 vocational education programmes and in about 5000 modules. The development of key lifelong learning skills is facilitated by a draft framework for new qualifications, which determines the transfer skills for 8 levels of the framework, from easy to complex.
- To implement the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the Establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, legislative amendments were introduced to the Law on Education Quality Improvement and the Law on Higher Education. The legislative amendments entered into force on 5 October 2018.

- To implement the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the Establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), legislative amendments were introduced, namely on 5 October 2018 when the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education came into force, based on which the act regulating the credit system in the field of vocational education will be drafted before April 2019.
- To implement the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the Establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training, relevant requirements were reflected in the new Law on Vocational Education and in amendments made to the Law of Georgia Education Quality Improvement. The amendments related to the introduction of 5 authorisation standards in educational institutions. The relevant amendments to be introduced to the Regulations of the authorisation are ready.
- In 2017, within the scope of the reform, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia developed the 2017-2021 Unified Education and Science Strategy and a two-year Action Plan. The document envisages meeting the commitments under the EU Georgia Association Agreement and relevant annexes in the field of education, training and development of youth, science, research and technology.
- In 2017 a package of legislative amendments was prepared to the Law on Education Quality Improvement, Law on Higher Education, Law on General Education; and the Law on Vocational Education was updated. Amendments to the legislative acts were made with regard to matters of the national qualification framework and classifiers of education fields.
- For the approximation of the vocational education system to EU practice, in 2017-2018 particular fields were developed, namely nursing and pharmacy, and vocational educational standards in the field of veterinary science were developed on the basis of the analysis of European best practice and the requirements of the Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (the amending Directive 2013/55/EU¹ of 20 November 2013).
- For the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the act determined by Annex XXXII of the Association Agreement, namely the Decision No 2241/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2004 on a Single Community Framework for the Transparency of Qualifications and Competences (Europass), and for the purposes of facilitating life-long learning,

¹ In accordance with the Annexes to the Association Agreement, the approximation of the said directive is not envisaged in the sub-chapter dedicated to education

the development of modern education and training systems, participation in EU cooperation programmes, and an increase in the mobility of students and teachers, an initiative on the approval of the Europass was prepared and submitted by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

- In 2018, on the basis of amendments made to the Law on Education Quality Improvement, under the National Qualification Framework project, in the academic education a 180 credit Bachelor's programme and 60 credit Master's programme and qualification opportunities were determined, which will boost the planning and implementation of joint programmes with European countries, the mobility of students and academic personnel, and the processes of recognition and continuation of learning.
- For the approximation of higher education with EU practice, an analysis of European best practice was conducted in order to develop programmes in the field of veterinary science, and the sectoral characteristics of veterinary science were developed considering the requirements of the Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications (the amending Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November¹).
- In 2018, two important European framework descriptors were integrated into descriptors defining levels in the National Qualifications Framework - European Framework Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL). The basis for the formation of the draft classifiers of educational fields was the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).
- 110 modular programmes of vocational education were approved and are being implemented, 24 dual educational programmes were developed and are being implemented in the fields of agriculture, tourism, railways, construction and engineering.

Future plans:

- Fulfilment of the commitments under the Association Agreement will continue, and approximation to the above recommendations under the Agreement will be ensured:
 - The National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement will continue the introduction of standards and procedures throughout the country relating to the

¹ *Ibid*,

authorisation of educational institutions compatible with the ESG-2015, and those for the accreditation of programmes;

- The updated National Qualifications Framework and a classifier of education fields were approved, on the basis of which the Electronic Qualifications Registry will be formed in the Georgian and English languages in order to promote the Georgian educational system and improve access to information related to transparency and programmes, qualifications, and educational institutions both at the local and international levels.
- For the modernisation of the Georgian vocational education system and for approximation to EU vocational education, lifelong learning will be facilitated - the adult education system will be formalised, an informal education acknowledgement system will be developed, and general education will be integrated into vocational education.
- For the promotion of the internationalisation of science, cooperation will intensify in order to associate Georgia with the European Network of the EURAXESS - Researchers in Motion.

Reforms planned beyond the Association Agreement:

- Within the framework of sectoral cooperation with the European Union, the introduction of the Blockchain Platform in the field of education was identified, which will facilitate the effective management of the system.
- To intensify cooperation with the European Joint Research Centre (JRC), and to actively cooperate with the European Union in developing and implementing the Smart Specialisation Strategies in the vocational and higher education and research fields, which will facilitate the development of the economy, and engagement and employment at the regional level.
- Work will continue to simplify access by Georgian students to education at European universities, which entails the equalisation of tuition fees payable by citizens of Georgia to study in higher educational institutions of the EU countries, with the requirements of EU and EEA citizens, in accordance with the EU directive on the Rights of Citizens, and Regulation (EU) No 492/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Freedom of Movement for Workers within the Union, and also the precedent law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, the *Grzelczyk* case.

4.5 Culture, sport and youth

Developing cooperation in the fields of culture, youth and sport is one of the most important priorities of Georgia.



For the approximation to the European cultural space, the Government of Georgia aims to improve cooperation with the European Union in the field of culture, intensify cooperation on matters related to cultural heritage and cultural varieties, including the promotion of Georgian culture and the assistance of Georgian society in perceiving varieties of European cultural heritage.

In order to develop cooperation with the European Union in the field of sport, exchange of information and best practice in the field of sport and physical activity is of utmost importance, as is the facilitation of cooperation in terms of developing healthy life styles and the social and educational values of sport.

In terms of Youth Policy, it is very important to create a favourable environment for the full development of youth, and also to engage Georgian youth in joint initiatives, and to develop their entrepreneurial and innovation skills.

Implementation of the Association Agreement in the field of culture, sport and youth

- On 9 August 2016, Georgia became a participant of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, which implies that the Member States will participate in the Programme of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and that the commitments under the Agreement will be fulfilled on at the national level.
- At the initiative of the European Commission and by a decision of the European Parliament, 2018 was declared the European year of cultural heritage.
- For approximation to the Unified European Cultural Space, in 2018 a gradual transition of the cultural sector to a public finance model commenced; the model was developed in 2017 on the basis of the recommendations provided for by the report From Strategy to Action: Transition to a European-Style Public Funding System and Creation of a Georgian National Culture Fund, which was prepared within the support project of the Implementation of the Association Agreement.
- In 2017, within the EU Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme framework, research was carried out and the following reports were prepared: the Culture for Development Indicators Suite (CDIS), the Development of Creative Industries in Georgia, and the Development of the Performance Arts in Georgia.
- At the Frankfurt Book Fair 2018, Georgia participated with the status of an honourable guest, where the Georgian programme with the concept Georgia Made by Characters was submitted.
- In 2018, Georgia first joined sports week #BeActive, the initiative of the European Commission aimed at promoting sport and physical activity throughout Europe and to ensure the widespread character of sport and increased access to sport.



- In close cooperation with all interested parties, a new draft law on physical education and sports was prepared, as the existing legislation (the Law of Georgia on Sports) cannot respond to modern challenges.
- The Mass Sports Availability and Development Strategy was prepared to overcome challenges in the field and for its effective development. The preparation of the Strategy was supported by EU expertise.

Future plans:

- To intensify cooperation with the European Union in order to obtain access to all sub-programmes of Creative Europe and for this purpose to ensure approximation to Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010.
- To adopt a package of legislative amendments on cultural heritage and its protection;
- To hold the European Cultural Days in Georgia in April-May 2019.
- To create multi-functional web platforms for creative industries for the purpose of supporting the development of creative industries in the European Union and Georgia.
- To adopt the Draft Law on Physical Education and Sports.
- To approve the Mass Sports Availability and Development Strategy and the Action Plan by the Government of Georgia.
- To reprocess the State Youth Policy Document of Georgia and make appropriate legislative amendments.
- To elaborate the Sports Integrity Strategy.
- To intensify cooperation with the European Commission in implementing the European Sports Week in Georgia - called #BeActive campaign.
- To ensure the participation of Georgia with the status of guest country in the 2021 International Arts Festival called Europalia in Belgium.
- To ensure the participation of Georgia with the status of honourable guest country in the Paris Book Fair of 2021.

Reforms planned beyond the Association Agreement:

- To initiate consultations with the European Union in terms of the capability to engage in the joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Union called Routes4U Project. The aim of the project is to facilitate regional development with the help of cultural heritage policy. The project activities involve developing guidelines for policy documents, developing new competences and skills via electronic teaching modules, and developing touristic mechanisms.

- To develop and put into effect a short-term mobility programme called the Culture Bridges for the professionals of Georgia in the field of art and culture, with the support of the European Union.
- To intensify cooperation with the European Union for the implementation of the goals of the international Cultural Relations Strategy.
- To strengthen international cultural relations between the European Union and Georgia in accordance with the strategic priorities of the 2019-2020 Work Plan for Culture of the New European Agenda for Culture approved on 27 November 2018, in the following areas: (1) to facilitate culture as a driving force of sustainable social and economic development; (2) to promote culture and intercultural dialogue to ensure peaceful relations between communities; (3) to create an ecosystem supporting artists, and cultural and creative professionals; (4) to strengthen cooperation on matters related to cultural heritage.

4.6 Communications and information technologies

Communications, information and modern technologies and innovations are actively being developed in Georgia, which ensures the simplification of different services for the citizens of Georgia and generally provides a fair basis for the development of innovative approaches in the country. In this regard the goals of the Government of Georgia are to eliminate digital inequalities and develop broadband internet infrastructure, update electronic communications, mailing and broadcasting by modern technologies, and develop entrepreneurship and competitiveness, as well as to form a new information and mailing space and develop electronic commerce together with the Euro-Asian Transportation and Energy Corridors.

At the end of 2017, the number of subscribers to fixed broadband internet reached 774 000, which exceeds by 48.5% (253 000 subscribers) the data of 2013, and in 2017, the frequency of subscribers to fixed broadband internet was 20.8% for 100 residents. Moreover, the number of mobile internet users in 2017 increased by 79.8% compared to 2013 data.

Implemented measures, including the fulfilment of implementation of commitments undertaken within the framework of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement

- In 2013-2017, 155 European standards were registered as National Standards of Georgia in the field of electronic communication.
- Amendments were introduced to the Law of Georgia on Electronic Communications.
- The Law on Information Technology Zones was adopted, which will facilitate the creation of an attractive environment in Georgia for those who carry out economic activities in the field of information technology.



- In 2015, large-scale state reform was successfully implemented in Georgia which involved the shifting from analogue surface television broadcasting to digital terrestrial television broadcasting.
- The free radio frequencies (the digital dividend) as a result of shifting to digital broadcasting will be used in mobile networks for the development of modern broadband services (LTE).
- All the necessary subordinate acts determined by the Law of Georgia on Electronic Documents and Electronic Trust Services were approved in 2017.
- A system of automated and electronic distribution of cases was introduced in the common courts of Georgia, which is operating via high-tech electronic distribution software.
- In 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding between Georgia and the European Union was signed on the new Eastern Partnership TEN-T (the Trans-European Transport Networks) maps.
- Significant work was carried out within the State Broadband, Fibre-Optic Infrastructure Development Programme, aimed at covering settlements with high speed internet where the number of population exceeds 200, and where the commercial environment for telecommunication operators is not profitable.

Future plans:

- To prepare and adopt the draft law of Georgia on Electronic Commerce for the implementation of the commitment on determining the rights and liabilities of intermediate service providers (ISPs) under the legislation of Georgia, in accordance with Article 129 of Chapter IV of the Association Agreement.
- To make amendments to the Law of Georgia on Electronic Communications for the approximation of telecommunications legislation to the relevant legislation of the European Union based on Annex XV-B of Chapter IV of the Association Agreement, in accordance with the legislation of Georgia and Directive 2002/58/EC concerning the Processing of Personal Data and the Protection of Privacy in the Electronic Communications Sector; Directive 2002/20/EC on the Authorisation; Directive 2002/19/EC on Access, and the Framework Directive (2009/140/EC).
- To adopt the drafted Technical Regulations in order to implement the commitments undertaken in the Association Agreement to ensure the relevant implementation of the Strategy of Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) for approximation to Directive 2014/53/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, concerning the Radio and Telecommunication Terminal Equipment and the Bilateral Acknowledgement of their Compliance.



- To adopt the drafted law on Postal Service, which is also envisaged by commitments undertaken in the postal service field under the DCFTA.

Reforms carried out beyond the Association Agreement:

- To elaborate and implement the Strategy of Safe Internet for Minors. The said Strategy will determine a set of measures to be taken to protect minors from internet threats.
- To sign an agreement between Eastern Partnership countries on the gradual reduction and harmonisation of roaming tariffs between Eastern Partnership countries and for integration into the common EU roaming space.

4.7 Transport

4.7.1 Maritime transport

Maritime transport today represents the most significant, and a gradually growing, part of the transportation field. Particular priority fields are being identified in maritime transport that require permanent control and updating. Such priority fields involve the obligation to ensure maritime safety, and the security of the merchant fleet sailing under the national flag of Georgia and the seaports of Georgia, the prevention of the pollution of the maritime environment, the effective coordination of maritime search and rescue operations, the monitoring of the movement of ships in the territorial waters of Georgia, and ensuring the smooth functioning of the system of training and certification of sea-fishermen, etc.

As of today, based on the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, 22 EU directives /regulations have been implemented in the maritime transport field, of which 10 have already been implemented, and the rest are in the process of successful implementation.

In addition, it should be pointed out that the Georgian maritime sector has undergone positive changes for the last five years, in which the projects funded by the European Commission and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) (SASEPOL, TRACECA, Maritime Safety and Security II, Black and Caspian Seas Project) have played dominant roles.

Reforms planned beyond the Association Agreement:

- To continue cooperation with the European Commission and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), within the framework of which Georgia will be one of the beneficiaries of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea project. The said project aims to facilitate maritime safety and security and the prevention of maritime environment pollution in Black Sea and Caspian Sea countries. One of the main components of the said project is to switch to the SafeSeaNet regional server of beneficiary countries, which will enable the Member States, including Georgia, to

obtain a full picture of maritime traffic in the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. This will facilitate the increase of safety and security of maritime traffic in the seaports of Georgia and maritime zones.

- The integration of Georgia into the European System of Long-range Identification and Tracking of Ships - (LRIT), which represents one of the most important means for the development of the National Flag of Georgia and envisages the meeting of the requirements of Regulation V/19-1 concerning Long-range Identification and Tracking of Ships - LRIT of the international convention on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). The LRIT system serves the identification and safety of ships sailing under the flag of a maritime country (Georgia in this instance), which envisages the safety of persons employed on board a ship, as well as of cargo and passengers. The said system will enable Georgia to control ships sailing under the National Flag of Georgia in any corner of the world; it will also facilitate the Maritime Transport Agency in maintaining the precise statistics of the detention of Georgian ships by another country within the shortest time possible (Georgia has already been connected to the national Cooperative Data Centre of the LRIT of Azerbaijan. Although, as Georgia aims to maximally approximate to EU standards and regulations, it is logical for Georgia to review the opportunity to join the EU LRIT CDC).

4.7.2 Railway transport

Annex XXIV of the Association Agreement describes particular EU commitments undertaken by Georgia in the railway transport sector. In total, there are 8 EU Directives and Regulations identified by the Association Agreement in the railway transport sector.

Regulation (EC) No 1371/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on Rail Passengers' Rights and Obligations has already been implemented and Regulation (EC) No 1370/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on Public Passenger Transport Services by Rail and by Road is being implemented.

Future plans:

The main commitments under the Association Agreement to be implemented after 2018 include the implementation of the following directives:

- Directive 2012/34/EU on Establishing a Single European Railway Area - the deadline 2022;
- Directive 2008/57/EC on the Interoperability of the Rail System within the Community - the deadline 2020;
- Directive 2004/49/EC on Safety on the Community's Railways - the deadline 2021;

- Directive 2007/59/EC on the Certification of Train Drivers Operating Locomotives and Trains on the Railway System in the Community - the deadline 2019;
- Regulation (EC) No 1370/2007 on Public Passenger Transport Services by Rail and by Road - the deadline 2018.

Reforms planned beyond the Association Agreement:

- To introduce amendments under the so-called Fourth Railway Package of the European Commission, by which Georgia will become more approximated to the European legal space in terms of legislative and institutional settings.

4.7.3 Civil aviation

In accordance with Article 125 of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement signed on 27 June 2014, ‘the progressive liberalisation of air transport between the Parties adapted to their reciprocal commercial needs and the conditions of mutual market access shall be governed by the Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part’.

For the given stage, the Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, has already been signed, and procedures for its entry into force will be completed soon. Before the entry into force of the Agreement, the Georgian side started active work and the taking of particular operative measures to fulfil the commitments under the Agreement fully and in a timely manner.

It should be taken into account that the necessary precondition for Georgia to become a full member of the Common Aviation Area of the European Union is to make the legislation applicable in Georgia in the field of civil aviation compliant with the legislation of the European Community, in particular in the following areas: access to the market, air traffic management, aviation safety, aviation security, environment protection, social aspects, and the harmonisation of legislation related to the protection of customers’ rights and other legal aspects to the regulations and directives of the European Union. In accordance with Article 26 of the Agreement, a list of regulations/directives is subject to regular revision and updating. For the given stage, analysis of around 70 regulations under the Agreement has already been completed and the plan for their introduction has been drafted. Moreover, as of today, approximately thirty regulations have already been implemented, including 8 regulations fully transposed to national legislation and published as separate normative acts, 10 regulations reflected in applicable normative acts, 8 regulations partially reflected in national legislation, and 4 regulations being implemented without transposition. For the given stage, intensive work is underway to implement the remaining regulations/directives considering their priority and urgency. As a result, the following regulations/directives have been implemented:



- Directive 2003/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2003 on Occurrence Reporting in Civil Aviation, which aims to improve the aviation safety level by way of reporting, collecting, storing, protecting, assessing and disseminating relevant information on the aviation occurrence. Procedures for Aviation Occurrence Reporting were updated by the Agency on the basis of the new Regulation 376/2014 of the European Union).
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 1330/2007 of 24 September 2007 laying down implementing rules for the dissemination to interested parties of information on civil aviation occurrences referred to in Article 7(2) of Directive 2003/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council.
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 768/2006 of 19 May 2006 implementing Directive 2004/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the collection and exchange of information on the safety of aircraft using Community airports and the management of the information system. In accordance with the Regulation, flight safety inspectors of the Civil Aviation Agency shall carry out the inspection of aircrafts of foreign countries. The aim of the Regulation is to improve aviation safety level.
- Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2004 establishing common rules on Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights, and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 295/91, and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 295/91. The aim of the Regulation is the legal regulation of the matters related to compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights.
- Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air. The aim of the Regulation is to give guaranteed and full assistance to disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air, and to protect them from discrimination, also to create maximally comfortable environment for them, simplify formalities and oblige the relevant aircraft operator or aviation company to provide them with the service by appropriate wheelchairs during the whole period of travelling by air.
- Regulation (EC) No 785/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on insurance requirements for air carriers and



aircraft operators. The aim of the Regulation is to protect the rights of passengers and third persons by way of setting minimum insurance requirements for aviation companies that relate to insurance of passengers, cargo, luggage and third persons.

