

Unofficial translation



**Six-Month Progress Report of the 2020 National Action Plan for
Georgia's European Integration**

July

2020

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1. General Overview

This report presents information on the progress of the 2020 National Action Plan for Georgia's European Integration covering the period from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2020.¹

It is notable, that the plan elaborated in 2020 has a new title and, instead of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, it is named the **'National Action Plan for Georgia's European Integration'**, as it incorporate not only commitments undertaken under the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda, but also commitments under the Georgia's novel European Integration Roadmap (Roadmap2EU) and the Eastern Partnership '20 Deliverables for 2020' document. **As a result, the 2020 actin plan is much more ambitious and comprehensive, and it fully responds to the aspiration of the Government of Georgia to go beyond the Association Agreement and take steps towards more ambitious and deeper integration with the EU.**

The six-month report of the European Integration action plan includes **activities across all sectors including those related to legislative and institutional approximation with the EU acquis, sectoral integration, international cooperation, and the enhancement of human resources**, as well as unfulfilled activities from 2019 AP that are currently under implementation phase.

In view of the new reality emerged in at the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic, certain activities planned for the first half of 2020 were postponed or performed online. The hindrances were caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic both in Georgia and across the EU. Due to the new challenges, certain actions were postponed until the second half of 2020 or until 2021.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Association Agreement, significant progress was achieved in terms of approximation of national legislation to the EU acquis, in particular, during the reporting period, the Parliament of Georgia adopted **the Law of Georgia on Energy Efficiency (21.5.2020); the Law of Georgia on Energy Efficiency standards in Buildings (21.5.2020); the Forest Code of Georgia (22.5.2020)** as well as **the Law of Georgia on Investment Funds (14.7.2020)**. Amendments were introduced into the following lageslative acts: **Law of Georgia on Vocational Education (11.2.2020)**, **the Law of Georgia on Special Vocational Education and Training (17.3.2020)** and **the Law of Georgia on Education Quality Improvement (12.6.2020)**. Currently, a **draft Law of Georgia on Labour Inspection** and a **draft Law on Employment** are being reviewed by the Parliament of Georgia, and amendments to **the Organic Law of Georgia Labour Code of Georgia** and draft amendments to **the Tax Code of Georgia** have been initiated.

¹ Part of the information presented in the report goes beyond the reporting period.

Electronic software and a respective web portal (aa-monitoring.ge) for monitoring the implementation of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda are operating, and are being systematically improved both in terms of functions and content.

During the reporting period, meetings of **three sub-committees within the EU-Georgia Association Committee in Trade Configuration**; meetings of **three thematic groups of the Sub-committee on Economic and Sectoral Cooperation**, a meeting of **the Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security**, **the EU-Georgia Human Rights Dialogue** and the 9th meeting of **the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee** were held.

In the first half of 2020, Georgian representatives participated in different events (platforms and panel meetings, seminars, workshops, ministerial meetings) within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

The Government of Georgia actively cooperates with civil society representatives involved in the process of elaborating and monitoring the implementation of National Action Plans for the Implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the Association Agenda. Meetings between the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society and representatives of the GoG aimed at discussing EU Integration related ongoing sectoral reforms have been regularly taking place.

2. Political Dialogue and Reform, Cooperation in the Field of Foreign and Security Policy

2.1 Reform of the Judiciary

In order to improve the Norms of Judicial Ethics, during the reporting period, a working group comprising judges of courts of all three instances was established on the initiative of the High Council of Justice. With the support of donor organisations (the Council of Europe project, the EU project, USAID/PROLoG), three international experts were involved in the working process, who provided their recommendations to the members of the working group. Consequently, **on 24 January 2020, the draft Norms of Judicial Ethics were submitted to the second working group established for the purpose of implementing the 2017-2021 strategy for the judicial system**. Together with the members of the working group, an independent inspector, and representatives from international and local non-governmental organisations, participated in the process of reviewing the draft. **By a decision of 31 January 2020, the High Council of Justice approved the draft Norms of Judicial Ethics** and submitted it for final approval to the Conference of Judges of Georgia. Once the Conference of Judges of Georgia approves the draft Norms of Judicial Ethics, work on the preparation of comments about the Norms of Judicial Ethics will begin.

In accordance with the judicial mediation development programme, in order to establish mediation centres at common courts, the High Council of Justice has requested information from the courts on

the availability of appropriate infrastructure. On the basis of the obtained information, the LEPL Department of Common Courts examined on site the needs of the courts. Currently, the Department of Common Courts is preparing the project and cost estimation documents required for the provision of necessary infrastructure for the mediation centres.

In order to develop the strategy and action plan for the information and technological development of the judicial system, a working group was established with the support of donor organisations, which comprises court chairpersons, managers, heads of the panel secretariats, the Chairperson of the Court Management Department of the High Council of Justice, and appointed field experts. The appointed experts have prepared an information and technological development strategy and a three-year action plan. The prepared documents will be submitted to the working group for review and, in due time, they will be submitted to the High Council of Justice for approval.

In order to change the organisational work and case management procedures at common courts, a working group was established with the support of the Council of Europe project, which comprises members of the High Council of Justice, court managers and judicial officers. At the working group meetings, the participants discussed the challenges related to case management procedures. Currently, the working group is preparing a draft of the organisational work and case management procedures at common courts.

A training module on EU Law was developed within the framework of cooperation between the High School of Justice and the EU project. Georgian experts, as well as a judge of the Court of Justice of the European Union, were involved in the development of the module. On 21-23 February 2020, a training of trainers for Georgian expert judges on the basis of the developed module was conducted. Seven judges attended the training of trainers. Once the expert judges undergo appropriate training, the High School of Justice will provide permanent retraining of the judicial corps in EU Law.

The information technologies group of the High Council of Justice started working on the development of **a new platform of electronic case management software**, after which it will be possible to integrate the electronic case management software with the Prosecutor's Office and other state institutions.

With the support of USAID/PROLoG, in May 2020, **work on upgrading the website of the High Council of Justice started**. A tender was held and a winner was identified. Currently, the work on the structural analysis and design of the website is in progress. The website is scheduled to be launched in test mode in September this year.

In February 2020, an international expert **completed the second stage of research on effective case flow management in courts**. It is notable that as a result of the research, the need to increase the number of judges in the judicial system, in general, was identified, and a recommendation was given regarding the

optimal distribution of judges in courts. According to the research, some courts of first instance have half as many judges as are needed to deal with the load under the existing model. Moreover, it is notable that, based on the research, the expert has prepared an application form of the reasonable weights of cases, and conducted training on its use for the management department employees of the High Council of Justice.