- Council Regulation (EC) No 2027/97 of 9 October 1997 on Air Carrier Liability in the Event of Accidents. The aim of the Regulation is to protect the rights of passengers and third persons in the event of death or bodily injury of passengers, delay during the carriage of passengers and/or luggage, loss, damage or destruction of luggage; Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 2008 on Common Rules for the Operation of Air Services in the Community The aim of the Regulation is to strengthen the stability and reliance of air traffic by way of ensuring permanent assessment of the ability of air carriers to fulfil the existing and potential financial liabilities.
- The Unmanned Aircraft Systems and General Aviation Department was established in the Agency, which directly ensures the elaboration of relevant legislation tailored to the European Union requirements.
- In terms of intensification of institutional cooperation with the European Union in the aviation sector, and for the effective implementation of the Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, the EU-Georgia Joint Committee was established, which ensures the analysis of commitments undertaken by the Agreement, the review of the status of fulfilment of those commitments, the holding of a constructive dialogue between the parties, and the initiation of series of actions related to the matters of Georgia's full membership to the Common Aviation Area of the European Union.
- To intensify cooperation in the aviation field, a Working Arrangement between the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and LEPL Civil Aviation Agency was drafted, which has already been agreed upon between the Parties and will be signed in the near future. The Arrangement envisages matters related to cooperation between the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and LEPL Civil Aviation Agency in almost all fields of civil aviation safety, which aims to facilitate the integration of Georgia into the Common Aviation Area of the European Union.

Future plans (directives/regulations to be implemented):



- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1178/2011 of 3 November 2011 laying down technical requirements and administrative procedures related to civil aviation aircrew.
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 965/2012 of 5 October 2012 laying down technical requirements and administrative procedures related to air operations.
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 2150/2005 of 23 December 2005 laying down common rules for the flexible use of airspace.
- Commission Regulation (EU) 2015/340, which regulates procedures relating to air traffic controllers' certificates, and the requirements of air traffic controllers' training and training institutions of air traffic controllers. As a result, after the enactment of the Agreement and the achievement of equality with European countries, our certificates, licenses and any issued permits will be acceptable for EU Member States without the need for conversion.
- Council Regulation 2000/79/EC on the Organisation of Working Time of Mobile Workers in Civil Aviation. The Regulation lays down minimum requirements for healthcare, working time and working conditions. It also provides for maximum working times and the minimum rest times during the year for the members of the crew.

Reforms to be carried out beyond the Association Agreement:

- With regard to matters related to the measures to be carried out beyond the Common Aviation Area Agreement, a concept developed by the EASA is noteworthy, which aims to regulate general and small aviation in the future. Taking into account that the mentioned field of aviation is a significant and fast-growing field, the Agency is working actively to develop this field of aviation in Georgia, and to elaborate appropriate legislation on the basis of the EASA concept.
- Work will continue on the fulfilment of the obligation under the Common Aviation Area Agreement, in particular aircraft without certificates issued by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) will be removed from the Civil Aircraft State Registry of aircraft from 2019. For the given stage, the important part of the said requirement has already been fulfilled, and all cargo aircraft not holding certificates issued by EASA have been removed from the State Registry.

4.7.4. Road transport

On the basis of Articles 292-296 of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, Georgia undertook to approximate its legislation to those EU acts and international instruments referred to in the provisions of Annex XXIV to the Association Agreement. To expand



and strengthen cooperation in the field of transport, technical and safety requirements and requirements related to social conditions in transport will be gradually implemented in the transport field by 7 directives and 3 regulations. The terms of approximation to the said legal acts are diverse and concern the years 2016-2020.

Georgia has started the implementation of requirements under certain EU directives and regulations in the field of transport before the conclusion of the Association Agreement. In particular, the following directives/regulations (applicable to international transport) are being partially implemented in Georgia:

- Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the Harmonisation of Certain Social Legislation Relating to Road Transport;
- Council Regulation (EEC) No 3821/85 of 20 December 1985 on Recording Equipment in Road Transport;
- Directive 2006/22/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on Minimum Conditions for the Implementation of Council Regulations (EEC) No 3820/85 and (EEC) No 3821/85 concerning Social Legislation Relating to Road Transport Activities;
- Regulation (EC) No 1071/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing Common Rules Concerning the Conditions to be Complied with to Pursue the Occupation of Road Transport Operator.

On 19 May 2011, Georgia joined the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport (AETR), which entered into force from 19 November 2011 in Georgia. The AETR Agreement envisages conditions for compliance with the work and/or rest schedules of drivers of vehicles to ensure road traffic safety. In the process of joining the AETR Agreement, a term called the 'tolerance period' was set for Georgia (2 years from the enactment of the Agreement) in order to introduce a system of digital tachographs, and the term expired on 19 November 2013. Following the above, Georgia has started the implementation of directives and regulations, before the signature of the Association Agreement, which relate to the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR).

From 19 November 2013, it was made possible in Georgia to issue plastic cards (driver's, company's, controller's, repair shop's cards) required for the operation of digital tachographs. As of today, 1468 drivers have been trained, as well as employees of 90 companies and 7 controllers (representatives of Legal Entity under Public Law called the Land Transport Agency).

Currently, out of 10 directives in the field of transport envisaged by the Association Agreement, 7 are being partially implemented, and intensive work is

underway on the implementation of the others. The EU legislative acts of special significance in the field of transport under the Association Agreement are the following:

- Directive 2009/40/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 on Roadworthiness Tests for Motor Vehicles and their Trailers - the provisions of the directive concern the compulsory testing of vehicles. The requirements of the Directive envisage the technical parameters of vehicles (identification of a vehicle, breaking system, steering and steering wheel system, visibility, lighting equipment, chassis and chassis attachments, axles, wheels, tyres, suspension, emissions, noise, other equipment, mounting system, etc.) and the methods (instrumental and organoleptic) of testing such parameters. The commitments under the said Directive have already been implemented - the Government of Georgia issued Ordinance N 510 on 1 December 2017 on the approval of the Technical Regulations on the Periodic Technical Inspection of Motor Vehicles and their Trailers.
- Council Directive 92/6/EEC of 10 February 1992 on the Installation and Use of Speed Limitation Devices for Certain Categories of Motor Vehicles in the Community - which envisages the necessity of the existence of speed limitation devices for maximum mass lorries and passenger vehicles (falling under N2, N3, M2 and M3 category). Their use in construction is conditioned by the circumstance that for such types of vehicle there is a significant difference in laden and unladen masses. In unladen vehicles, a large volume of power is accumulated and thus there is a threat of overspeed during driving. The function of the said device is to prevent such a situation. The commitments under this Directive have been implemented - the Government of Georgia adopted Ordinance N 400 of 16 August 2017 on the approval of the Technical Regulations on the Installation and Use of Speed Limitation Devices for Certain Categories of Motor Vehicles. Moreover, in the case of the non-existence of a speed limitation device, or where such device is faulty, an administrative penalty will be imposed under the Administrative Offences Code.
- Council Directive 96/53/EC of 25 July 1996 laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the European Union maximum authorized dimensions in national and international traffic and maximum authorized weights in international traffic - the provisions of the said Directive concern the maximum authorised mass of vehicles, the maximum load on leading or non-leading axles, and vehicle size. Although the said Directive is mainly designated for car manufacturers, it is necessary that masses and sizes of vehicles are monitored on roads to prevent abnormal load and the movement of oversize load vehicles. The commitments under this Directive have been implemented - the Government of



Georgia adopted Ordinance N 393 of 11 August 2017 on the approval of the Technical Regulations on the Determination of Maximum Authorised Size of Vehicles and Maximum Authorised Mass of Vehicles for Certain Categories of Vehicles to be Used on Roads.

Future Plans (full approximation to the directives given below):

- Directive 2008/68/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 2008 on the Inland Transport of Dangerous Goods - the Directive concerns inland transportation of dangerous goods. The Directive applies the same requirements to local (within the country) transportation, as provided for by the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR). In particular, it aims to increase the safety of the transportation of dangerous goods by way of ensuring economically feasible conditions for the transportation of dangerous goods and a high level of transportation safety. The ADR determines a list of substances and items which are dangerous goods, and also determines which goods may or may not be transported internationally. For those goods that may not be transported, special conditions are specified in the ADR, in compliance with which the transportation of such goods may become possible. The said conditions involve the classification of dangerous goods based on their specific type (explosives, flammable substances, flammable gases, poisonous substances, etc.), the type of packaging and labelling, and required documents, as well as special requirements for tanks, including requirements regarding loading, isolation and unloading.
- The requirements of Directive 2008/68/EC have been partially reflected in the legislation of Georgia (the Technical Regulations on the Procedure of Transportation of Goods by Vehicles, approved on the basis of Ordinance N 32 of 3 January 2014 of the Government of Georgia). It concerns only international carriage, and is not comprehensive. For its full implementation in legislation, the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) is being gradually implemented, and within its framework appropriate amendments were made to the Law of Georgia on Traffic and Law of Georgia on Motor Transport. Moreover, the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) in Georgia was approved on the basis of Decree N 1422 of 7 July of the Government of Georgia, and the Plan is being implemented based on appropriate time frames. Within the scope of the Plan, training programmes for drivers of vehicles transporting dangerous goods, and the forms of certificates of drivers of vehicles for transportation of dangerous goods and the procedures for their issuance, were approved on the basis of orders of the Minister of

Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia. As a result, 141 drivers have been trained to date, and relevant certificates have been issued.

- Council Regulation (EEC) No 3821/85 of 20 December 1985 on Recording Equipment in Road Transport - the said Regulation concerns the recording equipment (tachograph) recording the authorised duration of daily driving, authorised continuous driving, total weekly driving and breaks in work and daily rest period of crews (drivers) of vehicles engaged in international road transport, which ensures continuous and automated measurement and recording of the above parameters, and covers the speed and driving speed of a vehicle. The main requirements of (EEC) N3821/85 Regulation have already been reflected in the legislation of Georgia. The Government of Georgia adopted Ordinance N 426 on 31 December 2013 on the approval of the Technical Regulations on Procedures for Exploitation of Equipment Recording Driving Parameters of Vehicles (tachographs); from 2019, based on the amendments made therein, the provisions will also start to be applied to all vehicles engaged in local transportation.

4.8. Tourism

Tourism in Georgia plays one of the key roles in the development of the country's economy and contributes significantly to the achievement of the Government's social and economic goals. The tourism sector has grown substantially since 2014 and as a result, based on 2018 data, Georgia hosted 8.7 million international visits. At the same time, the proportion of international revenues from tourism has increased by 20% compared to that in 2017, exceeding USD 3 billion.

It should be noted that, along with substantial growth in the number of visitors, the interest in new markets in the country has also increased. There has been a substantial increase in the number of visitors from Middle East markets, particularly from the Persian Gulf region (GCC) and Europe. In addition, there is also an increase in interest from markets, such as India and China, which are relatively new for Georgia.

One of the top priorities for Georgia is to become a tourist destination in all four seasons. In the light of this, particular attention has been paid to the following areas:

1. Development of the touristic infrastructure;
2. Simplification of travel;
3. Popularisation of the country's touristic potential;
4. Improvement of service quality;
5. Creation of new touristic products.

Current strategic areas and work performed:

- The liberal visa regime of Georgia has had a substantial impact on the growth in the number of tourists in the country and in diversification. Nowadays, citizens



from 98 countries and persons with the right of residence from 50 countries can enter Georgia without a visa. In addition, in 2015, Georgia developed an electronic visa portal (www.evisa.gov.ge), which allows foreign citizens to apply online for a visa using only their passport and an application form, and to obtain an electronic visa by e-mail within 5 days.

- It should be noted here that, according to Georgian visa policy, visitors holding current visas for the United States, EU member countries, Schengen Area countries, Japan, Korea and United Arab Emirates, can enter Georgia without visa.
- The Georgian National Tourism Administration, as a result of cooperation with the World Bank and the consulting firm Solimar International, has developed the Georgian National Tourism Strategy – 2025, which clearly shows the view of the development of the tourism industry in the country for future years.
- According to the Strategy, by 2025, Georgia will have hosted 11 million international visits. In addition, touristic markets will be diversified and the proportion of travellers from Europe, Asia and other regions will increase. Moreover, the portion of international revenues from tourism will be tripled, and the amount of money spent by each visitor will be doubled, and the period of time spent in Georgia by the visitors will also increase.
- The aforementioned Strategy includes 8 strategic objectives, 50 priority actions and over 100 activities that aim at raising awareness in the target markets of the country's touristic potential, at promoting the private tourism sector so as to create high-quality and niche touristic products, and at enhancing service quality. In addition, the development of infrastructure and the raising of new investments will provide an important stimulus for the development and diversification of the industry. Furthermore, the Georgian Government aims to support sustainable principles in development, and therefore respect for, and the maintenance and improvement of, the natural and cultural heritage of Georgia have been emphasised in the 8 strategic objectives.
- With the support of the World Bank, the Georgian National Tourism Administration is currently working on the development of the country's branding, positioning and marketing strategy.
- With the support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), work on the development strategy of the country's mountain resorts is in progress, which also includes the field of adventure tourism.

Future plans:

- To continue implementing current initiatives that aim to improve the infrastructure at tourist destinations, and include the improvement of roads, highways, cable ways and the development of other appropriate infrastructure.
- To implement the 5-year Action Plan of the first Georgian Business Tourism Strategy developed in 2018, which aims to enhance business tourism (MICE).

- To continue working for the improvement of service quality, which is an important area. Therefore, training programmes will continue to be regularly organised for sector representatives.
- To continue cooperating with the UNWTO and use potentials to the extent possible.
- To continue working to increase the number of visits from EU member countries.
- To continue participating in International Tourism Exhibitions and conducting a campaign for the popularisation of tourism in Georgia.

4.9. Statistics

Cooperation in the field of statistics is included within the scope of Title V of the Association Agreement, which encompasses different aspects of official statistics, including the approximation of Georgian legislation to the EU acquis in the area of statistics.

The Association Agreement includes both the improvement of sector statistics (macroeconomic statistics, demographic statistics, agricultural statistics, environmental statistics, business statistics, etc.) and horizontal activities (classification, quality management, staff training, dissemination of information, use of up-to-date information technologies, etc.).

The achievement of the objectives set forth in the Association Agreement still requires a higher quality level of compatibility with the European Statistical System and data comparability.

Measures included in the Association Agreement are implemented according to the action plans of different durations based on the priorities agreed upon. Within the scope of reforms to be implemented within the framework of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreement, data of international trade in goods will be processed according to the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities (NACE) starting from autumn 2018.

The approximation of Georgian legislation to the EU acquis in official statistics is planned under Article 291 of the Association Agreement. The currently effective Law on Official Statistics was adopted in December 2009, which lacked clearly formulated provisions necessary for the proper functioning of the country's statistical system.

The aforementioned has also been emphasised in the Report of the Global Assessment of the Georgian National Statistical System undertaken by the European Statistical Office (EUROSTAT), the department of statistics of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which was published in 2013. Changes made to Georgian law in 2015-2016 significantly approximated it to EU statutory provisions in the field of official statistics. At this stage, alignment with EU provisions is carried out gradually, by making individual changes.

Work performed:

- In 2018, Geostat, in cooperation with a European expert, elaborated a draft of additional changes to be made to the Law on Statistics, which will be reviewed in the

frame of the second Global Assessment of the Georgian Statistical System (to be published in Spring 2019).

- For the assessment of compatibility with EU legislation, the so called ‘sectoral reviews’ are highly important, which aim to maximally approximate data maintenance processes to European standards, as a result of the detailed analysis of data maintenance processes in separate areas of statistics. In Geostat, EU experts conducted a sectoral review of business statistics in 2015.

Future plans:

- To make additional changes to the Law on Statistics.
- To continue with the practice of sectoral reviews, which will be important for further approximation to EU standards.

Activities planned outside of the Association Agreement:

- In order to introduce the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics of the European Union (NUTS system), explore opportunities and plan activities.

4.10 Healthcare, employment and occupational safety

4.10.1 Public health

The protection of public health and the establishment of a safe environment for health is considered a fundamental right of the population and each person in Georgia. The Association Agreement provides for cooperation in the area of healthcare to improve human healthcare, which is a significant element of sustainable development and economic growth.

Fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement:

Universal inclusion

- In 2013, the Georgian Government introduced a policy oriented to the health and welfare of the population, the State Universal Healthcare Programme, which has been in effect since 2013.
- Universal access to medical services has significantly reduced out-of-pocket expenses and increased financial security (in 2012 – 73 %, in 2016 – 56 %), which is the result of a sharp rise in state funding, increased access to medical services, and significantly increased usage of both outpatient and inpatient services in the country.

Communicable diseases

- In the EU association process, improvement in the surveillance of communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis, has become a topic of particular significance.
- Based on a World Health Organisation evaluation, there has been a tendency of reduced tuberculosis incidence and prevalence indicators in Georgia in recent years.

- Against the increase in detecting new HIV cases in 2015-2016, there was a reduction of HIV incidence (detected new cases) by 12 % documented for the first time in 2017.
- On 21 April 2015, a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding was signed between the pharmaceutical company Gilead and the Georgian Government, which served as a basis for the beginning of the elimination of Hepatitis C in Georgia, and in April 2016, the pharmaceutical company Gilead and the Georgian Government signed a long-term agreement in Barcelona on the continuous provision by the company with new generation medicines for treating Hepatitis C until the complete elimination of the disease.
- The National Strategic Plan for the Elimination of Hepatitis C in Georgia 2016-2020 was approved in August 2016, which aims at examining 90 % of those infected with Hepatitis C by 2020, including treating 95 % of them and curing 95 % of the patients treated.
- The National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Control in Georgia 2016-2020 was approved in 2016. The Government of Georgia has significantly increased the funding of the state Tuberculosis Management programme.
- As from 2015, the State has completely ensured patients with the provision of antiretroviral and anti-tubercular first-line drugs, and 50 % provision with second-line drugs was added to that in 2018.
- As from 2018, there has been a Hepatitis C, HIV and tuberculosis pilot screening programme in progress in the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region, which is integrated at the primary healthcare level and includes the timely detection of Hepatitis C, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis and their management 'under one umbrella'.
- To reduce morbidity and mortality caused by vaccine preventable diseases, the State supports the prevention of 13 diseases according to the National Vaccination Calendar. The programme budget has increased fivefold within the last five years (GEL 4.4 million in 2012, and GEL 22.4 million in 2018), and 5 new vaccines were successfully included in the National Vaccination Calendar.
- A National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy was approved in the country.

Surveillance of communicable diseases

- Order No 01-2/5 of the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia on the Procedure for Maintenance and Communication of Medical Statistical Information was approved on 18 January 2016, which is based on Commission Decision 2000/96/EC of 22 December 1999 and Commission Decision 2002/253/EC of 19 March 2002 binding the Community network, when reporting communicable diseases, to use the same, standard case definitions.
- Coverage by the network of communicable disease surveillance in Georgia is unified for 73 diseases/conditions: epidemiological surveillance in Georgia covers the whole territory of country and the whole population is involved in it proportionally.
- For epidemiological surveillance and the control of communicable diseases, Georgia has a unified integrated epidemiological surveillance system used for recording, registering, reporting and the accounting of human and animal communicable diseases and conditions subject to surveillance.

- Georgia is integrated into the unified information databases of the WHO European Region (CICID, JRF) for accounting purposes and submits information about diseases/conditions subject to epidemiological surveillance.

Non-communicable diseases

One of the obligations of Georgia under the Association Agreement is the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in the country.

- The National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases 2017-2020 was approved in January 2017, in which a challenging goal is set forth: to decrease, at the national level, the controllable and preventable burden caused by morbidity, mortality and disability related to non-communicable diseases, through multisectoral cooperation.
- As of 1 July 2017, a state programme providing medication for the treatment of chronic diseases has been launched for those persons with chronic diseases who are registered with the unified database of Socially Vulnerable Families and whose rating points assigned to them do not exceed 100 000.
- As of 2016, the Ministry has been providing persons diagnosed with early breast aggressive HER-2 receptor-positive cancer with a medication Trastuzumab (Herceptin).
- As of 2015, a state health promotion programme has been in operation, which aims at educating and raising the awareness of the population of Georgia with regard to health.
- In May 2017, Georgia adopted new legislative changes related to tobacco control. The adoption of a package of changes is a significant step forward in terms of strengthening tobacco control.
- The adopted law on tobacco control meets the requirements under the appropriate EU directives and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The provisions will enter into force gradually, a large part of which came into force from 1 May 2018, and another part became effective from 1 September. The remaining part will enter into force gradually, within a period determined by legislation.

Maternal and child health

- The improvement of maternal and child health is a main priority of the country. In 2015 Georgia achieved the Millennium Development Goal No 4 and reduced under-5 mortality rate from 48 (in 1990) to 10.7 (in 2016) per 1 000 live births, a significant improvement on the targeted number of 16.
- A Perinatal Regionalisation project commenced in 2015 and ended at the end of 2017. The project aimed at defining the levels of institutions providing perinatal services and their roles and responsibilities.
- The National Maternal and Newborn Health Promotion Strategy for 2017–2030 has been approved, which defines state policy in relation to maternal and newborn health, as well as to family planning, and sexual and reproductive health.

Safe blood



- According to the obligations under the Association Agreement, and in the frame of the National Strategy for Hepatitis C Elimination in Georgia 2016-2020, the safe blood strategy was approved.
- Work has been in progress for the harmonisation of industrial transfusiology license requirements with EU regulations/directives.
- The Unified Blood Donation Electronic Database has been updated, paid donations have been prohibited since 2017 for high-risk groups in spreading Transfusion Transmissible Infections (TTI), and the usage of high-sensitivity methodology for blood testing has become obligatory.

Future plans:

- According to the Commission Decision 2000/57/EC of 22 December 1999, and Decision No 2119/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, the operation centre responsible for the early warning and response system for the prevention and control of communicable diseases is planned to start functioning fully.
- For the prevention of blood transfusion transmissible infections, work is in progress to develop licence requirements compliant with modern standards for the blood transfusion service.

Reforms planned outside of the Association Agreement:

- More advocacy for immunisation and the increasing of coverage indicators.
- The strengthening of microbial resistance, infection control and the area of surveillance, control and prevention of health care-associated infections.
- The setting up of a modern environment and health system and its capacity enhancement based at the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health.
- The proper operation of the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).
- A standardised, so-called Plain Tobacco Packaging is planned to be introduced as from 2023, as is increasing the number of smoke free places.
- Work is in progress with regard to accession to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, which will also effectively address the challenge of the possible growth of illicit trade in the case of increased taxes and prices for tobacco products.

4.10.2 Labour and employment

People and human rights, including labour rights, are a matter of priority for Georgian authorities. In 2013, the Labour Code of Georgia was improved: the labour rights and conditions of employees were strengthened, labour standards were enhanced to new, European and internationally recognised standards, a labour mediation mechanism was introduced, and a tripartite commission of social partnership was set up. Obligations undertaken by the State at the international level, particularly under the Association Agreement and the Agenda, include pursuing an active labour market policy and protecting the labour rights of employees, and establishing/developing mechanisms for the oversight of labour rights protection. The DCFTA component of the Association

Agreement also lays down certain obligations on the State with regard to labour rights and labour relations.

The Parliament of Georgia, by a resolution of 2 November 2017, ratified Convention No 144 (concerning tripartite consultation to promote the implementation of international labour standards).

The Law of Georgia on Labour Migration was adopted, and the Procedure for the Employment and Conducting of Paid Labour Activities with a Local Employer by a Labour Migrant (an Alien without Permanent Residence Permit in Georgia) was approved by Ordinance of the Government of Georgia in 2015. The Government of Georgia has been pursuing an active labour market policy since 2015 through training and retraining and state employment programmes.

Current situation with regard to the fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement:

Chapter 14 of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU is dedicated to employment, social policy and equal opportunities, according to which the parties will cooperate with regard to the Decent Work Agenda, employment policy, health and safety at work, social dialogue, social protection, social inclusion, gender equality and anti-discrimination. Annex XXX of the Association Agreement contains 40 EU Directives that Georgia will transpose with respect to labour rights and occupational safety. On 19 February 2019, the Parliament of Georgia approved the legislation changes prepared in accordance with the Directives 2000/43/EC, 2000/78/EC, and 2004/113/EC of Annex XXX. The changes have been made in the following legislative acts:

1. Organic Law of Georgia Labour Code of Georgia;
2. Law of Georgia on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination;
3. Law of Georgia on Public Service;
4. Law of Georgia on Gender Equality.

Future plans:

- The improvement of the Organic Law of Georgia Labour Code of Georgia in terms of providing a Decent Work Agenda to employees in accordance with international labour standards.
- The institutional and administrative strengthening of the department of inspection of labour conditions, and the enhancement of the powers of the labour inspection with regard to the inspecting labour rights component, and their expansion to all sectors of the economy.
- The development of a labour mediation mechanism to ensure the protection of labour rights, and the improvement of mediation procedure.
- The development/strengthening of social dialogue at central and regional levels, and the enhancement of its efficiency, including by ensuring its systemised operation.

- The elaboration of legislation on employment services in order to establish employment facilitation guarantees beyond the regulation of the Organic Law of Georgia Labour Code of Georgia.
- To continue to carry out state training and retraining, and employment facilitation programmes in the following years.
- The revision of the statutory framework for the regulation of labour migration and the improvement of the state regulation mechanism for labour migration processes.
- The enhancement of interstate cooperation with regard to temporary legal labour migration.

4.10.3. Occupational safety

The right of employees to life and health is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Georgia.

The cancellation of the State Labour Inspection in 2006 entailed significant problems throughout the country related to occupational safety and health. This was clearly evident in the figures based on official data showing the number of people who died/were injured at their workplace. Annex XXX of the Association Agreement contains the list of EU Directives concerning the issues of health and safety at work and the time limits to comply with them, which will be taken into consideration when elaborating and/or revising a relevant legislative framework, to facilitate the introduction of international occupational safety and health standards.

Based on a settlement of the current situation and international obligations, the Ministry has made efforts to set up a supervisory body to control labour conditions at work, which will gradually introduce International Labour Organization standards.

Current situation with regard to the fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement:

- The State Labour Conditions Inspection Programme 2018 was approved by Ordinance No 603 of 29 December 2017 of the Government of Georgia, which aims to support employers in establishing safe and healthy working environment. In 2018, 216 entities were inspected under the Programme. On 31 December 2018, the 2019 State Programme for Inspecting Labour Conditions was approved.
- In 2018, the number of labour inspectors increased to 40 staffing positions. The following 2 offices were set up at the Ministry: The Inspection Office, and the Monitoring and Supervision Office. Based on the specifics of work, inspectors were equipped with appropriate protective devices (protective clothing, protective footwear, helmet, etc.).
- To ensure the transparency of the inspection process, the International Labour Organisation, in order to increase the efficiency of and simplify the inspection process, delivered 40 units of tablet computers to the Inspection Department on 1 August 2018. Moreover, the inspectors were equipped with shoulder cameras to

provide continuous communication with the server system. The cameras and tablet PCs will contribute to the minimisation of corruption risks and ensure transparency.

- On 7 March 2018, the Parliament of Georgia approved the Law of Georgia on Occupational Safety. For the implementation of the Law, 5 normative acts were elaborated and approved. On 19 February 2019, the Parliament of Georgia approved a new Organic Law on Occupational Safety, which will apply to all the sectors of economic activities from 1 September 2019.
- The purpose of the Law of Georgia on Occupational Safety is the maximisation of occupational safety and the protection of the health of employees at working areas/workplaces, the timely detection of work-related and occupational diseases and their prevention, and the avoidance of accidents (including fatal outcomes).
- The Law defines immaterial, material and critical non-compliances, for the commission of which the following penalties are imposed: a) warning; b) fine; and c) suspension of the work process.
- Under the Law of Georgia on Occupational Safety, 142 companies have been inspected, and appropriate administrative offence reports (including financial sanctions) and instructions have been issued since August 2018.
- On 16 February 2017, a Memorandum of Cooperation was concluded between the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and the Legal Entity under Public Law (LEPL) called the National Agency of State Property (under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia), within the scope of which enterprises founded with state participation of more than 50 % were inspected.
- On 11 May 2017, a joint order of the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia on setting up a special group to provide assessment of compliance by labour conditions and workplaces of employees conducting heavy, harmful and hazardous work, and work with an increased level of danger, with labour and safety requirements determined under the legislation of Georgia, and technical inspections of entities.
- The State, through different control agencies, carries out state supervision in terms of safety (e.g. Emergency Situations Management Agency, supervising agencies of the municipalities, LEPL Technical and Construction Supervision Agency, etc.). In order to avoid the overlapping of authority between the two agencies, a working group comprised of representatives from different control agencies was set up, which will revise legislation, separate powers between the control agencies, and specify the area of activities for each agency, thus contributing to the establishment of a fair supervisory system.

Prevention of forced labour and exploitation of labour

- On 13 August 2015, a Memorandum of Cooperation was concluded between the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and the Ministry of

Internal Affairs of Georgia on facilitating the detection of cases of human trafficking.

- According to Ordinance No 112 of 7 March 2016 of the Government of Georgia, the Labour Conditions Inspection Department was specified as a supervisory body, which carries out scheduled and random supervision to detect forced labour and labour exploitation cases and to further respond to them. If potential signs of forced labour and labour exploitation are identified, the case shall be transferred from the Department to the Ministry of Internal Affairs for additional investigation.
- In 2018, within the Programme, inspections were carried out in 154 companies, where 152 companies out of the 154 underwent a scheduled inspection and 2 underwent a random inspection. No potential signs of forced labour and labour exploitation were identified in any of the companies inspected. In 2019, routine inspections are planned in at least 100 companies, 15 of which have already been inspected by 28 February 2019.

Setting up/improvement of a legal framework

- To ensure labour safety, and the protection of labour rights, and for the integration of Georgia with the EU, the approximation of current provisions in the area of labour to international standards is of great importance.
- With the active participation of social partners and various governmental and non-governmental organisations, the Ministry has prepared drafts of 8 EU Directives containing minimal requirements for the provision of labour safety in different areas of the economy, and work on drafts of the remaining 17 Directives is in progress.

Future plans:

- A working group comprised of the representatives from various State control agencies will continue revising legislation and separating powers between control agencies, and will specify the area of activities for each agency, thus contributing to the establishment of a fair supervisory system.
- To raise awareness in companies, an information campaign is planned for 2019 with regard to new labour safety regulations, their enforcement, measures to be implemented by enterprises and changes to be made in relation to labour safety in the country.
- The Ministry shall, along with conducting compulsory inspections, keep detailed open records of the companies inspected, violations identified, administrative penalties applied, accidents and occupational diseases detected, awareness raising measures conducted for and by inspectors, and persons who died/were injured at their workplace. With the above data at hand, the Department will be in a position to develop a complete picture of the problems, by sectors, existing in the area of safety, which will be included in an annual report(s) prepared by the Department and used in the course of planning future inspections, elaborating strategies, safety policy and action plans.

4.10.4 Deinstitutionalisation of child care centres

Georgia has been implementing child welfare reform since 2004, which mainly aims at closing down large child care institutions in Georgia (children's homes, boarding schools) and replacing them with alternative care services (foster care, small family-type children's homes), strengthening biological families, and enhancing their social functioning. Strategic and priority areas of reform have been reflected in the plans of the Government and appropriate normative acts.

At the initial stage of reform, there were 48 child care institutions functioning in Georgia (children's home/boarding school), where up to 5 500 children were placed. The issue of developing alternative child care services was put on the agenda, which served as a basis for activating the deinstitutionalisation process in the State.

As a result of the reform, several large institutions have been closed down. At this stage, 2 large residential institutions operate in the country for minors with disabilities (for children from 0 to 18 years of age) and 2 large licensed fostering institutions under the Patriarchate of Georgia. In order to gradually close down these institutions at the next stage of the deinstitutionalisation process, 24 new, small, family-type children's homes started up in 2011 throughout the country within a project supported by the United States Agency for International Development.

In January 2016, on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding concluded between the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, the LEPL Social Service Agency and the United Nations Children's Fund, one small, family-type children's home was opened for children with serious and extreme disabilities, where 7 foster children were placed from an infant house.

Current situation with regard to the fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement:

- The deinstitutionalisation process is in progress. As of today, 1 457 minors have been placed in foster care, including 231 children with disabilities, and 24 children with different needs. 372 children live in small family-type children's homes (28 of them live on non-voucher funding); 39 children out of the 372 are with disabilities. 55 beneficiaries have been placed in a branch of the LEPL State Fund for Protection and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking – Tbilisi Infant House; 28 minors in a branch of the LEPL State Fund for Protection and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking – Kojori Children's Home; 197 children in 3 licensed children's homes under the Patriarchate of Georgia (94 beneficiaries in Peria children's home, 97 in Ninotsminda children's home, and 6 in Bediani children's home).
- Construction of a second small, family-type children's home for children with serious and extreme disabilities was completed at the end of 2017.

- When transferring to alternative services, considering the best interests of children, 25 children with disabilities were placed in foster care from an infant house in 2016, 1 child was placed for adoption and 1 child was included in a reintegration sub-programme, and 6 children with disabilities were placed in foster care from an infant house during 2017, and 1 child was transferred from Kojori Children's House for children with disabilities to a small family-type children's home.
- Instructions for the Prevention of Child Abandonment at Medical Institutions was approved by Order No 01-129/მ of 9 June 2017 of the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The LEPL Social Service Agency, on the basis of the Law of Georgia on Adoption and Foster Care, started trainings for adoptive parents and foster parents for the purpose of considering the best interests of children.

Future plans:

- The improvement, approval and activation of a mechanism for the prevention of placement under care of the state (gatekeeping).
- The reintegration, as necessary, of children with disabilities from large child care institutions to biological families, their placement in specialised family-type services or foster care.
- The development and improvement of family replacement alternative services (foster care, or specialised family-type services).

4.11 Regional development

In 2013-2018, the Government of Georgia took significant steps forward in terms of the approximation of the basic approaches, standards and tools of regional and territorial development policy to EU best practice. The aforementioned includes the elaboration and implementation of regional development as an inter-industry and territorially adapted integrated policy, the institutional structure of facilitation and coordination, the involvement of multilevel management elements – various agencies (central and local), development partners and other interested parties and the consolidation of their efforts, the establishment of appropriate policy implementation coordination channels, information exchange and processing, reporting and monitoring systems, including efforts for the significant enhancement of administrative resources.

Appropriate initiatives complied with obligations under the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, and the general and specific conditions of the financial agreement on EU sectoral aid.

Situation with regard to the fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement:

- *The Regional Development Programme (RDP) of Georgia for 2015-2017* approved by Decree No 1215 of 9 July 2014 of the Government of Georgia. The above mid-term governmental document defines the main goals and objectives of the regional policy of Georgia, including respective priorities and programme measures, and

specifies the necessary conditions for ensuring the balanced and sustainable social and economic development of the country's regions. The adoption of the first RDP document of this type was a significant step forward towards the approximation to the experience of EU member countries and candidate states in terms of the combined planning of regional and territorial development. It is based on and is closely connected to the experience of the framework policy of the social and economic cohesion of EU regions, which aims at the development of the regions and the reduction of inequalities between them. In addition, the programme substantially included policy approaches directed at increasing competitive ability as a means to achieve cohesion and address development needs.