In order to raise public awareness, two video clips were prepared as a result of a collaboration between the Office of the Independent Inspector and the Council of Europe, one of which is related to disciplinary proceedings, and the other contains important information on completing a form of complaint. It is planned to post the video clips on the updated official website of the Office of the Independent Inspector and on social networks, which will make it easier for any interested person to find information on disciplinary proceedings.

In order to raise the awareness of judges in the area of restorative justice, with the support of the EU project (EU4Justice), a training of trainers was conducted in February 2020 with a view to retraining four Georgian expert judges. At the next stage, it is planned that the retrained expert judges will conduct trainings for judges.

Within the framework of the programme of retraining judges of the High School of Justice and other court officers, one training was conducted on the topic ‘Case-law Decisions of the European Court of Human Rights’ (in the area of criminal law), which was attended by 8 judges.

With the support of the EU Court Support project (EU4Justice), a training of trainers (ToT) was held on the topic of **the imposition and justification of a measure of restraint**, which was attended by the judges of Tbilisi Court of Appeals, the City Court, and district courts. In the near future, these judges will conduct a pilot training for judges on the topic of measures of restraint.

Within the framework of the programme of retraining of judges of the High School of Justice and other court officers, one training was conducted on the topic ‘**Peculiarities of Domestic Violence Cases**’, which was attended by 36 judges.

With the support of the Council of Europe and in compliance with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention, the statistics sector started working on the development of software for the registration of comprehensive data on protective orders. In addition, for the purpose of the comprehensive registration of hate crimes, new forms of keeping statistics on criminal cases were developed in accordance with international standards. The methodology for the collection of statistical data is being updated with the support of CEPEJ, and research with the engagement of an expert will be available in September.

With the support of the Council of Europe, an online workshop was held for the judges and the Analytical Department staff of the Supreme Court in order to review the latest decisions of the

European Court of Human Rights. A lawyer from the European Court of Human Rights was invited to the online workshop.

2.2 Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; Strengthening Institutions

In order to raise public awareness of the issues of domestic violence and violence against women, in the first half of 2020, the employees of the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia carried out a number of activities.

In April 2020, in order to inform the population, based on the Ministry's policy of intolerance towards gender and domestic violence, the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia created informative short messages (SMS) which were sent to all mobile phone numbers in Georgia. The text contained information on alternative ways of contacting the police in a case of domestic violence. The message also included a link to the mobile application (112), which contains information on the public services available in the country (a hotline, shelters, and crisis centres) in the Georgian, English and Russian languages. It should be noted that informative messages were also sent in the languages of ethnic minorities (Armenian and Azerbaijani).

In April 2020, a video clip (with subtitles in the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages) was prepared by the organisation of the European Union, which aimed to highlight the readiness of the government to respond to cases of domestic violence, and to provide information on public services, as well as alternative ways of providing information, police protection mechanisms, and the procedure for downloading the 112 application; the video clip was broadcast as social advertising on 5 TV channels for 10 days.

Moreover, during the reporting period, the employees of the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia participated in approximately 20 TV programmes related to the following topics: femicide, violence against women, and electronic tags. Participation in the programme was of an informative nature and aimed at raising public awareness.

The Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia monitors the investigations of crimes committed by minors or against minors, by assessing the adequacy and quality of notifications and the response of police officers to the data entered into the electronic system. If a shortcoming is detected, an employee of the Department contacts the investigator of the case (and/or his/her superior), gives him/her appropriate instructions, and issues recommendations. If necessary, future activities for upgrading qualifications are also

planned. During the reporting period, more than 1000 cases of alleged crimes committed by minors or against minors were monitored using the above methodology.

Comprehensive statistical information was collected on minors involved in proceedings.

By Ordinance No 667 of 31 December 2019 of the Government of Georgia, **amendments were made** to Ordinance No 66 of 15 January 2014 of the Government of Georgia On Approval of the **Technical Regulations on Childcare Standards** and **updated Childcare Standards were approved**, based on which, from January to June 2020, the monitoring of services was carried out at four small family-type homes. Taking into consideration the best interests of the children, **8 children left an orphanage** in the first half of 2020; **at this stage, 55 children are residing at an orphanage.**

In 2020, **6 mobile groups** are operating (in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Rustavi) within the framework of the sub-programme of Providing Shelter for Homeless Children under the **Social Rehabilitation and Child Care State Programme**. As of June 2020, within the framework of the sub-programme of Providing Shelter for Homeless Children, contact was established with 102 homeless children, and 206 beneficiaries used the services, 138 of whom used a day care centre, and 68 of whom used a 24-hour shelter.

In the first half of 2020, **14 recommendations were prepared by the Public Defender on the violation of children's rights**. In January and February 2020, meetings on overcoming violence against children were held in 12 schools in the regions, including in villages near the border (Nikozi, etc.). The chapter on the children's rights of the annual parliamentary report of the Public Defender, and a report on the implementation of the recommendations concerning the situation in terms of violence against pupils at general education institutions, have been prepared. Three video clips were prepared on violence against children, and the life of children in villages adjacent to the demarcation line.

During the reporting period, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Public Defender's Office prepared **a special report on the results of monitoring the legal status of children in pre-school education institutions**; UNICEF also financed the project 'Monitoring of Child Sexual Abuse'; and thematic monitoring of the exercise of the right to education was carried out in a juvenile penitentiary institution.

The Public Defender's Office has prepared **11 recommendations and 1 general proposal on the issues of equality of various vulnerable groups**.

During the reporting period, in order to carry out the functions of the National Preventive Mechanism in prison facilities and other places of restriction of liberty, a Special Preventive Group of the Public Defender's Office updated the working strategy by adapting the working methodology to existing

challenges. The procedures for carrying out safe monitoring visits were established in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and appropriate instructions were given to the members. In pandemic conditions, special visits were paid to various institutions, such as No 17, No 5, No 8 (Gldani) penitentiary institutions, and No 8 penitentiary institution located in Ksani township of Mtskheta Municipality. Members of the Special Preventive Group attended the process of the transfer of prisoners from No 9 facility to No 12 facility; two special monitoring visits were paid to the Center for Mental Health and Prevention of Addiction and to the Temporary Accommodation Centre of the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia; the special quarantine areas set up for the purpose of prevention of the spread of COVID-19 were also monitored.

During the reporting period, **777 calls** were received by **the hotline on protection against violence** (116 006) operating within the framework of the state fund, out of which 164 calls were made by males and 613 calls were made by females.

In 2020, **200 persons used** victims of violence service institutions, in particular **temporary accommodation in shelters**. Other services available in shelters were used as follows: psychosocial assistance services - by 175 persons, medical care services - by 95 persons, and legal aid services - by 97 persons.

Crisis centre services were used in all by 143 persons, psychological assistance services - by 137 persons, legal aid services by 110 persons, assistance in the solution of social problems was provided to 43 persons, and medical assistance - to 12 persons. A 24-hour accommodation service for possible victims in Tbilisi was used by 16 possible victims and minor dependants.

A draft interim progress report of the 2019-2020 Action Plan on the Fight against Torture (2019) has been prepared.

Within the framework of a working group, a draft concept of release on parole has been developed. The final version of the document has been prepared taking into consideration the notes and comments of the working group. The preparation of the legislative package will be based on the document, if necessary. In addition, the members of the Council of Release on Parole will be retrained. It is notable that the retraining process was hindered by the COVID-19 situation.

The Spousal/Partner Assault Perpetrator Risk Assessment (SPAPRA or SARA) instrument was piloted from December 2019 to 1 April 2020 at No 5, No 8, No 15, No 16 and No 17 penitentiary institutions of different types (women's, semi-open, closed, and low-risk penitentiary institutions). With the assistance and direct involvement of the experts of the EU funded Penitentiary and Probation Support Project, the instrument was revised once again. Representatives from the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, the Human Rights Protection and Investigation Quality Monitoring

Department of the Ministry of Internal affairs of Georgia, the Special Penitentiary Service, and the National Probation Agency, prepared the SPAPRA instrument guideline. During the process of piloting, 5 specialists (3 psychologists and 2 social workers) interviewed 40 convicted persons and their partners; family visits were paid where necessary and as far as possible; specialists completed feedback questionnaires, which allowed the supervisor to respond to the needs identified at that stage; individual supervision over the process of the evaluation of convicted persons and planned interventions was carried out. Namely, the following was examined: the judgments of each beneficiary, the cases of violation of the conditions of non-custodial sentences/restraining orders/protective orders, the evaluation of the risk of harm and the probability of a repeated crime available in the electronic database, evaluation according to the SPAPRA questionnaires, and difficulties identified by the specialists in the process of working on the SPAPRA questionnaires. During the evaluation process, the information was shared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia on restraining orders and protocols issued against the persons to be evaluated. As a result of piloting, the evaluation form was changed with the engagement of the EU project and its experts. It is planned to draw up instructions and to retrain the staff in order to introduce the evaluation into the penitentiary and probation systems.

Based on an inquiry with specialists and convicted persons within the penitentiary and probation systems, a joint rehabilitation programme, a partner abusers' behaviour correction programme '**A Training Course Directed at Changing Violent Behaviour and Conduct**' was prepared in both entities; the partner abusers' behaviour correction programme '**A Training Course Directed at Changing Violent Behaviour and Conduct**' was piloted, and a training of trainers was conducted in the penitentiary and probation systems. The facilitators and most of the probation officers of the National Agency for Crime Prevention, Execution of Non-custodial Sentences and Probation were retrained according to the rehabilitation programme on behaviour correction.

On 12 March 2020, the Minister of Justice of Georgia approved Order No 502 'On Approval of the Procedures for the Risk and Needs Assessment for Resocialisation and Rehabilitation of Adult Convicted Persons and Former Prisoners, and for the Preparation, Implementation and Monitoring of an Individual Plan' (Case Management Procedures). According to the order, a database of the electronic evaluation system and a user-friendly environment have been created at the Probation Agency. For the effective implementation of the electronic system of the risk and needs questionnaire, the database was piloted in all areas of activity where the services of a probation officer, a social worker, and a psychologist are available. The work is actively going on for the implementation of a new minors' risk and needs instrument.

As from 1 January 2020, the Law of Georgia on Crime Prevention, Procedure for the Execution of Non-custodial Sentences and Probation has been amended, also from 1 January the updated Statute of the Agency entered into force (Order No 485), according to which structural changes and reorganisation

were carried out that will contribute to the popularisation and effective execution of non-custodial sentences. The Organisational Support Department was established, which will carry out electronic monitoring in the process of carrying out sentences of 'house arrest' and 'community service', finding jobs, and organising the coordinated work of bureaus in order to ensure the effective execution of said sentences. As a result of legislative and structural changes, it became possible to widely use a non-custodial sentence 'house arrest', for which the Agency gradually purchased the necessary equipment and provided server support.

A combined concept of incentives for convicted persons and the elimination of violence was developed, which includes European and American models of incentives as an alternative, as well as a combined version that allows the simultaneous implementation of the best practices of both models.

Based on international standards (the European Code of Ethics for Prison Staff (Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)5, the European Prison Rules), **a draft of the new Code of Professional Ethics for Special Penitentiary Service Staff** was prepared, for the approval of which a draft order of the Minister of Justice was drawn up. From September to the end of November 2019, all security and legal regime employees of No 6 penitentiary institution (114 employees) were retrained under the module 'Social Skills and Ethics Standards'. In addition, based on gained experience, the programme was adjusted and an adapted module was prepared for employees of all institutions, the implementation of which was delayed due to the situation caused by COVID-19 (the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, the LEPL Training Center of Justice of Georgia, the Special Penitentiary Service).

Based on the evaluation instruments existing in the penitentiary and probation systems, joint rehabilitation programmes have been developed for both entities according to identified needs: 'Group Motivation Programme for Women – Kalga' and 'Positive Thinking Skills Intervention Program (TSP)'.

It is planned **to complete and implement 3 joint rehabilitation programmes in the penitentiary and probation systems:**

1. Spouse/Partner Abusers' Behaviour Correction Programme (PRIA) – work on the programme has been completed;
2. Drug Addicts' Rehabilitation Programme;
3. Preparation for Release.

In the context of the reporting period it is notable that, in June 2020, in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, 83 employees (doctors, nurses) of the Medical Department of the Special Penitentiary Service, who work at medical units and medical divisions of the penitentiary institutions, were retrained by specialists of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia in fast/simple and PCR testing for COVID-19 and, as from 10 June 2020, they have been testing for

COVID-19 accused/convicted persons placed at the penitentiary institutions, and the staff of the penitentiary system.

The Special Penitentiary Service and the Training Center of Justice of Georgia are working to determine the relevant specific training needs of the medical personnel of the penitentiary system. After the development of training programmes tailored to needs, the medical personnel will be continuously retrained. In order to raise awareness of mental health, within the framework of the project of the Council of Europe 'Human Rights and Healthcare in Prisons and Other Closed Institutions in Georgia', the training programme 'Mental Health Basics for Nurses' was developed, 6 trainers were trained, and 30 nurses in the penitentiary system were retrained under the said training programme. The process of training and retraining of medical personnel was temporarily suspended at first due to the reorganisation of the Medical Department, and then the COVID-19 pandemic.