- In 2013-2015, the Government of Georgia approved development strategies for 9 regions of the country, which were elaborated by the advisory boards of the respective regions. The aforementioned strategies, and their respective objectives and priorities, are based on a multilateral analysis of each region and region-specific sectoral development tendencies, preceded by situational and factual diagnostics prepared with an appropriate methodology and the wide involvement of various interested parties (regional advisory boards, municipalities, local experts, non-governmental and donor organisations, and private sector bodies). Considering the specific context of each region, and based on their basic challenges, their defined competitive advantages and potentially successful sectors, appropriate strategies were put into effect for short-term and mid-term responses in order to define the basic needs for long-term economic growth and development.
- At the end of 2014, activity plans for 2015-2017 for regional development strategies were elaborated and were approved by the respective regional advisory boards, thus facilitating the effective implementation of the strategies. Various interested parties were involved and widely participated in this process at national and local levels, including international organisations as well. Moreover, certain projects of a region/municipality were included in the activity plans, and their priorities were based on the methodology, evaluation procedures and selection criteria elaborated in 2014-2015, which considered such fundamental factors as the relation between national and regional strategic priorities, expected economic and social outcomes, work to be performed, results of cost and benefit analysis, environmental impact, etc.
- With the support of the EU and the Council of Europe, in the frame of the Partnership for Good Governance, and to strengthen the institutional framework of local self-government, 2 phases of a local financial Benchmarking Pilot Project were implemented, which included, based on comparative analysis, the evaluation of local self-government financial systems and the introduction of Benchmarking in 10 municipalities. The Project was implemented in Kutaisi, Rustavi, Marneuli, Bolnisi, Tsageri, Tsalenjikha, Borjomi, Tianeti, Kareli and Lagodekhi municipalities. For the future, remaining municipalities are planned to be gradually included in the processes.

- After the adoption of the Local Self-Government Code, *Regional Advisory Boards* were set up, comprised of governors, mayors, and the chairperson of Sakrebulo and his/her deputies. The Boards represent the interests of the respective municipalities in terms of regional planning and implementation; in addition, the Boards are assigned to review programmes, projects and cost estimates of central authorities, the regional development strategy, and the process of implementing the action plan, and to submit recommendations to the state representative, the Governor.
- A draft of the subordinate act on the Arrangement, Operation, Closure and Aftercare of Landfills was elaborated, which was approved on 1 August 2015. Consequently, the Solid Waste Management Company of Georgia implemented 22 landfill rehabilitation projects in 2014-2017, and 22 landfills were closed on the basis of the landfill closure and post-closure care projects. Two waste transfer stations were built. Basic studies of the solid waste integrated management projects for Imereti, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Samegrelo were conducted.
- A new Regional Development Programme of Georgia for 2018-2021 was approved by Decree of the Government of Georgia No 1292 of 11 June 2018, which, similar to the preceding Programme (RDP for 2015-2017), is based on the most recent approaches of EU cohesion policy, meaning the efficient planning and implementation of integrated and territorially-adapted development strategies. The total approximate budget of the programme exceeds GEL 18 billion, which is almost four times more than the annual budget of the previous programme (RDP for 2015-2017). Moreover, the programme was prepared with the active involvement of the Governmental Commission for Regional Development of Georgia, various central agencies, regional administrations and development partners. In addition, a monitoring plan was prepared, which provides efficient monitoring of progress in implementing the programme activities and evaluating the programme results. Essentially, the adoption of the programme is considered a significant step towards the further approximation of strategic planning and implementation of regional development to European standards.

Future plans:

- The preparation of the decentralisation strategy of the Government of Georgia, and support for the efficient implementation of the Regional Development Programme of Georgia for 2018 – 2021, including the selection of pilot regions and the inclusive preparation of the development programme(s) of these regions.
- Support for the efficient implementation of the Regional Development Programme of Georgia for 2018 – 2021, with consistent use of efficient monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Reforms to be implemented outside of the Association Agreement:

- Considering the current situation in Georgia, to study the opportunities for gradual approximation to and the further application of the Classification of the

Administrative and Territorial Units (NUTS system) and to implement relevant activities (research, analysis).

- At the regional and local levels, for the purpose of identifying needs and capacities for the collection of statistical data, to enhance cooperation, jointly with the Department of Statistics of Georgia, with international donors and Eurostat, and to mobilise relevant expertise.



Part 5. Enhancement of Physical Integration with the EU in the Areas of Energy, Transport and Communications

The enhancement of physical integration with the EU in the areas of energy, transport and communications is particularly significant for EU-Georgia relations, and will promote the development of trade and economic relations and the integration of Georgia with the EU.

The development of the country's transit potential is one of the most important priorities for the Georgian Government. In this respect, the following areas are highly significant: the establishment of proper transport systems, the introduction of high standards for ensuring safe transport networks and operations, and the provision of high quality passenger transportation and cargo carriage services throughout the country.

To this end, the Government of Georgia is implementing such large-scale infrastructure projects as the construction and development of the Anaklia deep water port, the railway modernisation project, the East-West highway construction project, a new Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line project, and the development of modern logistics centres. The implementation of these projects will contribute to Georgia's becoming a transit hub, and will substantially improve mobility within the country, as well as throughout the region. In addition, the approximation of Georgian legislation to that of the EU will reveal new opportunities in terms of integration with the EU transport system.

International cooperation in the area of transport is greatly important for the complete utilisation of the country's transit and economic potential. Georgia is an active member of the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), and participates in the development of new strategic areas and corridors, such as the so-called Middle Corridor, Lapis Lazuli, Persian Gulf – Black Sea, South-West Corridor, etc. Moreover, in 2016, Georgia became a member of the Central Asia Regional Economic Co-operation (CAREC) programme, which offers new opportunities in terms of establishing the shortest route between Central Asian and European countries. In addition, the Georgian Government continues to actively cooperate with the People's Republic of China in the frame of the New Silk Road initiative. Our goal is to facilitate the implementation of projects that are beneficial and profitable for all participants, considering the synergy of interests.

The Harmonisation of Digital Markets (HDM) project has been in progress since 2014, which aims at promoting the process of harmonisation of digital markets between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries, developing the digital economy and society through the implementation of joint projects, and harmonising and integrating the legislative, administrative and technology systems of the national ICT policy. Georgia has been involved in the EU4Digital initiative, which includes the development of the following networks: digital skills (eSkills), ICT Innovation, electronic identification, trust services, information security and cybersecurity (Trust&Security), electronic trade

(eTrade), regulators for electronic communications (Telecom) and electronic health (eHealth).

The development of the Southern Gas Corridor is a significant area in the energy field, and in this respect, Georgia actively cooperates in the implementation of EU Southern Gas Corridor projects. Currently, the Southern Caucasus Pipeline expansion works have been successfully completed in the territories of Georgia and Azerbaijan, which already makes it possible to transport volumes of gas for export, obtained as a result of deploying the 2nd phase of the Shah Deniz gas field in Azerbaijan, to Turkish and European markets. This project will allow Georgia to purchase increased volumes of gas for a beneficial price.

The planning and implementation of new international transit projects with countries of the region and other interested parties is very important, which will contribute to the entry of Central Asian energy resources into European markets, and to the enhancement of energy security in the region. Georgia supports the development of strategically important projects such as the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline and the White Stream projects. At the same time, the EU supports the development of the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline project, which is important for the enhancement of the transit potential of Georgia.

The development of the aforementioned projects will contribute to the economic development of the country, the further approximation to the EU, the improvement of the investment environment, and the strengthening of regional cooperation.

At the same time, the enhancement of the security of the delivery of energy resources is essential for Georgia, which should be facilitated by the currently ongoing Georgian underground gas storage project.

In addition, Georgia actively cooperates with neighbouring countries in establishing the regional market. To this end, there is active, ongoing, bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Azerbaijan and Armenia for the development and enhancement of cooperation in the area of power and energy. In the light of this, the implementation of a 500 kV power line project between Georgia and Armenia is especially important.

Georgia, within the Energy Community, has also initiated the idea of constructing the Black Sea submarine cable, which enables the connection, through a connecting cable in the Black Sea bed, of the European energy system with not only Georgia but also the countries of the entire South Caucasus region. The energy system of Romania is considered to be the starting (connecting) point of the submarine cable in Europe, and cable capacity is considered to be within 2 000 – 3 000 MW. At the same time, an optical fibre cable in the submarine cable structure will give the project importance not only in terms of power and energy but in terms of telecommunications as well. The connection of the West and East coasts of the Black Sea through a submarine cable may be potentially considered a project of common interest, with appropriate European funds as well as co-financing from the interested countries of South Caucasus region. Therefore, it is

important to carry out a preliminary feasibility study of the project to facilitate the raising of investments for the implementation of the project.

Investment plan of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T):

In order to enhance physical integration with the European Union, the European Commission's investment plan of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) is particularly important, which was published by the European Commission on 15 January 2019. This initiative will significantly contribute to the enhancement of transport relations with the European Union, regional development, and the improvement of access to economic capabilities. The plan is also a significant leverage for raising additional investments for the projects presented in it. It aims at enhancing relationships in Eastern Partnership countries, promoting economic growth and improving transport relations in the framework of the Trans-European Transport Network¹ (TEN-T) by 2030.

Projects included in the investment plan were identified with active support from international financial institutions. The projects will enable the construction and rehabilitation of new and existing roads, railways, sea ports, airports, logistics centres and border checkpoints. Implementation of the investment plan will substantially contribute to enhancing transport relations with the EU, regional development, and improving access to economic capabilities.

Among the priority projects/investments are short-term projects (including those already in progress) the implementation of which will be completed in 2020, and long-term projects that will be carried out before 2030. Along with investments from the infrastructure area, the investment plan aims to promote the implementation of major reforms in the area of transport and the improvement of road safety in the region.

According to the investment plan, there are 18 priority projects identified in Georgia, the total value of which amounts to approximately EUR 3.4 billion.

Six projects out of the above 18 are already in progress and the total investment value of the projects amounts to approximately EUR 1.3 billion. Before 2020, the implementation of 2 more projects² are planned, the total investment value of which amounts to EUR 32 million, and the implementation of an additional 10 projects³ are planned before 2030, the total investment value of which amounts to EUR 2.02 billion. The implementation of the projects will be financed by various international financial

¹ Georgia acceded to the Trans-European Transport Network in July 2018.

² Construction of Friendship Bridge at Sadakhlo and construction of Grigoleti – Poti connecting bridge.

³ 1. Construction of Kutaisi logistic centre; 2. Construction of Anaklia deep water sea port (2nd phase); 3. Construction of the road leading to Anaklia deep water sea port and of the railway; 4. Construction of Grigoleti – Kobuleti bypass road; 5. Construction of air transportation cargo terminal in Kutaisi airport; 6. Construction of Chumateleti – Argveta section of the Rikoti passage road; 7. Construction of Tbilisi – Kumisi logistic centre; 8. Construction of Rustavi – Red Bridge road; 9. Construction of Algeti – Sadakhlo section of East–West highway (E-60); 10. Construction of Batumi bypass road and Sarpi connecting road.

institutions, along with EU and European financial institutions. Significant resources will also be allocated from the budget of Georgia.



Part 6. Expansion of Participation in EU Programmes

6.1 Review of EU aid

Aid from the European Union is very important in Georgia's EU integration process. The aid is rendered through various types of programmes and instruments, and facilitates the political and economic integration of Georgia with the European Union.

The European Union is a major donor organisation in Georgia which has actively supported the democratic, economic and social development of the country since the restoration of its independence. From 1992 to date, EU financial aid, only in a bilateral format, has exceeded EUR 2 billion. Significant projects have been implemented in almost all sectors, including energy, transport, environmental protection, agriculture, economic development and others. In addition, Georgia actively participates in regional, thematic and borderline cooperation programmes that play an important role in terms of facilitating Georgia's EU integration process.

Currently, EU aid to Georgia is rendered basically within the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). The Instrument is available for 16 European Neighbourhood countries and its total budget for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 15 billion.

After the aggression carried out by Russia in August 2008, the European Union has allocated EUR 500 million to support Georgia, which played a very important role in terms of maintaining the macroeconomic stability of Georgia, rendering emergency assistance to internally displaced persons, and facilitating the irreversibility of Georgia's EU integration process.

In 2014, after signing the Association Agreement with the EU and starting the implementation of comprehensive reforms, the volumes of EU aid substantially increased, and moreover new modalities of EU aid became available to Georgia. The main programmes of EU aid, which are rendered in a bilateral format, are sector support programmes (with a budgetary support component) and expert support programmes. The role of the above programmes is particularly essential in facilitating legislative approximation with the EU *acquis*, approximating to EU standards and enhancing state institutions.

In 2014 – 2016, Georgia received up to EUR 350 million of EU aid under EU bilateral aid. In 2017 – 2020, EU aid of EUR 370 million to EUR 450 million is expected, which is allocated for the following priority areas: economic development, good governance and the enhancement of state institutions, including in areas like the rule of law and security, energy efficiency, environmental protection and promotion of relationships; mobility promotion, including support of the fulfilment of obligations within EU visa liberalisation; vocational education; support of civil society and strategic communication.

It should be noted that, among Eastern Partnership countries, Georgia stands out for its high indicator of EU aid utilisation. This is due to the existence of an effective coordination mechanism for EU aid, and the preparedness of beneficiary state agencies to actively participate in EU projects.

Georgia is one of the Eastern Partnership countries, which, as a result of successfully implemented reforms, receives additional aid within the framework of the EU's More for More initiative. The initiative is only available to countries that have

achieved substantial progress in terms of reforms implemented in the EU integration process. Since 2014, Georgia has been regularly receiving aid within the More for More initiative, which, from 2014 to date, has totalled EUR 121 million.

On 12 December 2013, the *Framework Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the general principles for the participation of Georgia in Union programmes*¹ was signed, which allowed Georgia to participate in EU new generation Framework Programmes that are available to EU member countries, countries that are waiting to join the EU, and also to other countries which are signatories to a similar agreement with the European Union.

6.2 Institutional development programmes of the European Union

The institutional development programmes of the European Union include expert support instruments that aim at developing the institutional and administrative capabilities of the state agencies of a beneficiary country and approximating national legislation to EU legislation.

The most significant keystone of the institutional development programmes of the European Union is the twinning programme for public agencies, which was particularly successfully used in support of Eastern and Central European countries waiting to join the European Union. Currently, this instrument is available to both EU candidate and potential candidate countries, and to Neighbourhood Policy countries.

Georgia has been using the twinning programme since 2009, and this institution is particularly successfully used in Georgia in the implementation of reforms under the Association Agreement in almost all areas. In terms of the utilisation of EU expert assistance, Georgia is a leader in the region, which is the result of the high quality and preparedness for cooperation of the public agencies. Within the twinning programme, from 2009 to date, 23 projects have been successfully implemented in Georgia, and currently 13 projects are in progress.

Moreover, Georgia has been successfully using such short-term instruments of the institutional development as the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX), and a joint programme of the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA). The aforementioned instruments also aim at developing the institutional and administrative capabilities of state agencies, and approximating national legislation to EU legislation. It enables foreign experts to come to Georgia, making short-term study visits and retraining employees working in the state agencies of Georgia. Within the technical aid and information exchange instrument of the European Commission, up to 10 applications initiated by the state agencies of Georgia were funded in 2018.

¹ PROTOCOL to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, on a Framework Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the general principles for the participation of Georgia in Union programmes: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A22014A0111%2801%29>

Further steps:

- To continue maximally mobilising capabilities available within the institutional development programmes of the European Union, including in the areas of sectoral cooperation aiming at deeper integration with the European Union beyond the Association Agreement.

6.3 Budgetary aid programmes of the European Union

Within the European Neighbourhood Instrument, EU budgetary aid programmes have been implemented in Georgia since 2007. Within this instrument, the aid received by Georgia to date amounts to approximately EUR 520 million. A substantial part of the annually allocated financial aid within EU bilateral aid is that very budgetary aid.

EU budgetary aid is designated for different sectoral areas, which plays a significant role in the successful implementation of reforms planned in the process of European integration. Receiving financial aid under the instrument depends on the progress achieved in the implementation of reforms in a specific area.

Georgia is a leading country in the Eastern Partnership region in terms of the implementation of reforms under the Association Agreement and the utilisation of EU financial aid, particularly budgetary aid. Georgia has already successfully implemented budgetary aid programmes in education, the economy, regional development, public financial management, agriculture and rural development, the penitentiary system, public management and other areas.

Since 2017, a working group to facilitate the implementation of the Association Agreement and EU aid has been functioning within Georgia's EU Integration Commission, which ensures the fulfilment of obligations under the budgetary aid programmes.

Further steps:

- To continue coordinating the fulfilment of obligations to be implemented under EU budgetary aid programmes and effectively operating the working group to facilitate the implementation of the Association Agreement and EU aid set up within Georgia's EU Integration Commission.

6.4 Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programme of the European Union

The European Union carries out Cross-Border Cooperation programmes with neighbourhood countries. The programmes mainly aim at developing regional cooperation and enhancing contacts between people by supporting various priority areas.

Georgia has been involved in the Black Sea Basin Cross-Border Cooperation programme, which aims at developing regional cooperation in the Black Sea region in the areas of tourism, environmental protection, culture, and business facilitation. Eight countries are involved in the programme (Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Moldova, Ukraine, and Armenia) and the major beneficiaries of projects funded in the frame of the programme are non-governmental organisations and municipalities.

The budget for 2014 – 2020 for these eight countries amounts to EUR 40 million and is spent on certain projects on the basis of competitions announced by the CBC.

Currently, up to 50 projects have already been funded within the programme, in which mostly non-governmental organisations are involved. Among the projects, we must particularly note joint initiatives carried out in the areas of environmental protection, tourism and culture, in which representatives of almost all countries participating in the programme were involved.

Further steps:

- To continue maximally utilising capabilities available within the programme, with the support of programme beneficiary organisations (non-governmental sector, and municipalities).
- To continue actively participating in regional interagency formats available within the programme.

6.5 Participation in the framework programmes of the European Union

EU framework programmes differ in their character from traditional aid programmes under the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).

Participation in framework programmes allows a country to become involved additionally in new programmes apart from the aid instruments available within the ENI, to share EU best practice, to approximate legislation and strengthen state institutions, and to develop close cooperation with EU member countries at both state agency level and non-organisation level.

Active participation in framework programmes will contribute to gaining practical benefit in various fields.

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union for 2014 – 2020 includes 18 framework programmes¹ that aim at enhancing cooperation in the following areas: justice, migration and asylum, crisis management, nuclear research, satellite surveys and exploration, the development of small and medium businesses, customs control, the fight against fraud, education and sciences, research and innovation, maritime governance and fisheries, culture and media, healthcare and environmental protection.

Participation in the framework programmes requires the conclusion of a bilateral cooperation agreement in relation to each programme, between the European Commission on the one hand, and a beneficiary country on the other. In addition, a beneficiary country has to pay an annual membership fee, which in turn is included in the agreement and is different for each programme and each participating country.²

¹ The framework programmes under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union for 2014 – 2020: 1) Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF); 2) Civil Protection Mechanism; 3) COPERNICUS; 4) COSME; 5) Customs 2020; 6) Creative Europe; 7) Erasmus +; 8) EU Aid Volunteers; 9) European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF); 10) Fiscalis 2020; 11) Galileo and EGNOS Programmes; 12) HEALTH III; 13) Hercule III; 14) Horizon 2020 including COST; 15) Internal Security Fund; 16) LIFE Programme; 17) Pericles 2020; 18) EU Aid Volunteers

² The membership fee is calculated by an appropriate office of the European Commission, which, on the basis of certain macroeconomic and statistical indicators, determines the amount of annual membership fee for an individual country.



Currently, Georgia participates in 3 framework programmes. Consequently, Georgia has an opportunity to expand its involvement in the aforementioned programmes and engage in new programmes. Moreover, it should be noted that from 2021 on, new framework programmes will also start functioning within the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union for 2021 – 2027, in some of which non-EU member countries will have an opportunity to participate. Inclusion in new programmes should be carried out gradually and on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the costs connected with participation in a specific programme (membership fee) and of expected benefits in the case of participation.

6.5.1 Involvement of Georgia in current framework programmes of the European Union:

- **The framework programme – ERASMUS +**

Georgia has been successfully involved in the Erasmus+ programme and holds a leading position in terms of active participation. Among 131 countries, Georgia is among the first 10 countries (8th) by results achieved in competitions announced within the programme and by the number of educational scholarships received.

Based on the data of 2018, within the Credit Mobility component of the Erasmus+ programme, 1 105 students and scientific and administrative personnel from Georgian universities have studied/taken retraining at European universities, and 697 students from various countries of the world have come to Georgia to study. Within the Degree Mobility component of the Erasmus+ programme, 21 citizens of Georgia have won Erasmus scholarships in joint master's programmes.

Considering the high demand for Erasmus+ projects and scholarships, and based on the success achieved, the European Union has opened the so-called Special Funding Window for Georgia, thus providing an additional EUR 6 million for 2019 – 2020. Within the increased Erasmus+ budget, up to 800 additional scholarships will be available to Georgian students and academic personnel. The above indicates enhanced support from Georgian higher education by virtue of reform.

Based on the progress achieved, the possibility for Georgia to participate in the programme with the status of Programme Country is being studied. Currently only EU member countries and 6 non-member countries participate in the programme with the status of Programme Country (Norway, Iceland, Turkey, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Liechtenstein and Serbia). In the case of participation in the programme with the above status, Georgia will have to pay an additional annual financial cost (a membership fee), however it will have new opportunities to become fully involved in other components as well, and to gain more practical benefits. It is important to evaluate the expected potential benefits, and the costs that the country will have to pay annually, of participating in the programme with the status of Programme Country.

Further steps:

- To study the possibility of participation in Erasmus+ programme with the status of Programme Country.
- To continue supporting the beneficiaries existing within the programme.



- To continue making efforts to promote the opportunity of education within the EU Erasmus+ programme for persons residing in the occupied regions¹.

- **Framework programme – HORIZON 2020**

Horizon 2020 is the largest EU framework programme, in the area of research and innovation, which has a total budget of EUR 79 billion for 2014 – 2020.

In 2016, Georgia became an Associate Member of Horizon 2020, based on which it was allowed additional opportunities within the programme. Since acquiring the status of Associate Member, 21 projects have been funded with the participation of Georgia, in which 26 Georgian organisations and independent research academics in different fields are involved. In total, the funding utilised by Georgia by its participation in projects amounts to EUR 2 220 610.

Within Horizon 2020, Georgia has an opportunity to participate in a European programme in the area of science and technology – COST, which is a main component of the European Research Area (ERA). The programme allows researchers to set up special research networks in Europe and outside of Europe. It should be noted that the programme facilitates the enhancement of cooperation between researchers, engineers and scholars, and their mobility throughout Europe. To become fully involved in the programme, participating countries are required to pay certain costs, which amount to EUR 200 000 for Georgia. Consequently, it is important first to determine the expected benefits and then to make a decision with regard to joining the programme.

Further steps:

- To continue raising the awareness of existing beneficiaries within the Horizon 2020 programme.
- To plan and conduct appropriate activities in order to enhance the capabilities of potential beneficiaries of the programme and to improve project preparation and presentation skills.
- To examine the appropriateness of participation in the COST programme and determine expected benefits.
- To continue making efforts within the Horizon 2020 programme to promote joint Georgian-Abkhazian/Georgian-Ossetian scientific activities².

- **Framework programme – Creative Europe**

Creative Europe is a programme to support cooperation in cultural, audiovisual and creative areas with a budget for 2014 – 2020 amounting to EUR 1.46 billion. The aforementioned programme aims at promoting the operation of organisations with a cultural and creative profile at a transnational level, and the popularisation of persons working in the area of culture, and of their work/achievements beyond borders; and at supporting cooperation at an international level for representatives of cultural and

¹ A Step to a Better Future, pp. 15 – 16: http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/_a2beda36.pdf

² A Step to a Better Future, p. 23: http://smr.gov.ge/Uploads/_a2beda36.pdf



creative areas. Within a media component, the cinema and audiovisual industries of the European Union have been financially supported for the development, expansion and popularisation of their activities.

In 2015, Georgia, the first country in the Eastern Partnership region, signed an agreement on becoming a member of the Creative Europe programme. In the same year, the representation office (Desk) was set up in Georgia aiming at supporting programme beneficiaries and disseminating information about the opportunities available within the programme.

From 2015 to date, 22 projects have been funded within the programme with the participation of Georgia in the area of culture and under a sub-programme of media. In addition, the number of projects submitted with the involvement of Georgia and of those that won competitions has increased every year. Despite the fact that Georgian organisations have been successfully participating in the programme since their involvement, it is necessary to have more communication with potential programme beneficiary organisations to keep them informed of the opportunities and competitions available within the programme, and conditions for participation in the competitions.

Further steps:

- To continue actively communicating with the beneficiaries available within the Creative Europe programme, and enhancing their capabilities for active participation in the programme.

6.5.2 Prospects for joining new framework programmes of the European Union

- **Framework programme – Civil Protection Mechanism**

The EU framework programme Civil Protection Mechanism promotes the enhancement of cooperation between national civil protection agencies in Europe in the area of crisis management. The programme budget for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 364.8 million. The programme aims at rendering aid to victims of natural and man-made disasters in Europe and outside of Europe. The hub of mechanism activities is the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which conducts the continuous monitoring of emergencies throughout the world and, in the case of identification of a crisis, starts coordinating the appropriate responses of the participating countries. The mechanism allows a rapid response time to several emergencies at the same time, and the ERCC facilitates the avoidance of duplicated efforts.

Georgia is not a member of the programme, because only EU member, candidate or potential candidate countries and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member countries can become members of the programme. Despite this, it is important to take steps towards promoting the enhancement of cooperation without being involved in the programme, including the sharing of experience.

Involvement in the framework programme Civil Protection Mechanism will contribute to disaster risk assessment, including the introduction of early warning systems in Georgia. In emergency situations, the mobilisation of EU aid and the involvement of European offices to overcome crises will be simplified.

Further steps:

- To commence cooperation for sharing experience within the programme and participation in activities.

• **Framework programme – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is an EU framework programme or fund to facilitate the efficient management of migration streams and the formation of the common asylum policy of the European Union. The programme budget for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 3.137 billion, and it aims at supporting such activities as the development of the Common European Asylum System; promoting legal migration in EU member countries and the integration process of citizens of non-EU countries, in compliance with EU labour market requirements; and fighting against illegal migration.

Considering the challenges and opportunities in the EU visa liberalisation process, the enhancement of active cooperation with the AMIF is particularly important for Georgia, including through promoting legal migration (circular migration) and fighting against illegal migration from Georgia to the European Union.

The framework programme Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund does not provide for participation of non-EU countries in the programme with full member status; however Georgia can participate in the programme by working on a specific project, or cooperating with an EU member country.

Based on the above, it is appropriate to hold consultations with relevant EU offices to consider the issue of potential involvement of Georgia in the programme activities.

Further steps:

- To hold consultations with relevant EU offices to consider the issue of potential involvement of Georgia in the programme activities.
- To commence cooperation for sharing experience within the programme and participation in activities.

• **Framework programme – COPERNICUS**

The framework programme Copernicus is a programme conducting activities in the area of satellite surveys and exploration, and its budget for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 4.3 billion. Within the programme, information is collected in 4 thematic fields, covering issues related to the atmosphere, marine matters, climate, land use, security, and special issues. The programme also provides for the storage, processing and analysis of satellite historical data. The information services of Copernicus mainly are free for customers and they can be used in a number of areas, such as the management of urban areas, sustainable development and the protection of nature, regional and local planning, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, healthcare, civil protection, infrastructure, transport and mobility, and tourism.

Using information obtained through participation in the framework programme Copernicus will be particularly important for elaborating legislation and policy in relation

to the environment and/or for making critical decisions in emergency situations (natural disasters, humanitarian crisis).

The framework programme Copernicus provides for the participation of non-EU countries in the programme with full member status. Based on the above, it is appropriate to determine conditions and priorities of participation in the programme, and on the basis of a potential benefits analysis, to decide as to participation in the programme. At the next stage, it will be important to hold negotiations with relevant EU offices regarding the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the programme, including the conclusion of an appropriate cooperation agreement.

Further steps:

- To study the issue of determining the conditions and priorities of participation in the programme.
- To conduct analysis of the potential benefits of participation in the programme.
- To hold consultations with the European side regarding full membership procedures.
- To start cooperating for sharing experience within the programme and participation in activities.

• **Framework programme – HEALTH III**

HEALTH III is an EU healthcare framework programme aiming at improving the health status of EU citizens, reducing inequality in the area of healthcare, promoting innovations and increasing the sustainability of health systems through enhancing cooperation between EU member countries in the area of healthcare. The budget of the framework programme for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 449.4 million. The healthcare framework programme has 4 specific thematic priorities as follows:

1. The facilitation of healthcare, prevention of disease dissemination and promotion of healthy lifestyles;
2. The protection of EU citizens from a serious cross-border hazard to health;
3. The facilitation of the establishment of innovative, efficient and sustainable healthcare systems;
4. The simplification of access to a high quality and safe healthcare system for EU citizens.

After studying conditions of participation in the programme and analysing the potential benefits, the decision was made to join the framework programme HEALTH III. Proceeding from the fact that a new phase of the programme will begin from 2021, it is appropriate to hold negotiations with relevant EU offices to consider the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the new phase of the programme, including the conclusion of an appropriate cooperation agreement.

Further steps:

- To hold consultations with the European side regarding full membership procedures.
- To start cooperating for sharing experience within the programme and participation in activities.

• **Framework programme – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**

The EU framework programme European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) aims at developing EU policy and enhancing cooperation between EU member countries in the area of maritime governance and fisheries. The total budget of the Fund for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 6.4 billion.

The EMFF facilitates the creation of a sustainable environment for fishermen, the support of the population residing in seaside regions in terms of diversification of the economy, and the sustainable development of aquaculture around the European coastline.

The framework programme European Maritime and Fisheries Fund does not allow for the participation of non-EU countries in the programme with full member status; however Georgia can participate in it through working on a specific project, or cooperation with an EU-member country.

Based on the above, it is appropriate to hold consultations with relevant EU offices to consider the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the programme activities.

Further steps:

- To hold consultations with relevant EU offices to consider the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the programme activities.
- To commence cooperation for sharing experience within the programme and participation in activities.

• **Framework programme – HERCULE III**

HERCULE III is an EU programme for fighting against fraud, and its budget for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 104.9 million. The programme aims at supporting EU member countries in the fight against fraud, corruption and other illegal activities. The programme is administered by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

Projects such as purchasing high-tech means and equipment for the appropriate authorities of participating countries to fight smuggling and other criminal acts against EU financial interests are funded within the framework programme. Moreover, various types of trainings, workshops and conferences are held within the programme with regard to fighting against fraud and corruption.

On 19 October 2018, a regional conference was held in Tbilisi on issues of the prevention and identification of, and response to, fraud cases in EU-funded activities, which established cooperation within the programme HERCULE III.

The framework programme HERCULE III provides for the participation of non-EU countries in the programme with full member status. Based on the above, the determination of the conditions and priorities of participation in the programme is in



progress so as to make a decision on the basis of a potential benefits analysis, regarding participation in the programme. At the next stage, it will be important to hold negotiations with relevant EU offices regarding the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the programme, including the conclusion of an appropriate cooperation agreement.

Further steps:

- To continue examining the conditions and priorities of participation in the programme.
- To conduct an analysis of the potential benefits of participation in the programme.
- To hold consultations with the European side regarding full membership procedures.
- To continue actively cooperating with the European Anti-Fraud Office, and participating in activities organised within the programme.

• **Framework programme – EU Aid Volunteers**

EU Aid Volunteers is an EU humanitarian volunteer programme, which is meant to promote participation in ongoing EU humanitarian support projects in different places of the world. It is aimed at rendering aid in cases of natural or man-made disasters/crises. The programme budget for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 147 million, and provides for various types of activities, including retraining, exercises and active participation in the settlement of a crisis.

The involvement of Georgia in this programme is a special opportunity for the faster development of the volunteering culture in the country and for increasing the number of volunteers. Furthermore, the involvement of Georgia in the programme will allow it to become familiar with the international experience of volunteering practice, and to participate in humanitarian projects carried out under the auspices of the European Union.

EU Aid Volunteers provides for the participation of non-EU countries in the programme with full member status. Based on the above, the determination of conditions and priorities of participation in the programme is in progress, so as to make a decision, on the basis of a potential benefits analysis, regarding participation in the programme. At the next stage, it will be important to hold negotiations with relevant EU offices regarding the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the programme, including the conclusion of an appropriate cooperation agreement.

Further steps:

- To continue examining the conditions and priorities of participation in the programme.
- To conduct an analysis of the potential benefits of participation in the programme.
- To hold consultations with the European side regarding full membership procedures.

- To commence cooperation for sharing experience within the programme and participating in activities.

- **Framework programme – Internal Security Fund (ISF)**

The EU framework programme Internal Security Fund aims at developing cooperation in the area of security, in particular promoting cooperation between the enforcement authorities of EU member countries to ensure the security of EU borders. The budget of the programme for 2014 – 2020 amounts to EUR 2.76 billion and covers the following fields: support for the common visa policy, the facilitation of legal migration in the EU, the improvement of visa issuing procedures, the fight against illegal migration, the integrated management of external EU borders, information exchange, and the improvement of coordination.

In addition, the programme provides for the introduction and development of high-tech IT Systems, the procurement of operational equipment, the arrangement of trainings and exercises, the improvement of coordination and cooperation at administrative and operational levels.

With respect to overcoming challenges in the EU visa liberalisation process, and reducing risks for security, it is particularly desirable for Georgia to participate in the framework programme Internal Security Fund.

The Internal Security Fund programme does not provide for the participation of non-EU countries in the programme with full member status, however Georgia can participate in the programme by working on a specific project, or by cooperating with an EU member country. Based on the above, it is appropriate to hold consultations with relevant EU offices to consider the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the programme activities.

Further steps:

- To hold consultations with relevant EU offices to consider the issue of the potential involvement of Georgia in the programme activities.
- To commence cooperation for sharing experience within the programme and participation in activities.

Part 7. Expansion of the Involvement of Georgia in EU Agencies

Functions of EU agencies and cooperation with third countries

Over 40 agencies of the European Union cover areas such as the common market, internal and justice affairs, the Common Security and Defence Policy, etc. The main functions of the agencies are as follows: the facilitation of pursuing an EU policy, the regulation of any sector at a common European level, the improvement of the validity of regulations in the EU, etc.

Some EU agencies cooperate with third countries as well. The cooperation may be based on mutual agreement, or it may develop concerning a certain issue without a legal framework. Based on information communicated by the External Action Service, Georgia can cooperate with 25 specialised EU Agencies.

Cooperation with EU Agencies plays a significant role in the fulfilment of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, and in the facilitation of Georgia's EU integration process in the areas beyond the Association Agreement. In particular, cooperation with the Agencies will help Georgia to transpose EU provisions, standards and legal requirements into national legislation and to apply them in practice; to become more familiar with EU policy and relevant instruments; and to share the experience directly related to the European integration of Georgia.

In the Government of Georgia, the coordination of cooperation with specialised EU Agencies is ensured by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry, in cooperation with relevant authorities, has studied the appropriate interests of Georgia and has identified the Agencies to establish cooperation with.

Based on the interest expressed by the authorities, the embassies of Georgia accredited in EU countries have communicated information about the interest expressed by the relevant authorities of Georgia to the head offices of the respective Agencies, and clarified the form and procedures of cooperation between the Agencies and third countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, based on the information received from the Embassies and in coordination with the relevant authorities, has prepared information regarding the appropriateness of initiating cooperation or enhancing existing cooperation with specialised EU Agencies.

Currently, the relevant public authorities of Georgia cooperate with 15 EU Agencies, out of which Georgia has signed different types of agreements with the following Agencies: EUROPOL (the European Police Office), FRONTEX (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency), CEPOL (the European Police College), EASA (the European Aviation Safety Agency), EUIPO (the European Union Intellectual Property Office), EMCDDA (the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction). Signing an agreement with EUROJUST (the European body for the enhancement of judicial cooperation) is planned before the end 2019. Furthermore, an



agreement has been concluded in the frame of EMSA (the European Maritime Safety Agency) Black and Caspian Sea project between the Maritime Transport Agency of Georgia, EMSA and the Italian Coast Guard.

In addition, the relevant authorities of Georgia are developing cooperation with the following Agencies:

- EASO (the European Asylum Support Office)
- EU-OSHA (the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work)
- ECDC (the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control)
- EFCA (the European Fisheries Control Agency)
- EEA (the European Environment Agency)
- EFSA (the European Food Safety Authority)
- ETF (the European Training Foundation)

Based on the consultations held, it was clear that the Georgian authorities are interested in cooperation with the following Agencies:

- EDA (the European Defence Agency)
- EUROFOUND (the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions)
- ERA (the European Railway Agency)
- ENISA (the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security)
- ECHA (the European Chemicals Agency)
- CPVO (the Community Plant Variety Office)
- EU-LISA (the European Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems)
- GSA (the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency)
- EIGE (the European Institute for Gender Equality)
- EUISS (the European Union Institute for Security Studies)

The Government of Georgia has been actively working to facilitate further cooperation with specialised EU Agencies.