It should be additionally noted that a framework document on crisis management has been prepared with the support of the Council of Europe. A three-stage training of trainers on 'Crisis Management in the Penitentiary System' was held with the support of the Council of Europe, within the scope of which 40 employees of the system were retrained. To further enhance the effective management of the mental health problems of accused/convicted persons, in November 2019, 3 mobile groups comprising civil sector specialists started working in a pilot mode in No 8 penitentiary institution. Considering the model existing in the civil sector, each mobile group comprised a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and a nurse. Due to the preventive measures taken against the possible spread of COVID-19 in the Special Penitentiary Service, during the reporting period the operation of the mobile groups was temporarily suspended and will be resumed in the near future.

In 2020, **the cases of diversion/diversion and mediation programme were continuously monitored** by the LEPL National Agency for Crime Prevention, Execution of Non-custodial Sentences and Probation. If shortcomings were detected, a responsible office/body took the relevant recommendations into consideration.

On 1 January 2020, the Minors' Referral Centre started operating within the LEPL National Agency for Crime Prevention, Execution of Non-custodial Sentences and Probation for minors in conflict with the law and who have not attained the age of criminal liability. From January to June 2020 inclusive, 18 cases (7 girls and 11 boys) were referred to the Minors' Referral Centre. The employees of the Centre evaluated 9 minors at the minors' referral institution (LEPL Samtredia No 15 Public School), and the groups of specialists revised the decisions made on their referral to the institution. All the necessary working documents were prepared at the Centre and included in the proceedings. 15 rehabilitation programmes were developed, in which minors and their family members are engaged.

The restorative justice programme 'Mediation in Criminal Cases', which was approved in 2018, is being carried out in a pilot mode at the LEPL National Agency for Crime Prevention, Execution of Non-custodial Sentences and Probation. During the reporting period, 6 applications for mediation were submitted to the Agency. In addition, the activities focused on the successful implementation of the pilot programmes were suspended due to the risks of spread of COVID-19.

2.3 Civil Service Reform and the Fight against Corruption

During the reporting period, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UK aid of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Government of Sweden, the Civil Service Bureau is implementing in 2019 and 2020 a project named '**Promoting the Introduction of New Ways of Governance in the Implementation of Civil Service Reform**'. Within the framework of the project, the Bureau has planned and conducted a number of research projects aimed at developing the professional skills of public officers, promoting the use of various schemes and methods, and examining best practice in order to determine future needs for skills and competences.

Within the framework of the project, research was carried out on the issues of mentoring and coaching in the civil service. In addition, a mentoring programme for new employees was developed in two pilot ministries (the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development), and a respective action plan was prepared on the basis of an evaluation of the employees' and the organisation's readiness for the implementation of the said instrument.

In addition, research was prepared regarding the motivation schemes in the civil service. The research analysed the motivation systems available in the Georgian civil service, the challenges related to their use in practice, and ways of overcoming difficulties.

In addition to the above, in order to conduct research on future skills and labour force planning in the civil service, the Civil Service Bureau held a workshop and conducted research on the issue with the participation of national and international experts, and representatives from public institutions. Based on the results, guidelines were prepared on future professions and labour force planning in the Georgian civil service.

For the purpose of the effective management and development of organisational culture in the civil service, the Bureau conducts **a series of leadership and management trainings** for I and II rank professional public officers working at governmental organisations. In respect thereof, certified trainers have prepared a training programme and have conducted 10 trainings so far. As a result, at this stage, 135 professional public officers have been retrained.

A concept of an e-learning platform for ethics in the civil service has been developed, which aims at raising awareness of ethics and good faith in the civil service. Within the scope of the course, public officers will be provided with information on the concepts envisaged by the Ordinance of the Government of Georgia ‘On Determining General Rules of Ethics and Conduct at Public Institutions’, and on their application in practice, without leaving their workplace and work environment which, in the long run, aims to avoid possible cases of professional misconduct, conflicts of interests, and the violation of ethical norms and general rules of conduct. On the basis of the concept, a company selected through a tender announced by the Programme of Law of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) provided software support for the electronic course and created a web portal (www.ethics.gov.ge). At this stage, work on the design of the e-learning course has been completed, and in addition, in order to develop the content, appropriate text materials have been prepared for posting on the e-learning resource. Moreover, the e-course on ethics includes videos and comics along with a narrative, for the purpose of the better formulation of the various issues.

All ministries within the scope of application of the Law of Georgia on Public Service have submitted to the Civil Service Bureau their 2020 professional development plans. Based on the professional development plans, basic and supplementary programmes were planned for 1778 public officers, of whom a basic programme (‘Personal and Professional Competences Development Course’ and ‘Managerial Skills of a Public Officer’) was planned for 227 public officers, and a supplementary programme was planned for 1551 public officers. In most cases, the form of teaching is training.

Furthermore, in cooperation with the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, and with the support of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Civil Service Bureau has performed **a functional and institutional analysis of local self-government bodies**. Namely, as a result of interviews conducted with the following six pilot municipalities: Senaki, Kutaisi, Kazbegi, Rustavi, Gurjaani and Dedoplistskaro, and an examination of the organisational structure of local self-government bodies, as well as on the basis of an analysis of the information provided by them, initial reports on functional analysis of the municipality bodies were drawn up. The reports were gradually submitted to the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia.

The total number of asset declarations to be examined during 2020 is 336, which is distributed by months, according to an appropriate schedule, and is carried out by 7 employees of the Asset Declaration Monitoring Department.

Currently, **the asset declarations of 122 officials are being monitored**, in relation to 55 of which administrative proceedings have been completed and appropriate decisions have been made. Moreover, in accordance with Article 112(2) of Ordinance No 181 of 23 March 2020 of the Government of

Georgia ‘On the Approval of Measures to be Implemented in Connection with the Prevention of the Spread of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Georgia’, the timeframes established by Article 181(8) of the Law of Georgia on Conflict of Interest and Corruption in Public Institutions and Articles 17 and 18 of the Instructions approved by Ordinance No 81 of 14 February 2017 of the Government of Georgia ‘On Approval of the Instructions for Monitoring Official’s Asset Declarations to be Examined’ were not taken into consideration in the process of monitoring the asset declarations of 74 officials.

In the first half of 2020, two training activities were carried out on the topic of the efficient investigation of corruption cases. A total of 23 prosecutors and investigators of the Prosecutor's Office were retrained within the framework of the training activities.

2.4 Cooperation in the Field of Foreign and Security Policy

During the first six months of 2020, regular consultations were held with the EU Delegation to Georgia, the Office of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM), the European External Action Service, and other partners, regarding the implementation of the reconciliation and engagement policy and, in the first place, the implementation of the peace initiative ‘**A Step to a Better Future**’.