EUROPOL – the European Union Law Enforcement Agency

EUROPOL is an EU agency mainly aiming at ensuring security in EU countries. The priority areas of the Agency are the fight against international organised crime, terrorism, cybercrime, trafficking and irregular migration. The headquarters of EUROPOL are located in The Hague. The Agency is open for cooperation with third countries.

Cooperation between Georgia and EUROPOL is based on the Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation between Georgia and the European Police Office signed on 4 April 2017 and which entered into force on 31 July 2017. Consequently, Georgia became an operational partner country of EUROPOL.

There had been no direct cooperation whatsoever between Georgia and EUROPOL before the conclusion of the above Agreement. Only in individual cases, study

visits to EUROPOL were organised through EU-funded projects for representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA).

On 9 March 2018, a Liaison Agreement was signed between Georgia and EUROPOL. On the basis of this agreement, Georgia now has the opportunity to second a Liaison Officer to EUROPOL headquarters.

In September 2018, a Georgian Office was opened in EUROPOL and the first Liaison Officer began to exercise his/her powers. According to Article 2 of the Liaison Agreement concluded on 9 March 2018, a Liaison Officer is responsible for supporting contacts between Georgia, EUROPOL and EU member countries, and facilitating information exchange. In addition, a Liaison Officer is responsible for promoting the enhancement of cooperation with Europol and identifying new areas for cooperation, representing and defending the interests of MIA, and cooperating with a law enforcement corps accredited in Europol, etc.

A Memorandum of Understanding on the Secure Communication Line between Georgia and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation was also signed on 9 March 2018. As per the Memorandum, a secure communication line (SIENA) will be established between Georgia and EUROPOL, which will entail the exchange of personal data, and operative and confidential information with EUROPOL.

Cooperation with EUROPOL and the law enforcement authorities of EU countries is essential for Georgia, and in particular, for MIA and other law enforcement agencies. Based on the aforementioned cooperation, Georgia has become a significant partner of the European Union in the law enforcement area, which is a step towards Georgia's EU integration. As a result of the agreements with EUROPOL, Georgia now has the opportunity to second a Liaison Officer to EUROPOL headquarters; to exchange personal data and operative and confidential information with EUROPOL and the law enforcement authorities of EU countries through a secure communication line; national contact persons from Georgia will be able to participate in the meetings of the heads of national EUROPOL bureaus; top level meetings will be held between EUROPOL and the relevant agencies of Georgia; Georgian experts will become familiar with the activity of EUROPOL's analytical group and take part in the activities of joint investigation groups set up by EUROPOL.

In the first quarter of 2019, representatives of MIA plan to pay a visit to EUROPOL to become acquainted with the characteristic features of the SIENA system.

Further steps:

- In February 2019, EUROPOL representatives plan to pay a visit to Georgia; appropriate work is planned to be done for the SIENA system to start functioning.
- A Georgian party is planned to become a member of the appropriate EUROPOL thematic analytical groups working on different areas of organised crime.

CEPOL – the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training

CEPOL is an EU Agency for law enforcement training aimed at promoting cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of EU countries and sharing experience, holding trainings for law enforcement officers, and coordinating between



agencies, thus pursuing the goal of enhancing security throughout Europe. The headquarters of CEPOL are located in Budapest. The Agency is open for cooperation with third countries.

The mandate of CEPOL was renewed in 2016 and consequently the following areas were determined: organised crime, terrorism, public order, and defence and security policy. In performing its activities, CEPOL uses various courses and workshops, webinars, online learning modules, exchange programmes (CEPOL Exchange Programme (CEP)), research and academic conferences, access to libraries on the CEPOL platform, and a Master's programme for law enforcement officials.

For the development of the staff of law enforcement agencies in Georgia's EU integration process, the sharing of the best and up-to-date European experience at CEPOL's premises is an important priority. The CEPOL platform allows Georgian law enforcement officials to upgrade their skills by attending international workshops in a specific field, to join an exchange programme, to pay an information visit to a country of their interest and to get to know the enforcement system of this country, to enhance international cooperation, and to share knowledge gained with representatives of his/her agency. In addition, the CEPOL platform allows Georgian law enforcement officials to attend online courses and workshops without leaving the country. Consequently, Georgian law enforcement officials annually have the opportunity to upgrade their professional levels, being an important factor for the development of the country.

Cooperation between CEPOL and the MIA Academy began in the course of working in the format of the Association of European Police Colleges (AEPC), which the MIA Academy became a member of in 2007. Cooperation between Georgia and CEPOL was rare before 2011 and was limited to the attendance of representatives of the MIA Academy at individual international workshops/conferences organised by CEPOL regarding police cooperation in the context of European neighbourhood policy.

In 2011, Georgia became the first of the Eastern Partnership countries to conclude a Cooperation Agreement with CEPOL and to start enjoying the status of Framework Partner. The above Agreement aims at sharing experience and best practice, and facilitating the development of police officers' skills.

Since 2013, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has been actively involved in a CEPOL exchange programme allowing MIA employees to visit the law enforcement agencies of partner countries, and to host European colleagues on their return visits.

According to the new mandate of 2016, other law enforcement entities also joined in the cooperation along with the police. The MIA Academy is the official representative of CEPOL in Georgia, and therefore plays a mediating and coordinating role with other law enforcement agencies of the country.

The enhancement of cooperation with CEPOL remains an important component on Georgia's EU integration agenda.

Further steps:

- To conclude a Cooperation Plan for 2019 – 2020 between the MIA Academy and CEPOL to determine priority areas of cooperation.

- To upgrade the skills of Georgian law enforcement officials at all professional levels through sharing European experience.
- Within CEPOL's exchange programme of 2019, sections of a general exchange programme and a joint CEPOL-FRONTEX exchange programme was supplemented by a project-based exchange programme to further enable law enforcement officials to participate in an exchange programme with: a) Middle East and North African countries on counterterrorism issues, or b) Western Balkan countries on financial investigation issues.

Frontex – the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

In accordance with the Integrated Border Management concept, Frontex is an EU agency aiming at facilitating, developing and coordinating the management of EU borders, and helping EU countries manage their external borders. The headquarters of Frontex are located in Warsaw. The Agency is open for cooperation with third countries.

A Working Agreement on the Establishment of Operational Cooperation was signed in 2008. Currently, negotiations between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (MIA) and Frontex about renewing the Working Agreement are in progress. To this end, a working group meeting was held in 2017. Based on the new agreement, cooperation will be enhanced in the following areas: conducting joint risk analysis, establishing an information exchange mechanism, determining common training standards, and participating in joint operations and return migration procedures more actively.

In 2018, the Georgian border checkpoint of Sarpi became the Frontex coordination centre in Georgia, and MIA officers were assigned the status of national contact persons and local coordinators of the operational plan of the 2018 common ground operation. Consequently, Frontex seconded a French expert/border services officer to the Sarpi border checkpoint to observe the activities of personnel and for assistance.

Based on the Agreement with Frontex, relevant divisions of the MIA are engaged in activities conducted by the Agency, in particular they participate in trainings and joint operations (with observer status). The Agreement also facilitates the exchange of information and the improvement of risk analysis.

In the activities conducted by Frontex, the representatives of relevant MIA divisions are given the opportunity for professional development in compliance with European standards, and to acquire new experience by participating in joint operations. Based on this, it is important to further enhance cooperation with Frontex, thus contributing to further increasing the compatibility of Integrated Border Management with EU standards.

Further steps:

- To conclude a new working agreement with Frontex



- To participate in joint operations conducted by Frontex
- To enhance cooperation in relation to risk analysis.

EASO – the European Asylum Support Office

EASO is an EU agency aiming at facilitating the operation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and enhancing the coordination of asylum issues between EU countries, and practical cooperation. The headquarters of the Agency are located in Valletta. The Agency assists EU countries in overcoming existing asylum-related challenges, and to this end is actively working on upgrading the skills of the asylum system specialists of EU countries. Moreover, EASO helps EU member countries meet the needs they have identified, and is also actively involved in the management of emergencies and crises related to asylum seekers. The Agency is open for cooperation with third countries.

In 2014, Georgia expressed its willingness, by official letter, to cooperate with EASO. In response, the Agency offered Georgia a meeting of experts to define cooperation modalities; however, this meeting failed for reasons independent of the Georgian side. In 2017, Georgia started negotiations with EASO to establish cooperation. In March 2018, the first meeting between official persons of Georgia and EASO representatives was held in Valletta, with the assistance of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). The parties agreed to continue negotiations regarding future cooperation.

Cooperation with EASO will contribute to the strengthening of the asylum system in Georgia. Considering that Georgia is both a receiving transit country and a transit country for asylum seekers, an important priority is to enhance the effectiveness of asylum procedures. Considering the state interests of Georgia, and in accordance with international obligations undertaken by Georgia, this aims at protecting human rights. Sharing EASO's best practice and experience is particularly essential for Georgia in terms of upgrading the skills of specialists working in Georgia in the area of asylum, and improving the capabilities of the asylum system.

Further steps:

- Signing a cooperation agreement on asylum issues;
- Participation of specialists working in Georgia in the area of asylum in EASO trainings, working meetings, thematic workshops and study visits.

EASA – the European Aviation Safety Agency

EASA is an EU agency aiming at ensuring a high level of safety in civil aviation by observing general safety rules. The Agency is also responsible for the provision of a high level of environmental protection and the introduction of a common regulating and



certifying system in EU countries. The headquarters of the Agency are located in Cologne. EASA is open for cooperation with third countries.

In 2009, a Working Agreement was signed between EASA and the United Transport Administration of Georgia; and in 2013, a Working Agreement was signed between EASA and the Civil Aviation Agency of Georgia. Georgia cooperates with EASA as part of several working groups, including Pan-European Partner Countries (EASA–PANEP). Moreover, active consultations between EASA and Civil Aviation Agency experts are constantly in progress with regard to individual topical issues.

In 2012 – 2015, Georgia was actively involved in the regional TRACECA Civil Aviation II project. The objective of the TRACECA project was to support the sustainable development of civil aviation in beneficiary countries. The project was implemented by EASA and a consulting company Egis Avia.

Since 2016, Georgia has been involved in the Technical Assistance project for Eastern Partnership and Central Asian countries. The project is implemented by EASA and is aimed at rendering assistance to participating countries in terms of effective operation within Pan-European airspace, the implementation of obligations undertaken to the EU, and approximation to European standards.

Since 2016, the Civil Aviation Agency of Georgia has enjoyed observer status at the EASA Management Board.

Close cooperation with EASA contributes to the approximation of Georgian aviation to EU standards and regulations.

Further steps:

- To enhance cooperation with EASA in different areas, including engaging the LEPL Civil Aviation Agency of Georgia in different projects and programmes.
- The LEPL Civil Aviation Agency of Georgia to take appropriate steps towards the enhancement of international cooperation, which will be oriented to the development of specific areas and fields in aviation, including general and pilotless aviation.

EMSA – the European Maritime Safety Agency

EMSA is an EU agency aiming at providing technical expertise and prompt assistance to EU countries in the area of maritime safety and fight against environmental pollution. The headquarters of the Agency are located in Lisbon. EMSA is open for cooperation with third countries.

Over the years, the Agency has actively promoted the development of maritime transport in Georgia. Significant positive changes have been made in the Georgian maritime industry over the last 5 years, thanks to the European Commission and EMSA-funded projects (within the TRACECA programmes – SASPOL, Maritime Safety and Security II, etc., Black and Caspian Seas Project).



Currently, Georgia is an EMSA's Black and Caspian Seas Project beneficiary country. The objective of this project is the facilitation of maritime safety and the prevention of environmental pollution in the Black and Caspian Sea countries; and one of the main components of the Project is the connection of beneficiary countries into the regional SafeSeaNet server of the common EU Vessel Traffic Monitoring System, thus enabling the maritime administrations or other competent agencies of EU countries to have a complete picture of the maritime traffic in the Black and Caspian seas. The aforementioned will contribute to the enhancement of maritime traffic safety in the ports and maritime zones of Georgia. Furthermore, an agreement was concluded within this Project between the Maritime Transport Agency of Georgia, EMSA and the Italian Coast Guard.

From 2014 on, Georgian seamen have the right to be employed on vessels of EU countries.

Within the Black and Caspian Seas Project, Georgia presented the documentation and asked to cover the territorial sea of Georgia with AIS (Automatic Identification System) earth stations. Within the donation, in the first quarter of 2019, the Italian side will transfer to Georgia 2 AIS earth stations for monitoring of vessels, and the accompanying server. This will allow us to conduct the real-time AIS monitoring of vessels. For the future, within the framework of integration with European Agencies, information will be exchanged with European system, enabling Georgia to be connected into the common European network, and consequently, the AIS information will be shared in MAREΣ system.

The cooperation with EMSA contributes to the employment of Georgian seamen in various countries of the world, the flawless navigation of Georgian vessels in EU countries' and other countries' waters, and the safety of Georgian ports as well.

Further steps:

Georgia, as a beneficiary country of the Black and Caspian Seas Project, plans to participate in the following activities:

- A regional training related to the implementation of MLC, 2006 (Maritime Labour Convention)
- A workshop for port safety officers of the Black Sea Memorandum of Understanding member countries
- A training for port safety officers of Georgia (for container vessels)
- A regional training for VTS (Vessel Traffic Service) operators
- A regional training for flag state inspectors
- A training on timely response to oil spill
- A training for MLC, 2006 inspectors
- A regional ISPS (International Ship and Port Facility) training
- A regional Search and Rescue training
- The IMO Model Course OPR level 1 and OPR level 2 training



EUROJUST – the European Union’s Judicial Cooperation Unit

EUROJUST is an EU agency aiming at coordinating judicial cooperation between EU countries to combat organised crime and terrorism. The headquarters of the Agency are located in The Hague. EUROJUST is open for cooperation with third countries.

Since 2015, Georgia has been officially present on EUROJUST’s list of priority countries, thus contributing to the beginning of the process for concluding a Cooperation Agreement with the Agency. This aspiration can be noticed in both the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, and in the EU-Georgia Association Agenda for 2017 – 2020 and Visa Liberalisation Action Plan.

In particular, according to the Association Agreement, the Parties agree that they will intensify their efforts to efficiently render mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, including closer cooperation with EUROJUST. Moreover, in the Association Agenda for 2017 – 2020, the EU has assigned Georgia to take appropriate measures to sign and effectively implement the cooperation agreement with EUROJUST.

In May 2017, a mission of EUROJUST experts visited Georgia to evaluate the current situation regarding the personal data protection in Georgia, and the mechanisms of cooperation on criminal matters. The positive evaluation by the experts served as a basis for the beginning negotiations between Georgia and EUROJUST. In January 2018, the Georgian delegation paid a visit to EUROJUST headquarters, where the Parties discussed the issues of future cooperation, and the Georgian side adopted a working version of the agreement text. Following the negotiations on the conclusion of the agreement between Georgia and EUROJUST, Georgia initialled the agreement text on 3 July 2018 and submitted it to EUROJUST.

Currently, internal procedures are in progress in relevant EU bodies (EUROJUST College, Council of the European Union, and European Parliament). After the final confirmation by the EU of the agreement text, the Parties plan to sign the agreement.

After the agreement takes effect, Georgia will second a Liaison Prosecutor to EUROJUST. The Cooperation Agreement between Georgia and EUROJUST aims at enhancing mutual legal assistance and cooperation between Georgia and EUROJUST in criminal matters, fighting against serious crime, particularly the organised crime and terrorism.

As a result of concluding the aforementioned agreement, the legal cooperation between Georgia and EUROJUST will be improved in the investigation and the coordination and conduct of criminal prosecution.

Further steps:



- To conclude the agreement between Georgia and EUROJUST
- Georgia to second a Liaison Prosecutor to EUROJUST
- To enhance mutual legal assistance and cooperation between Georgia and EUROJUST in criminal matters
- To participate in meetings organised by EUROJUST

EMCDDA – the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

EMCDDA is an EU specialised agency working in the area of studying drug abuse situation and data collection in EU countries. To evaluate drug abuse situation, the monitoring centre processes and analyses statistical data about drug users, the rising trend of the dissemination of narcotic drugs, their delivery and consumption, and mortality caused by drugs throughout Europe. The Centre, based on the researches conducted and the reports issued, establishes evidence-based approaches, thus helping the EU and EU countries plan and develop a narcopolicy. The Centre operates on European market using the Early Warning System to detect those new psychoactive substances and their dissemination limits that may pose a threat to public health.

The headquarters of the Agency are located in Lisbon. EMCDDA actively cooperates with third – non-EU – countries and works jointly with them on the development/improvement of evidence-based and human-rights-protection-oriented approaches.

Georgia has actively cooperated with EMCDDA since 2014, right after the Georgian delegation, headed by the Minister of Justice, visited the Centre on 22 – 25 June of the same year; and later, the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Drug Abuse hosted the Centre delegation in Georgia on 16 – 17 April 2015.

On 4 November 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded between the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and the Centre. Under the Memorandum, the Parties expressed willingness that their cooperation develop into more active phase, meaning that EMCDDA should support Georgia in terms of the fulfilment of obligations under the Association Agreement; and Georgia, in its turn, undertook to elaborate analysis- and evidence-based methodologies. To this end, Georgia plans to set up the National Drug Abuse Situation Monitoring System to work toward monitoring the illicit consumption and illegal circulation of substances subject to special control, and the current drug abuse situation, conducting thematic studies and analysis in this area and underlining the latest trends in the drug abuse situation in the country.

Within the framework of cooperation with EMCDDA, Georgia has gradually introduced the evidence-based scientific and practical methodologies of collection and analysis of information related to drug abuse situation. In addition, the cooperation with the Centre facilitates the harmonisation of Georgian legislative environment with EU standards.

Further steps:

- To exchange information related to drug abuse situation with the Centre, including to share the results of scientific studies in the area of illegal circulation of drugs and drug consumption
- In cooperation with the Centre, to retrain experts and to support the studies at the national level (financially, as well as content-wise and technically)
- To participate in thematic meetings and activities organised by the Centre.

European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO)

EUIPO is an agency of the European Union (EU) offering intellectual property rights protection across the EU and beyond. Thus, EUIPO protects EU trademark and design rights, and manages the activities of the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights and the Orphan Works Database.

EUIPO cooperates with national and regional intellectual property offices within the EU. The purpose of the cooperation is to develop common tools and services for the users of intellectual property systems. EUIPO also cooperates with intellectual property offices across the world, including international organisations, such as the European Patent Office (EPO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). EUIPO is based in Alicante. The members of EUIPO are EU Member States. EUIPO is open for cooperation with third countries.

The development of an effective system for the protection of intellectual property is one of the important priorities of the Government of Georgia, because it is directly connected to the economic development of the country.

Intellectual property is one of the main components of the DCFTA between Georgia and the EU. With the direct support of the EU, Georgia has achieved significant progress in implementing the DCFTA action plan, which envisages the further approximation of Georgian legislation and practice to EU standards.

In this regard, cooperation with EUIPO is very important, which started in 2015 by signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the National Intellectual Property Center of Georgia ‘Sakpatenti’. Within the framework of mutual cooperation with EUIPO, Sakpatenti has integrated three components, namely: TMview¹, TMclass², and

¹ Provides users with the information on trademarks.

² Helps users to search for and classify goods and services, for which applications are submitted.



Designview¹, into the electronic governance system, in seven months, an unprecedentedly short period of time.

Currently, Sakpatenti is working on the integration of seven new components into the electronic governance system that will benefit users in Georgia as well as in the EU. The integration of Georgian databases allows foreign users to obtain information on trademarks and designs registered in Georgia. Moreover, by adding the Georgian language to the above-mentioned tools, it is possible to search for information through a Georgian interface.

For the purpose of the further development of intellectual property legislation in Georgia, and for the proper interpretation and implementation of a new directive relating to trademarks, as well as EU regulations and guidelines relating to trademarks and designs, it is necessary to continue cooperating closely with EUIPO.

The 2018 Action Plan of the Single Support Framework for EU Support to Georgia (SSF) includes a joint project between Sakpatenti and EUIPO, which aims to further develop the intellectual property system and to facilitate enforcing the protection of intellectual property rights in Georgia. The implementation of the above-mentioned project will start approximately at the end of 2019, after signing a respective financial agreement.

Further steps:

- to prepare draft legislative amendments in cooperation with EUIPO for the purpose of further improving the legislation on trademarks and designs;
- to prepare guidelines on trademarks and designs in cooperation with EUIPO;
- to prepare a review of the significant decisions of the GC of the ECJ and the Boards of Appeal of EUIPO (for judges and for persons working in the field of intellectual property);
- to modernise and improve the control system and automated processes of proceedings related to trademarks and designs in cooperation with EUIPO (to finish the work carried out by Sakpatenti for the purpose of obtaining ISO 9001:2015 standard);
- to standardise the activities and to improve the legal framework of the Chamber of Appeals of Sakpatenti in cooperation with EUIPO;
- to finish the implementation of the other tools of EUIPO;
- to share the best practice of the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights.

¹ A centralised system available for viewing information on the designs registered by any participating national agency.

European Training Foundation (ETF)

ETF is an agency of the EU that helps EU neighbourhood transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital in the context of EU external relations policies, through the reform of education, training, and labour market systems. ETF supports countries in the development of vocational education systems for the purpose of the approximation of vocational qualifications to the demands of the labour market. ETF also supports EU institutions in the preparation, execution, supervision and evaluation of the EU action plan to support Georgia in the area of human resources. ETF is based in Turin. ETF is open for cooperation with third countries.

Georgia has been cooperating with ETF since 2001. The cooperation is being deepened and it is effective for the education system. Georgia is part of the EU Eastern Partnership programme, which is supported by ETF.

In terms of education, it is important that the cooperation with ETF facilitates the approximation of the education system of Georgia to European education systems. The Torino Process, a project implemented by ETF, was introduced in 2010 and aims to analyse vocational education and training (VET) policies and practice, to evaluate systems, to supervise the implementation of policies, and thus improve outcomes.

With the support of ETF, Georgia has the opportunity to share the progress of the reforms carried out in Georgia in the area of education, as well as to become familiar with the experience of other countries, and to improve results achieved in the area of vocational education through the development of cooperation in different areas.

In 2013-2014, in cooperation with Georgia, ETF implemented the project ‘Strengthening Social Partnership in Vocational Education Sector’, the purpose of which was to develop and strengthen the National Vocational Council. A Social Partnership Policy Document was drawn up within the scope of the above project. The technical support of ETF to Georgia is also important in terms of the recognition of informal education.

Currently, ETF is participating in the sector support programme and in the development of the respective policy matrix in Georgia.

It should also be noted that the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement under the Ministry, in close cooperation with ETF, is working on the institutional twinning project ‘Strengthening Capacities for Quality Assurance and Governance of Qualifications’. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to human capital development by improving quality assurance, transparency and the



governance of skills and qualifications in a lifelong learning (LLL) perspective. The project envisages the transposition of the recommendations provided for by the Association Agreement Annexes into the relevant laws and policy documents of Georgia.

Further steps:

- to support the development of the component of entrepreneurship in vocational education in cooperation with ETF;
- to improve the quality of work-based learning and to develop mechanisms of financing in this area in cooperation with ETF;
- to share the experience and achieved results of the countries in the Eastern Partnership programme within the scope of vocational education reform;
- to support the development of programmes contributing to the development of art education and creative skills, in close cooperation with ETF, in order to contribute to the formation of innovation and entrepreneurial thinking in students;
- to organise focus groups, with the support of ETF, with the participation of the parties involved in the system, namely social partners, international donor organisations and educational institutions, in order to prepare an interim report of the Torino Process (TRP).

European Environment Agency (EEA)

EEA is an agency of the EU that provides independent and reliable information on the environment to countries associated to EEA. EEA provides very important information to those involved in developing, implementing and evaluating environmental policy. EEA helps countries make informed decisions in relation to environmental issues and to integrate environmental considerations into economic policies. It should be noted that EEA coordinates the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet).¹ EEA also significantly contributes to the improvement and sustainable development of the environment of Europe by providing timely, accurate and reliable information to politicians and citizens. EEA is based in Copenhagen and its members are members of the EU and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Iceland. Six Balkan countries have the status of cooperating countries of EEA. EEA is also open for cooperation with other countries.

¹ Eionet is a partnership network of the European Environment Agency and its 39 member and cooperating countries. The network enables the exchange of environmental data.



At this stage, the process of evaluating EEA activities is under way, as a result of which the conditions and status of cooperation between EEA and non-EU countries may be redefined. Moreover, the 2021-2027 budgets of EEA are currently being reviewed at EU institutions, after the completion of which it will be possible to determine the budgetary payments of countries to EEA.

Georgia has been cooperating with EEA since 2014 within the framework of the EU regional project 'Implementation of the principles and practices of the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) in the Eastern Partnership countries'. The first phase of the project was implemented in 2010-2015 and the second phase of the project (ENI SEIS East II) started in February 2016 and will continue till 2020. Under the project best European practice in terms of analysis, storage and management of environmental information are shared, and data exchange system and the evaluation of the state of the environment are improved. In 2017, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, the National Statistics Office of Georgia, and EEA signed an agreement which envisages cooperation for the purpose of achieving the goals set by the project in line with SEIS principles and EEA/Eionet data protection policy, in order to improve the exchange and availability of environmental data and information.

Under the project ENI SEIS East II, special attention is paid to the development of water indicators and statistics.

In addition, during a visit from EEA experts the national Air Quality Portal and data exchange capabilities were discussed in detail.

Under the project ENI SEIS East II, Georgia also cooperates with EEA by preparing regular reports.

Cooperation with EEA in the field of the protection of biodiversity is also actively being carried out.

Cooperation with EEA will contribute to the collection of environmental data, the enhancement of the capacities of environmental and statistical institutions, the creation of environmental integrated information systems and integrated information systems in the areas of analysis and assessment in Georgia.

Further steps:

- to put into effect five water quantity indicators and two water quality indicators of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in cooperation with EEA, based on which national reports on the state of water will be drawn up. To develop a Water Information System for Georgia (WIS-Georgia);

- to display Georgian ambient air quality data on the European Air Quality Index map with the support of EEA;
- to cooperate with EEA in order to facilitate the introduction of European Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA) practice in Georgia;
- to create the Emerald Network in Georgia, to improve the reporting capabilities in relation to species and habitats, and to introduce UNECE D1 indicators of protected areas, that are comparable at the regional level, with the support of EEA.
- The performance of the activities determined by the regional work plan of the project ENI SEIS East II will be continued in cooperation with EEA.

European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

EFCA is an agency of the EU that promotes the highest common standards for control, inspection and surveillance under the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The additional objective of EFCA is to contribute to a European-wide level playing field for the fishing industry and to apply European commitments to that area. EFCA contributes towards the sustainable development of fisheries in compliance with existing measures to the benefit of present and future generations. It should be noted that EFCA assists the European Commission by analysing catch certificates and processing statements received from third countries, as well as collecting statistical data on trade and other related matters. EFCA organises different trainings and seminars in member states on issues related to the fishing industry (for example illegal fishing, etc.) The members of EFCA are EU Member States and the European Commission. EFCA is based in Vigo. EFCA is open for cooperation with third countries.

Cooperation between Georgia and EFCA started in 2018, when EFCA launched a new pilot project to establish a voluntary observation and inspection system in the Black Sea region. In order to negotiate the agenda of the project and the possible areas of cooperation, together with other countries of the Black Sea region, Georgia took part in a meeting organised by EFCA in Vigo in January 2018. At the meeting it was decided that, under the project, EFCA would assist in the capacity enhancement of Georgian inspectors, who supervise commercial fishing in the Black Sea.

Under the above-mentioned project, on 11-12 April 2018, EFCA organised a Training of Trainers (ToT), which was held in the city of Constanta. Three employees of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia took part in the training.



On 23-27 April 2018, another meeting was held in the city of Vigo, under the coordination of EFCA, on carrying out supervision over the waters that are under the jurisdiction of Romania and Bulgaria. The representative of the Department for Environmental Assessment of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia participated in the meeting. The main objective of the above-mentioned activities was to enhance the capacities of the Black Sea region in the area of fishing, including the identification of illegal fishing.

Under the project, on 25-27 September 2018, a training was held in Batumi for the inspectors of the Black Sea Conventional Service of the Department of Environmental Supervision, who control commercial fishing immediately in the fishing process. The main objective of the training was to share European practice in the areas of control and inspection of fishing. The participants were also granted access to the online training platform of EFCA: www.training.efca.europa.eu.

Further steps:

- to continue cooperation with EFCA within the framework of the programme with a view to the approximation of the process of commercial fishing in the Black Sea to EU standards;
- to improve control over commercial fishing in the Black Sea and to refine law enforcement mechanisms in cooperation with EFCA.

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

EFSA is an agency of the EU that operates independently of EU legislative and executive institutions and provides a scientific basis for developing policies in the areas of food/feed safety, nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection. The mandate of EFSA also covers environmental risk assessment in terms of the impact on the food chain and animal and plant habitats. EFSA is based in Parma, Italy. EFSA is open for cooperation with third countries.

Georgia started active cooperation with EFSA in 2016, when the LEPL Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture of the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia was determined as a contact institution.

At the beginning of 2017, an experts' mission visited the LEPL Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture under the TAIEX programme. The purpose of the visit was to evaluate the institutional capacities of Georgia in the area of risk assessment and to share



experience. It was stated in the report about the visit that the structure of risk assessment of the LEPL Scientific-Research Center of Agriculture complies with EFSA standards. In 2017-2018, on the basis of close cooperation with EFSA, the personnel of the Risk Assessment Division of the Center took part in different trainings and online courses.

On 7-9 November 2018, an international seminar organised by EFSA on the topic of Food Safety Risk Assessment was held in Tbilisi. Georgian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Belarusian and Moldovan public servants participating in the system of risk analysis attended the seminar.

Further steps:

- to deepen cooperation with EFSA for the purpose of sharing methodology and obtaining knowledge in different areas of risk assessment, especially by elaborating joint projects/programmes;
- to cooperate with EFSA for the purpose of exchanging knowledge in the area of food safety and increasing risk assessment capacities, which guarantees the protection of the life and health of consumers.

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)

EU-OSHA is an agency of the EU that aims to make workplaces safer, healthier and more productive. EU-OSHA promotes a culture of risk prevention in order to improve working conditions. EU-OSHA is based in Bilbao, Spain. EU-OSHA is open for cooperation with third countries.

Georgia has been cooperating with EU-OSHA since 2014. In 2014, EU-OSHA launched a project, within the framework of which relations were established with EU neighbourhood countries and contact persons were determined. The programme also envisaged assistance to the above-mentioned countries by exchanging knowledge and practical experience. Under the project, the budget allocated for Georgia amounted to EUR 35,000.

In 2015, representatives of Georgia took part in the EU - Eastern Partnership Seminar, organised by EU-OSHA, the purpose of which was to share information and knowledge between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries on issues of safety in the working environment. After the seminar, information leaflets were prepared on issues of safety in the workplace.

EU-OSHA has the opportunity to share its experience in the area of occupational safety and health with an interested party, to provide assistance by means of awareness raising and capacity building, to facilitate the attraction of European partners for mutual cooperation and the organisation of expert and study visits financed with other mechanisms (TAIEX).

EU-OSHA is ready to host short-term study visits of representatives from Georgia. The cooperation with EU-OSHA will help Georgia in terms of making the workplace safer, healthier and more productive and ensuring risk prevention.

Further steps:

- to share the experience of EU-OSHA in terms of the separation of the rights and obligations of the Labour Inspection and other regulatory bodies;
- to upgrade the qualifications of labour inspectors in matters of occupational safety and to implement EU directives in practice in cooperation with EU-OSHA.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

ECDC is an agency of the EU that aims to strengthen mechanisms against infectious diseases. The core functions of ECDC cover a wide spectrum of activities: collecting information on epidemics, determining responsive actions, preparing scientific opinions, raising public awareness on health related issues. ECDC is located in Solna. In addition to EU Member States, ECDC cooperates with EFTA countries and also with third countries.

Georgia has been cooperating with ECDC since 2014. Within the framework of cooperation with ECDC, Georgia has participated in many conferences, seminars and meetings on issues of the prevention, control and treatment of communicable diseases.

ECDC is the scientific leader of the EU project ‘Further Development and Consolidation of the Mediterranean Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training – MediPIET’. The project is financed by the EU. In 2015-2017, Georgian epidemiologists and healthcare specialists participated in different trainings under the MediPIET programme. Training was completed by 31 Georgian specialists, which allowed them to deepen their knowledge, to improve their skills and to establish relations with their counterparts from Mediterranean countries. As a result, 9 experts became trainers of trainers in areas such as: preparedness for emergencies, preliminary identification of epidemics, risk management, health of refugees and migrants, and ethical issues in infectious disease outbreaks. Participants from Georgia presented 19 scientific works at



the annual scientific conference in 2015-2017. As our country did not have residents in the programme, the representatives of Georgia participated in the above-mentioned trainings only as external participants, who attended only specific modules according to the topics. Therefore, the extension of the programme is very important for Georgia in order to enable selected residents to undergo a complete training course.

Georgia is working to further develop and consolidate the Mediterranean and Black Sea region programme for intervention epidemiology training (MediPIET) (consolidation phase of 2018-2020).

Cooperation with ECDC will help Georgia to better analyse information on communicable diseases provided by EU Member States, and thus to plan the fight against communicable diseases.

Further steps:

- The preparation for cohort 3 of MediPIET is under way. It is planned to select two residents from Centre employees, who will be trained under the MediPIET programme.



Part 8. Effective Use of Opportunities within the Framework of the EU Eastern Partnership Initiative, Including the Implementation of the Results Envisaged by the ‘20 Deliverables for 2020’ Document

Since 2009, Georgia has been actively engaged in the eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy - the Eastern Partnership initiative, which incorporates EU institutions, EU Member States and six partner countries and, in addition to the development of bilateral relations between the EU and the partner countries, is aimed at the exchange of experience and best practice and the implementation of joint projects in areas of common interest. Participation in the initiative has significantly contributed to the process of the approximation of Georgia to the EU and to the development of cooperation with other partner countries in the region (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan) in different areas.

Currently, Georgia has put into effect almost all the measures envisaged in the initiative, including the Association Agreement, together with the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), visa liberalisation, membership of the Energy Community, increased sectoral cooperation and integration with the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), which has advanced cooperation between Georgia and the EU to a new, higher level and offered Georgia a prospect of comprehensive political association and economic integration with the EU.

Georgia was involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy/Eastern Partnership review processes (in 2011 and 2015) and presented its own vision/opinions regarding the development of a political framework. One of the basic principles for Georgia is the differentiated approach towards the partner countries, in addition to inclusiveness, which enables the countries to develop relations with the EU which are compatible with their ambitions.

Although it is a clear priority to deepen and further develop bilateral relations with the EU, Georgia is actively participating in events organised within the Eastern Partnership multilateral cooperation framework, such as: summits, formal ministerial meetings, Informal Partnership Dialogues, meetings of high-ranking officials, thematic platforms and panels, informal sectoral ministerial meetings, trainings and others. Georgia hosts a number of multilateral meetings within the Eastern Partnership framework, including Informal Partnership Dialogues (in 2013 and 2015), and the Civil Society Forum (6-7 December 2018). Georgia is also actively participating in the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), in which the representatives of local self-governments take part. Georgia is an active member of the



Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, which is the parliamentary dimension of the Eastern Partnership.

The most important innovation of the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit of 2017 was the opportunity to introduce individual cooperation/discussions with associated countries on the basis of the principle of differentiation. The first such meeting was held on 20 September 2018 in Brussels, which was organised by the European Commission, at the initiative of the European Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, and was dedicated to DCFTA related issues. Three main topics were discussed at the meeting, which had been raised by the associated partners themselves, namely: the implementation of the provisions of public procurement (Ukraine); the simplification of customs procedures and trade facilitation (Moldova); the opportunities offered by the DCFTA to small and medium-sized enterprises (including sanitary and phytosanitary measures) (Georgia).

Georgia was involved in the Eastern Partnership regional projects and flagship initiatives, which significantly contributed to the development of infrastructure in Georgia, the improvement of emergency management systems, the sharing of knowledge and experience in different areas, and the strengthening of connections between people.

In order to facilitate a further boost of multilateral cooperation and to achieve more tangible results, the EU has drawn up the '20 Deliverables for 2020' document, in the preparation of the final version of which Georgia was also involved. The document was officially adopted at the 2017 Eastern Partnership Summit. It is similar to an action plan, and incorporates specific results and goals to be jointly achieved by the partner countries and the EU before 2020. As the goals set by the document are in line with the priorities determined by the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, in order to ensure the effective monitoring of implementation, the goals determined by the '20 Deliverables for 2020' document were also included in the annual action plan for the implementation of the Agreement.