On 12-13 February 2020, the 9th meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee was held in Strasbourg, during which, among other issues, challenges existing in the occupied territories and the peace-based policy of Georgia were discussed.

Due to general restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, two rounds of Working Group II dealing with humanitarian issues on the Geneva International Discussions, scheduled for the reporting period, have been postponed.

In the beginning of 2020, the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality held bilateral meetings with all three co-chairs of the Discussions: Toivo Klaar (EU), Cihan Sultanoğlu (UN) and Rudolf Michalka (OSCE). Although the rounds were postponed, the Office of the Minister had regular remote communication with the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, during which the issues on the agenda of Working Group II were discussed, in particular, the legal and humanitarian conditions of the population living in the occupied territories, discrimination on ethnic grounds, the facts of installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers across the occupation line, the restriction of the right to movement and to education in a native language, and illegal detentions and gross violations of other fundamental rights. Furthermore, attention was paid to the right of the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

Special emphasis was placed on the severe humanitarian crisis created on the ground as a result of the prolonged closure of so-called checkpoints in the direction of Akhlagori, and the restrictions imposed by the occupation regime on the access of the local population to free health care services in the territory controlled by Georgia, including emergency medical aid, which has already led to the death of 14 people. Georgia has constantly emphasised the necessity of free movement in the direction of both Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region.

The co-chairs were regularly provided with information on the measures taken by the Georgian government to fight against COVID-19 in the region of Abkhazia.

Together with the implementation of the peace initiative 'A Step to a Better Future', the grant programme named '**Produce for Better Future**' was also continued, which was launched in 2019 in order to facilitate trade and economic activities across the demarcation line, and to support individual and joint production and partnership projects among the population living on both sides of the demarcation line. In light of the large number of business applications received from the occupied regions of Georgia as a result of the first competition, the interagency commission has additionally reviewed further funding projects with a high evaluation received as a result of the competition. Up to 20 winning projects are currently being identified.

With the support of the USAID, a technical support programme of the second financial instrument '**Peace Fund for a Better Future**', created within the framework of the peace initiative, was launched and carried out during the reporting period, the main purpose of which is to ensure the efficient operation of the fund by developing strong organisational and operational systems.

Despite unprecedented restrictions imposed on free movement, interest in the educational component of the peace initiative is still high. In February 2020, admission was announced to the post-secondary education preparation programme for young people living in the occupied regions, which was piloted in 2019, and under which entrants living in the occupied regions are admitted to higher education institutions without entrance examinations, only on the basis of internal testing, and are awarded with a monthly scholarship of GEL 150, and are provided with free accommodation in a dormitory. 180 students, more than last year, were registered for the programme this year. The implementation of the programme was delayed due to COVID-19, however, in order to ensure access to quality education, a decision was made to enrol all registered young persons to higher education institutions in Georgia without entrance exams.

It is an important objective for the Government of Georgia that the benefits of the process of Georgia's European integration become equally accessible to the populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. In this regard, within the framework of the peace initiative, it was important to

simplify the procedures for obtaining a passport of a citizen of Georgia by persons living in the occupied territories. As a result, a passport of a citizen of Georgia is available to the populations of the occupied territories through a simplified procedure, free of charge, within a period of one month. It is also possible to go through a more expedited procedure.

During the reporting period, active work was carried out with the European Commission and EU Member States in order to ensure the unhindered operation of the visa-free regime. Consultations were continued with representatives from both the executive and the legislative bodies for the purpose of planning/implementing appropriate measures to ensure compliance with the requirements of the visa-free regime.

Consultations were held with the EU and its Member States at various levels in relation to the activation of the role of the EU in the process of the **regulation of the Russia-Georgia conflict and the enhancement of the non-recognition policy** and, in this regard, the determination of outcome-oriented measures.

Intensive work was carried out with both partner states and international organisations in order to **maintain the issue of the Russia-Georgia conflict high on the international agenda**. Severe security and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories and the necessity for a peaceful resolution of the conflict were regularly emphasized during various visits, meetings, international forums and public speeches.

The Deputy Minister Lasha Darsalia paid visits to Brussels, EU institutions, and European capitals (Paris, London), with the main purpose of activating the issue of the Russia-Georgia conflict on the agenda of the EU and European states, and deepening the engagement of the international community in order to achieve a comprehensive resolution to the conflict. Conflict-related issues were also discussed at a meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee.

Georgia continued close cooperation with a number of partner countries, at the level of both executive and legislative authorities, and with international organisations, **in order to support 'the Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List' and to impose restrictive measures on the persons on the list**.

Special efforts were made for the purpose of the further consideration of issues related to the Russia-Georgia conflict on the agenda of international organisations (**UN, OSCE, Council of Europe**). As a result, the grave situation in terms of security and human rights in the occupied territories of Georgia, and the provocative actions of Russia against Georgia, were discussed several times in international formats, including: the 43rd session of the High-Level Segment of the UN Human Rights Council (25 February), the UN Human Rights Council meetings (24 February-13 March, and 15-22 June), the UN Security Council Open Debate (13 February, 6 March, 27 April, 23 June), a high-level video conference

held under the auspices of the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council by the Republic of Estonia (8 May), the debates on the 63rd issue on the agenda of the UN General Assembly (20 February), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (27-28 January), the meeting of Committee of Ministers at Deputy Level of the Council of Europe (22 April, 10 June), the meetings of the OSCE Permanent Council (30 January, 23 April, 28 May), the Winter Meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (21-22 February), the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) (23-25 June), as well as the NATO-Georgia Commission Meeting (23 January), the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee (12 February), and various conferences, round table events, etc.

Several international documents were prepared on the issue of the Russia-Georgia conflict, among which the following are especially noteworthy: the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution on Cooperation with Georgia (22 June), the Consolidated Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe ‘Conflict in Georgia’ (22 April 2020), the Joint Statement of the OSCE Group of Friends of Georgia on so-called ‘presidential elections’ in Abkhazia (22 March 2020), a Joint Statement of the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission Working Group on People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges (24 January 2020), the 2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices of the US Department of State (11 March 2020).

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia prepared and distributed **the 2019 Compilation Report on human rights violations in the Russia-occupied territories of Georgia** to international organisations as an official document.

During the reporting period, the international response is noteworthy on the following issues: the so-called ‘parliamentary elections’ in the occupied region of Abkhazia held on 22 March, the so-called ‘borderisation’ process near the village Takhtisdziri, the response to the intensified provocative actions of Russia’s occupation regimes in the conditions of COVID-19, which were severely criticised by the international community, including the European Union.

Georgia actively cooperated with the **EU Monitoring Mission to prevent conflict escalation at the occupation line and to deal with the provocative actions of Russia**. At all possible levels of the meetings with representatives from the EU and its Member States, whether in bilateral or multilateral formats, Georgia constantly emphasised the role and importance of the EU Monitoring Mission, and the necessity of the further enhancement of the Mission and the extension of its mandate. As for now, the mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission has been extended to December 2020.

Despite the efforts of Georgia and the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, **the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM)** meetings were not held during the reporting period. The IPRM meetings have not been held since June 2018 in Gali and since August 2019 in Ergneti. **The Russian Federation and the occupation regimes disrupted the IPRM meetings for fictitious reasons:** in

the case of the region of Abkhazia, the suspension of the format was related to 'the Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List', and in the case of the Tskhinvali region, the installation of a standard police post near Chorchana village in the Khashuri Municipality.

The 'hotline' mechanism operating with the intermediation of the EUMM **was actively used, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.** Despite the growing dynamics of the attempts of the occupation regimes to politicise the hotline mechanism, as a result of the constructive approaches of Georgia, the mechanism remains an effective instrument for communication across the occupation line, the importance of which has increased in the conditions of the suspension of the IPRM and the postponement of the Geneva International Discussions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the purpose of identifying/defusing in the shortest possible time incidents taking place across the occupation line, the hotline was activated for 1443 times during the reporting period: 952 of which were related to the occupied Tskhinvali region, and 491 to the occupied region of Abkhazia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia successfully continued work to raise the issue of the protection of the rights of the IDP population of Georgia before various international organisations, including the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and others. **Active work, a campaign, was carried out for the purpose of hearing the 'Resolution on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia' at the UN General Assembly** and strengthening its support.

Due to the spread of COVID-19 in the world, the Co-Chairs from the EU, the UN and the OSCE decided to postpone the 51st round of the Geneva International Discussions, which was planned for 31 March-1 April 2020. The date of the round is determined by the co-chairing international organisations, on the basis of the mandate and practice of the Geneva International Discussions. Despite the above, **active work was carried out with the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions and with the United States of America, as a participant in the Discussions** (the Co-Chairs visited Georgia in February and March, after which online meetings were held), in order to reach progress in terms of the non-use of force, the establishment of international security mechanisms on the ground, and the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees, as well as to eliminate illegal activities in the occupied regions, and to support the improvement of the extremely difficult conditions of the local population. In the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain measures were taken in terms of humanitarian assistance, with the coordination and direct involvement of international organisations.

Special emphasis was also placed on Russia's destructive actions, which prevented **the establishment of international security mechanisms in the occupied regions of Georgia as determined by the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008.**

The international community was actively calling upon the Russian Federation to allow the EUMM to enter the occupied territories of Georgia, and to allow the monitors to exercise the mission mandate without any restriction throughout the territory of Georgia. The international community consistently emphasised the necessity of the access of international human rights organisations to the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

The issue was also reflected in international documents, among which the following are noteworthy: the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution on Cooperation with Georgia, the Consolidated Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe 'Conflict in Georgia', and the 2019 Country Report on Human Rights Practices (11 March 2020) of the US Department of State.

Participation in EU missions and operations within the framework of the **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** is on-going. In March 2020, the seventh rotation of the platoon of the defence forces (35 military servants) was conducted in the **European Union Training Mission in the Republic of Central Africa (EUTM RCA)**.

Within the scope of the measures taken against COVID-19, **the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali)** was temporarily transferred into **the limited action phase**, which involves the termination of all external activities (trainings, exercises, meetings). Therefore, according to the order issued by the mission leadership (FRAGO_M4_2020_066 PLAN HIBERNATION 04APR20), only the minimum contingent required to be present in the area of operations remained in the mission.

Based on the specifics of the work, the position held by the representative of the Georgian defence forces in the mission (the Mission Liaison Officer with International and Non-Governmental Organisations) was included in the list of temporarily redundant positions and, therefore, by an order of the Minister of Defence of Georgia, the Georgian officer's secondment to the Republic of Mali was suspended on 17 April 2020, and the officer was deployed in Georgia on 24 April. In parallel to lifting the limitations by the mission leadership, the Georgian defence forces will resume participation in the Republic of Mali with the same contribution under the renewed (5th) mandate of the European Union Training Mission (EUTM Mali) until the expiry of the mandate (18 May 2024).

The National Security Council started updating national strategic documents, such as **the Document of National Security Concept of Georgia and the Threat Assessment Document**, which determine the framework for the National Defence Strategy and represent a 10-year concept document for planning national defence.

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Defence started the preparation of **the Strategic Defence Review Document (SDR 2021-2025)**, which is a medium-term planning document of the Ministry of

Defence prepared at the agency-level, and which complies with the National Defence Strategy. The purpose of the SDR 2021-2025 is to determine the optimal structure of the Defence Forces for 2025. The preparation of the document will be completed in the 3rd quarter of 2020.

The Office of the Prosecutor of The Hague Court, in the context of the investigation into alleged crimes committed during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, implemented appropriate domestic procedures to fulfil the requests of the Court and to efficiently pursue the investigation. Meetings on issues important for cooperation and on the signing of international agreements are regularly held with representatives of the International Criminal Court.

The State Commission for Implementing United Nations Security Council Resolutions filed 9 motions with the Administrative Cases Panel of the Tbilisi City Court requesting seizure or removal of the seizure of the property of appropriate, authorised natural and/or legal persons, or natural and/or legal persons on the list, by the Sanctions Committees established on the basis of the resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. The Administrative Cases Panel of the Tbilisi City Court granted all the motions and issued 9 orders, under which the property of 4 natural persons and 5 legal persons was seized, and seizure orders were removed from the property of 3 natural persons and 15 legal persons.

During the reporting period, consultations were held on legislative amendments required for accession to 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.

Georgia has recognised the accession of 10 states (the Republic of Albania, the Principality of Andorra, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of Uzbekistan) to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

2.5 Cooperation with Specialised EU Agencies

During the first half of 2020, the following activities are noteworthy in terms of the development of cooperation with specialised EU agencies:

- an improved draft agreement will be signed as soon as the internal procedures of the EU are completed; the following 5 departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia are involved in **Frontex** activities: the Border Police, the Patrol Police Department, the Information-Analytical Department, the Migration Department, and the MIA Academy;

- **CEPOL** has added a new component to its 2020 exchange programme ‘the CEPOL-EJTN Joint Exchange Programme’.

3. Freedom, Security and Justice

During the reporting period, **80 applications** of citizens were submitted to the State Inspector’s Service. In all **49 inspections** were carried out. In addition, the number of consultations provided to public and private institutions was 952, and in addition, the State Inspector's Service conducted a legal review of 20 draft subordinate acts submitted by agencies. Six trainings were conducted on the topic ‘Personal Data Protection’, which were attended in all by 128 participants.