Georgia has made significant progress towards achieving the goals set forth in the '20 Deliverables for 2020' document, of which the following are noteworthy:

- The Government of Georgia actively cooperates with members of civil society in the European integration process. Georgia is the first country, among other countries that are parties to Association Agreements with the EU, which has actively engaged the non-governmental sector in the preparation and the monitoring of the implementation of an action plan for the implementation of a Framework Agreement. To promote close cooperation with the non-governmental sector, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Government of

Georgia and the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (which unites about 180 non-governmental organisations) on 13 November 2015. The Memorandum envisaged the holding of sectoral working meetings of the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and representatives of the executive authority in relation to certain issues of sectoral cooperation under the Association Agreement, as well as the holding of annual high-level joint conferences.

- Significant progress was achieved in terms of gender equality, namely on 5 April 2017, the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention). In order to harmonise national legislation and bring it into compliance with the Istanbul Convention, on 4 May 2017 changes were made to approximately 25 legislative acts. The legislative changes entered into force on 1 June 2017, and the Istanbul Convention entered into force on 1 September 2017. In addition, on 12 June 2017 the Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was established, which also performs the functions of a coordinating body determined by the Istanbul Convention.
- Georgia is actively carrying out strategic communication with society on issues of EU integration. The Government of Georgia has adopted and is successfully implementing the 'Government Communication Strategy on Georgia's Membership to the EU and NATO for 2017-2020'. The document determines the Government's strategic communication policy on issues of EU and NATO membership at both national and international levels.
- Significant reforms have been implemented in the areas of the enhancement of democratic institutions and good governance. In this regard, significant reforms implemented in the penitentiary system and the Georgian Public Administration Reform, which was supported by new legislation on public service, are noteworthy.
- Significant steps were taken in the area of economics, in terms of the stimulation of trade with the EU. From the signature of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, Georgia's exports to the EU market have increased by 15 %, and the EU has become a key trading partner of Georgia, whose share in the country's foreign trade amounts to 31 %. As a result of the reforms implemented by the Government of Georgia, Georgia has been included in the list of third countries from where honey, wool, Black Sea fish and sea-fishing products may be imported to the EU.
- Within the framework of the project 'Harmonisation of the Digital Markets in the Eastern Partnership' (HDM), which aims to facilitate the harmonisation of digital markets between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries, EU4Digital – EaPeReg was established, which is the Electronic Communications Regulators Network of



the partner countries, one of whose areas of operation is the harmonisation of roaming tariffs. At the first stage, this initiative aims at creating a common roaming space among Eastern Partnership countries, and at the second stage, it aims at creating a common roaming space between Eastern Partnership countries and EU Member States. For this purpose, the Roaming Expert Working Group (REWG) was created in 2016 within the framework of EaPeReg, which comprises relevant experts from EaPeReg member regulators. The REWG is working on the above issue with the funding and support of the European Commission.

- On 28 March 2017, the visa-free regime to the Schengen area entered into force for citizens of Georgia, which significantly facilitated mobility and the strengthening of contacts between people. In addition, Georgia is actively involved in different EU mobility programmes, especially including successfully participating in the EU framework programme Erasmus+, which helps students and scientific and administrative personnel of universities from Georgia to obtain education and upgrade qualifications at higher educational institutions in Europe. In terms of active participation in the programme, Georgia holds one of the leading positions and, according to funded activities, it is in the top ten among 131 partner countries. According to the data of 2017, 818 scholarships were granted to Georgia within the framework of the programme, which points to a high level of commitment and motivation among Georgian youth, and 515 students came to Georgia from other countries for studying purposes.
- On 4 September 2018, the Eastern Partnership European School was launched in Tbilisi. As a result of the competition, the European Commission selected for the 2018-2019 academic year 30 students out of 156 applicants from 6 Eastern Partnership countries: 4 students from Armenia, 2 students from Azerbaijan, 4 students from Belarus, 8 students from Georgia, 5 students from Moldova, and 7 students from Ukraine.
- Georgia joined the TEN-T, which was initiated within the Eastern Partnership framework and which aims at improving the coordination of the road, railway, inland water transport, airports, sea ports, inland ports and traffic management systems that will facilitate the development of high-speed routes for passenger transportation and cargo shipment all over Europe.
- On 7 July 2017, at the EU and Eastern Partnership Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting (JHA) held in Tallinn, during which issues of cooperation and reforms implemented in the areas of justice and home affairs were discussed, the Minister of Justice presented two initiatives on behalf of Georgia, namely the following:
 - to establish a regional judicial cooperation network on civil and entrepreneurial cases among Eastern Partnership countries, which aims to



respond to present-day challenges related to the global increase in the number of court proceedings on civil and entrepreneurial cases day by day. The network will ensure the availability of justice for all persons involved in such proceedings, as well as the proper use of international instruments of legal assistance, and it will facilitate mutual cooperation between courts through the national contact persons of the network, etc.;

- to organise an annual forum on law reforms among Eastern Partnership countries, which includes the establishment of a regional platform, through which experience related to law reforms will be exchanged. Eastern Partnership countries will be able to share their achievements and challenges in different areas and, at the same time, to host the regional forum annually, in turn. The said initiatives were positively evaluated by the EU and Eastern Partnership member states.
- One of the areas envisaged by the '20 Deliverables for 2020' document, agreed within the framework of the Eastern Partnership, includes the availability of public services within a single space. In this regard, in order to increase the availability of services and to create a comfortable environment for citizens, every day more than 20,000 customers are able to enjoy up to 450 public or private services provided at 22 branches of the Public Service Hall currently operating all over Georgia. In 2018, three new branches of the Public Service Hall were opened in Akhalkalaki, Senaki and Martvili. By the end of 2019, it is planned to build four new branches of the Public Service Hall in Gardabani, Bolnisi, Samtredia and Tskaltubo and to open Khoni Public Service Hall.
- It is notable that the number of public and private services provided to customers is increasing every year. In 2018, the following public and private services were introduced: 31 services of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia; the service of seven companies distributing energy resources (changing the registration of a consumer); in 2019, the process of integrating of various public and private services in the Public Service Hall will continue. The following activities are planned in the area of service development:
 - to introduce the services of the National Probation Agency, which will enable the beneficiaries to receive services in an integrated and comfortable environment, and in a timely manner;
 - to introduce the services of the Service Agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia;
 - to continue cooperation with the energy resources sector, which includes the introduction of more services offered by energy distribution companies;

- to deepen cooperation with insurance services providing private companies for the purpose of introducing their services. The insurance services provided at the Public Service Hall significantly facilitate the development of insurance culture in customers;
 - to introduce remote services, which will allow customers to receive certain services without leaving their houses.
- In order to introduce services adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities and to ensure equal access to public services, in 2018 the Public Service Hall implemented the project ‘Enhanced services for all’. Under the project, based on the analysis of international practice and the study of the needs of persons with disabilities, the Public Service Hall has developed guidelines and standards, which include directions concerning communication and conduct with the persons with disabilities. All front office employees of the Public Service Hall, in all 750 employees, were trained according to the thematic training module developed on the basis of the above-mentioned document.
 - Service Standards for Persons with Disabilities were put into effect at all branches of the Public Service Hall and the developed training module became part of the training system of new employees of the Public Service Hall, which ensures the sustainability of the project results. The introduction of the updated standard made the services of the Public Service Hall more accessible for and tailored to persons with disabilities. Under the project, 20 employees of Tbilisi Public Service Hall learned sign language, as a result of which up to 450 services offered by the Public Service Hall became more accessible for deaf persons and persons with hearing impairments. It is notable that after the implementation of the project, up to 250 customers were provided with the services of the Public Service Hall in sign language.
 - From February 2019, it became significantly easier for deaf persons, persons with hearing impairments and blind persons to use such important services as those related to the registration of a right of ownership or the registration of a business.
 - In addition to the Public Service Halls, at the local level in rural areas the LEPL Public Service Development Agency under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia is implementing the EU funded project ‘Introducing E-governance in Local Governments’, within whose framework the residents of rural areas can now use more than 200 public and private services at 61 Community Centres across Georgia without leaving their villages. It is planned to build and open ten more Community Centres (in 2019-2020).
 - From April 2014, the project ‘Voice of the Customer’ is being successfully implemented. Under the project, by filling in the ‘Voice of the Customer’



application form, customers of all branches of the Public Service Hall have the opportunity to give feedback to the Public Service Hall administration on any dissatisfaction, difficulty or hindrance in the provision of services, and by stating their opinion, to take part directly in the development of the process and quality of services, in the introduction of innovations and in the implementation of new projects. The customers of the Public Service Hall can fill in the 'Voice of the Customer' application form remotely, within 24 hours on any day of the week, with the help of the Public Service Hall Call Centre. In addition, the Public Service Hall provides feedback to the correspondence received through social media and official applications. It is notable that the number of applications submitted within the framework of the project is increasing every year.

- In 2018, the Public Service Hall plans to introduce a new and innovative platform for citizen engagement, based on the principles of accountability, openness and transparency, which includes engaging with the general public through three different modules (electronic public opinion survey, electronic voting system, electronic feedback system), in the process of introducing new services, the improvement of existing services, the establishment of new service delivery channels, and the improvement of the quality of services.
- A Customer Satisfaction Survey is conducted every year in order to identify the factors influencing customer satisfaction, to set strategic plans and to plan future activities, as well as to improve processes on the basis of customer engagement and feedback. From 2013 until now, the average customer satisfaction index is 87.2 %. It is notable that the survey results are improving every year.

The objective of Georgia is to use Eastern Partnership mechanisms and resources as much as possible, including to achieve the goals set in the '20 Deliverables for 2020' document, that will assist the country in the implementation of the Association Agreement and in the achievement of more tangible results, as well as in the strengthening of regional cooperation by means of implementing joint projects.

In addition, one of the main priorities of Georgia is to further strengthen cooperation within the Eastern Partnership framework, which should be carried out through the existing and new formats of cooperation and should support the country in the achievement of specific tangible results.

Part 9. Approximation of the Legislation of Georgia to the EU Acquis

The Association Agreement provides for the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the EU acquis in many areas. According to the Association Agreement the process of approximation will be gradual, dynamic and will be subject to monitoring.¹

The Annexes to the Association Agreement include lists of EU legal acts which are to be transposed into the legislation of Georgia, and respective deadline/deadline.

The Annexes to the Association Agreement, including the legal acts specified in the legislative approximation list agreed between the parties within the framework of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement, envisage approximation to approximately 600 EU legal acts. The deadline for the approximation to the legal acts listed in the Annexes to the Association Agreement is 2029, and the deadline for the approximation to the legal acts included in the legislative approximation list approved by the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Sub-Committee is 2027.²

According to the Agreement, Georgia has also undertaken the obligation of dynamic approximation of legislation. Dynamic approximation implies making amendments to the Annexes to the Association Agreement, upon the decision of the Association Council, in accordance with amendments made to the relevant parts of EU acquis and their transposition into the national legislation within the timeframes agreed between the EU and Georgia.

In some cases, the Annexes to the Association Agreement envisage approximation to certain provisions of a legal act and not the entire legal act. Such legal acts are often included in the Annexes, which are related to the titles of the Association Agreement on economic and sectoral cooperation.³

It should be noted that the obligation of dynamic approximation applies only to the legal acts specified in the Annexes to the Association Agreement and not generally to the changes made to the EU acquis.

¹ Association Agreement, Articles 417- 419.

² See the Annexes to the Association Agreement; and decision N1/2017 of 7 March 2017 of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Sub-Committee amending Annex XI-B of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part.

³ See Association Agreement, Annexes XXII-XXXIV.

As a result of the agreement between the parties and the amendments made to the Annexes in writing, the number and types of the expected acts may be changed taking into consideration future amendments to EU law and changes in the EU-Georgia relations.¹

Georgian government welcomes various initiatives of the Georgian Civil Society, aimed at supporting Georgia's European Integration Process including the initiative regarding the elaboration of the "Questioner for Georgia's Accession into the EU", which implies preparation of the compliance assessment of the national legislation with the EU Acquis, inter alia, identification of the differences. This initiative as well as other such initiatives will facilitate process of adoption of the necessary political decision for Georgia's full integration into the EU and accelerate approximation of the national legislation with the EU Acquis.

9.1. Current practice of legislative approximation

At this stage, the issue of approximation to the legal acts listed in the Association Agreement is included in the annual national action plans for the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda. In cooperation with appropriate state agencies, the General Directorate for European Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, as the structural unit coordinating the implementation of the Association Agreement, will incorporate into the annual action plan the activity/activities to be carried out for the purpose of approximation to the respective legal acts.

As stated above, the electronic monitoring system of implementation of the Association Agreement enables the grouping of activities incorporated into the national action plan according to their types, including according to activities related to legislative approximation.²

On 10 May 2018, the Government of Georgia adopted Ordinance No 211 on determining domestic procedures related to the implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia, of the one part, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part. According to the Ordinance, the domestic procedures related to the adoption of decision(s) and recommendation(s) by the institutions responsible for cooperation envisaged by the Association Agreement, including within the framework of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the EU acquis, in relation to the decisions on revising, changing, amending and/or updating the Annexes to the Association Agreement, are carried out on the basis of a respective decision of the Government of Georgia. The Ordinance

¹ Manual on Approximation of Georgian Legislation with European Union Law, p. 36.

² See the part of this document related to the Association Agreement.

determines in detail the domestic procedures necessary for making the above-mentioned decision by the Government of Georgia.¹

According to the amendments to the Law of Georgia on Normative Acts, approved by the Parliament of Georgia on 13 June 2018, it is mandatory to indicate in the explanatory note, which is attached to the draft law prepared for the purpose of approximation to the legal acts included in the Association Agreement, the general correspondence between the submitted draft law and EU law, including an appropriate explanation with regard to the compliance or contradiction in respect of the draft law and EU law. In addition, it is necessary to specify the respective article and/or part of the Association Agreement, which serves as the basis of the submitted legislative initiative, and the EU legal act (or its specific norm), the transposition of which is envisaged in that specific case. Moreover, the above amendments also provide for the obligation to submit the tables of correspondence with EU legal acts, which is an important and efficient tool for facilitating monitoring and evaluation of the ongoing approximation process.

Before the adoption of the above-mentioned amendments to the Law of Georgia on Normative Acts, the tables of correspondence with EU legal acts had been prepared only in fields related to the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area envisaged by the Association Agreement.

The Manual on Approximation of Georgian Legislation with European Union Law has been drawn up with the involvement of international experts, which aims at understanding the specifics of approximation to EU law. The Manual is intended for specialists in agencies whose activities are related to the fulfilment of the obligations undertaken under the Association Agreement. The Manual contains a basic outline of legal approximation, seen as a long-term and multi-stage process, and attempts to describe in detail the actions to be carried out at specific stages of the process.

As the Manual also contains a theoretical part and is intended for specialists who do not have a basic knowledge of EU law, in the beginning it explains the sources of EU law and their characteristics, including how they become part of the national law of the Member States. The Manual then reviews the contents of the Association Agreement and lists the approximation obligations envisaged by it, and also describes the institutions created under the Association Agreement that are related to legislative approximation, and summarizes the challenges existing in the process of approximation. Next, the rationale

¹ See: Ordinance No 211 of 10 May 2018 of the Government of Georgia on determining domestic procedures related to the implementation of the Association Agreement between Georgia, of the one part, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part.

for approximation is reviewed by examining the approximation process in its broad sense (implementation and enforcement) and its narrow sense (law drafting), which is followed by a description of the stages of the law-drafting process together with relevant recommendations for each stage, from identifying an EU legal act/acts, to which the national legislation must be approximated, to drawing up specific provisions in the national legislation and then analysing their compliance.

The Manual examines recommended and discouraged techniques of transposing EU legal acts into the national legislation, and practical recommendations for preparing the tables of correspondence and for searching for EU legal acts.

The Manual will be approved by the Government of Georgia in the near future and the respective state agencies will start actively using it in practice.

9.2. Measures planned to increase the efficiency of legislative approximation

A higher level integration with the EU than that envisaged by the Association Agreement requires a broader and more comprehensive approximation of the national legislation to EU law. This Roadmap incorporates certain activities beyond the obligations undertaken under the Association Agreement. However, it is only the beginning of the respective process. An appropriate mechanism will be created which will aim to permanently identify new legislative differences and introduce them into the legislation of Georgia.

General coordination of the activities related to legislative approximation will be carried out by an appropriate working group and working sub-group established within Georgia's EU Integration Commission.

As stated above, in certain cases the Annexes to the Association Agreement envisage the obligation of approximation to certain articles of an EU legal act and not to all of its articles. Therefore, at the first stage, sectoral agencies will comprehensively analyse the legal acts listed in the Annexes to the Association Agreement that fall within their competence, except for the mandatory provisions for approximation, in order to determine the appropriateness of approximation to other provisions of the legal act.

In order to take into consideration the experience of a successful example of the European Economic Area (EEA), at the first stage, the legal acts listed in the Annexes to Agreement on the European Economic Area and the Annexes to the Association Agreement will be analysed in order to identify common legal acts and to find differences.

On the basis of the primary analysis of the legal acts listed in the Agreement on the European Economic Area and its annexes, a Regulatory Impact Assessment will be carried out in order to determine the appropriateness of approximation to a legal act/acts that is/are considered as having a great impact on economic activities.



At the next stage, the entire EU acquis and the respective legislation of Georgia will be subject to a comparative analysis for the identification of legislative differences.

The results of identified legislative differences and, if necessary, the findings of the Regulatory Impact Assessment, will be submitted to Georgia's EU Integration Commission. Once Georgia's EU Integration Commission approves the issue of approximation to the respective EU legal act, it shall be submitted to the Government of Georgia for a final decision.

The issue of approximation to the EU legal act, approved by the Government of Georgia, will be incorporated into Georgia's European integration annual and mid-term action plans and in the process of preparing the respective legal act/acts.

Therefore, both the obligations undertaken under the Association Agreement and the obligations unilaterally undertaken by Georgia for the purpose of consistent approximation to EU law will be fulfilled.

In order to increase the predictability and transparency of the process of legislative approximation to EU law, activities related to legislative approximation will be separately listed in the annex to the mid-term European integration plan.

The measures beyond association will be incorporated into the mid-term European integration plan and their implementation will start from 2019.