The State Inspector's Service has prepared **the Code of Ethics for the Employees of the Investigation Department** of the State Inspector's Service, which determines the standards of conduct of the employees and the basic principles of their activities, such as lawfulness, protection and respect for human rights and freedoms, political neutrality, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, professionalism, protection of secrets and confidentiality, and protection of personal data. The Code also establishes the standards of relations with colleagues, the participants of criminal proceedings, and the public. It is planned to revise and update the Code of Ethics by the end of 2020, as needed.

In order to improve the quality of investigation, to introduce effective investigation standards, to ensure that an investigation complies with the standards of protection of human rights and freedoms, and to implement the uniform policy, the State Inspector's Service **has prepared the Investigation Methodology Guide** with the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Guide is intended for investigators of the State Inspector's Service.

In order to raise public awareness and credibility, and to establish effective communication, **a Communication Strategy of the State Inspector's Service** was prepared last year in cooperation with the Council of Europe.

The legislative package regulating the legal circulation of melee weapons has been initiated at the legislative body. Currently, the legislative package has been reviewed at the first hearing. The legislative review procedures were temporarily suspended due to the state of emergency declared in the country. The parliamentary reviews necessary for adopting the legislative package will continue at the autumn session.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has prepared **a package of legislative amendments which regulates the procedure for collecting DNA codes, their storage periods, and the grounds and conditions for requesting DNA code data**. The legislative package is at the stage of agreement with other bodies. Upon its completion, the amendments will be submitted to the Parliament of Georgia.

During the reporting period, **a draft of a new Integrated State Border Management Strategy** was developed, which will be submitted this year to the Government of Georgia for approval.

In addition, a risk analysis methodology was developed during the reporting period that needs approval. According to the draft methodology, risk analysis is being carried out at the Border Police, and 18 analytical products have been prepared.

In addition, a training programme for analysts was developed at the Border Police, on the basis of which Module I of Risk Analysis Training was conducted (21 employees were retrained).

The cooperation with Frontex has been deepened. An improved draft agreement will be signed as soon as the internal procedures of the EU are completed. The following 5 departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia are involved in Frontex activities: the Border Police, the Patrol Police Department, the Information-Analytical Department, the Migration Department, and the MIA Academy.

In order to reduce the flow of illegal migrants from Georgia, the cooperation with Frontex has been further deepened. Frontex has increased the number of officers at Tbilisi and Kutaisi international airports; also, within the framework of a joint operation with Frontex, Georgian officers have been seconded to the airports of EU Member States for a one-month rotation.

Within the framework of cooperation with Frontex, representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia participated in 5 different activities organised by Frontex, such as joint operations, workshops, and trainings.

In 2020, with the financial support of the European Union, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia launched **an information campaign against organised crime**, which aims to raise public awareness of the threats associated with organised crime, and reforms carried out by the Ministry in this regard, and achieved results.

During the reporting period, as a result of measures taken by the divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia for the purpose of detecting, eliminating and preventing organised crime, 24 organised criminal groups with 67 participants were arrested for committing various crimes.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs continues active work in terms of analysis-based policing and community-oriented policing. A special internal working group focused on the development of analysis-based policing was established, which comprises representatives and experts from the relevant structural units, according to their specialisations. Draft policy documents for the development of analysis-based policing were drawn up during the reporting period.

A pilot project of community-oriented policing is also being implemented. **43 public order officers** were appointed during the reporting period. As of 1 July 2020, the total number of public order officers and senior public order officers appointed at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia is 261, 53 of whom are undergoing training at the LEPL MIA Academy.

The employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Security Service, the Ministry of Finance, the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Justice, and the Special State Protection Service of Georgia are participating in the CEPOL Exchange Programmes (CEP) and Residential Training Activities. CEPOL has added a new component to its 2020 exchange programme 'the CEPOL-EJTN Joint Exchange Programme', as a result of which judiciary bodies, namely the Tbilisi City Court, were added to the above-listed entities.

During the reporting period, 28 law enforcement officers were paired in the CEPOL Exchange Programme, and 5 free quotas are offered for Residential Training Activities. 12 candidates were nominated for paid Residential Training Activities.

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia sent 8 motions to the EU Asset Recovery Offices (EU AROs), and 2 motions were received from the said offices. The motions were fully executed by the parties.

The Guide on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was updated during the reporting period. It is planned to develop a training module according to the said training material, and to implement important issues in the basic and retraining programmes of the MIA Academy.

A legislative package '**the Law of Georgia on Rehabilitation and Collective Satisfaction of Creditors**' has been approved by the Government of Georgia, initiated at the Parliament of Georgia and adopted in the first hearing.

For the purpose of the mandatory recognition by Georgia of the 1965 **Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters** and the 1970 **Convention on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters**, the conventions and their accompanying legislative amendments have been prepared for the Government and the Parliament of Georgia, which are now at the final stage of internal structural discussions.

Before 1 July 2020, within the readmission agreements concluded by Georgia, the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia had reviewed **the readmission applications of 1285 persons**, 1268 of which were decided positively, and 17 of which were decided negatively.

In February 2020, in order to improve the capacity to reduce chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) hazards, '**Handbook on Georgia's Export Control System to Raise Awareness of CBRN**

related Dual Use Items Export Controls', which was prepared by the LEPL Revenue Service, was issued (link to the Handbook: https://www.rs.ge/Default.aspx?sec_id=5304&lang=2).

By Order No 2-278 of 26 March 2020 of the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, the Nuclear and Radiological Emergency Response Management Centre was established at the LEPL Agency of Nuclear and Radiation Safety. The composition and functions of the Centre were developed on the basis of the technical regulations 'Preparedness and Response Plan for a Nuclear or Radiological Emergency'.

During the reporting period of 2020, **in order to work with the BOMS system**, the LEPL Operative-Technical Agency of Georgia conducted trainings for 52 employees from relevant sectors, and mobile groups of the Land Border Defence Department of the state subordinate agency the Border Police of Georgia within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. In addition, six employees of the LEPL Operative-Technical Agency of Georgia completed the first stage of the training course in the maintenance of the BOMS system components in Sweden.

With the financial support of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) of the United States of America, an electronic surveillance system was installed at one of the sectors of the state border of Georgia, which has been operating since May 2020.

The State Security Service actively cooperates with partner countries and international organisations in bilateral and multilateral formats **in the area of fighting against terrorism**. During the reporting period, important steps were taken in terms of developing a legal framework for the deepening of international cooperation on the issues of terrorism. On 21 January 2020, the '**Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the State Security Service of Georgia and the General Directorate for Internal Security of the Republic of France**' was signed in Paris (France) and entered into force. Furthermore, on 27 May 2020, the implementation rules adopted in line with Article 12 of the Agreement **between Georgia and the European Union on Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information** were signed.

The Ministry of Justice of Georgia, together with the Inter-agency Coordinating Council for Implementing Measures against Trafficking in Human Beings, has prepared an interim progress report (2019) of the 2019-2020 Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.

During the reporting period, the following measures were taken regarding **the issue of trafficking**:

- 16 border controllers completed an advanced training programme in trafficking-related issues, and 35 persons completed a special training programme at the MIA Academy before appointment as border guards;
- on 6 February 2020, the employees of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, one employee of the Division for Combating Human Trafficking of the Central Criminal Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, and one employee of the Division Combating Cybercrime of the said Department, as well as the employees of the Office of the Prosecutor General of Georgia, participated in a regional dialogue on 'Child Online Protection and Empowerment' in Chisinau. The purpose of the event was to share experiences between Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus on child protection from online exploitation;
- on 10-14 February 2020, in Budapest, 2 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and 3 employees of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia participated in training on the topic of child sexual exploitation. The training was organised by the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA);
- 36 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia were retrained in the topic of trafficking at the MIA Academy;
- on 17 February 2020, the Ministry of Defence of Georgia retrained 180 military personnel in the topic of trafficking before their secondment to international peacekeeping missions;
- the retraining of the employees of diplomatic missions and consular institutions in the topic of trafficking was planned for the end of March, although it was postponed for an indefinite period due to the COVID-19 situation. Trainings for other target groups were also postponed for the same reason.

On 9 January 2020, representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia held an information meeting on the topic of trafficking at Tbilisi State University (with approximately 30 participants). Under the co-organisation of the Ministry of Justice, the Training Center of Justice and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

It is noteworthy that, during the reporting period, 7 calls were made to the hotline (116 006) of the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human trafficking, and 8 calls were made to the hotline (2411 714) of the Central Criminal Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

The services of the shelter for the victims of human trafficking were used by 1 female minor, who was provided with medical assistance, psychological assistance, legal assistance, and assistance in social reintegration. The services of the crisis centre were used by 1 male adult, who was provided with psychological assistance, legal assistance, a residence permit, and one-time compensation. In all, two beneficiaries used the services.

Within the scope of the state reintegration programme, 30 citizens of Georgia, who returned from emigration, were provided with appropriate assistance.

During the reporting period, 108 beneficiaries participated in the programme of the integration centre for internationally protected persons, 40 beneficiaries were engaged in the sociocultural awareness raising component, 40 beneficiaries were engaged in the civil education component, and 101 beneficiaries used the consultation services.

It is notable that within the scope of activities planned under Georgia's European Union Integration Roadmap (RoadMap2EU) beyond the Association Agreement, the following activities were carried out during the reporting period:

On 16 January 2020, **the National Centre for Monitoring the Drug Situation** was established by an order of the Minister of Justice of Georgia. The function of the Centre is to collect and analyse information on the drug situation in Georgia, to introduce evidence-based scientific and practical methodologies, to exchange information with appropriate organisations at the international level, and to prepare reports. The National Centre for Monitoring the Drug Situation consists of two divisions: the Data Analysis Division and the Consultation Division. Both divisions are staffed with representatives from the fields of prevention of drug abuse, treatment and rehabilitation, harm reduction, supply reduction, addiction, sociology, statistics, or epidemiology, and appointed both from state bodies and the civil sector.

In cooperation with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), research was conducted and completed on an evaluation of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures taken against it on treatment and harm reduction services; the results of the research were shared with the EMCDDA.

Furthermore, in collaboration with the EMCDDA, the preparatory works for the research of European institutions were started, a research plan was prepared, and the research questionnaire was adapted; in addition, with the expert assistance of the EMCDDA, the EU online research on the drug situation was planned together with the non-governmental organisation 'Alternative Georgia'.

Moreover, the National Centre for Monitoring the Drug Situation has started working on the 2019 Report on Drug Situation in Georgia, which will be the first such report for the Centre, and the results of which will be shared with the EMCDDA.

In order to increase access to public services within a single space, the construction of the branches of LEPL Public Service Hall continues in different municipalities of Georgia, namely: since 1 January 2020, when the Community Centres were transferred into the management of the Public Service Hall,

six Community Centres have been opened (in Chrebalo, Abasha, Khobi, Kharagauli, Chiatura, Vani), and the construction of six more Community Centres (in Baghdati, Chokhatauri, Ninotsminda, Aspindza, Dedoplistskaro, Khevi) is planned this year. The construction design of Kaspi Community Centre has been prepared, and construction can be started when appropriate financial resources are available.

The secretariat of the Anti-Corruption Council (the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice) is preparing a progress (monitoring) report of the 2019-2020 Anti-Corruption Action Plan (based on data for 2019) in accordance with Ordinance No 629 of 20 December 2019 of the Government of Georgia 'On Approval of the Procedures for the Preparation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents'. The report will be presented to the Council at the next meeting.

The secretariat of the Anti-Corruption Council (the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Justice) is working on the development of a public relations strategy on anti-corruption issues. The secretariat has prepared a draft public relations strategy; the Eastern Partnership Regional Project 'Fight against Corruption and Fostering Good Governance/Fight against Money-Laundering' was also asked for assistance in the preparation of the analytical document. On the basis of the concept, for the purpose of development and implementation of the public relations strategy, the secretariat conducted negotiations with the Good Governance Initiative (GGI) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). As for now, a draft public relations strategy has been developed. The strategy will be submitted for approval to the Council at the next meeting.

The Ministry of Justice has prepared **draft amendments to the Criminal Code of Georgia** together with a related package of legislative amendments. The draft has been through a number of legal reviews by national and international experts. At this stage, final consultations are being held with the responsible authorities.

Work is in progress on draft amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia, according to which the procedures for admissibility of evidence will be reformulated, including the determination of clear criteria for the admissibility of indirect evidence.

As from 1 January 2020, the Minors' Referral Centre started operating. The referral mechanism has been introduced and is working in accordance with Ordinance No 681 of 31 December 2019 of the Government of Georgia 'On Approval of Minors' Referral Procedures'. In order to carry out the minors' referral process, all the necessary documents have been prepared at the Minors' Referral Centre, and are included in the proceedings of minors' cases. The Centre receives applications from all other bodies involved in the referral process. At this stage, the proceedings on the cases of 18 minors are being carried out at the Centre. 12 rehabilitation programmes have been developed by the Centre. Negotiations are in progress with UNICEF and the European Commission (TAIEX) regarding study

visits and expert support. In accordance with Ordinance No 681 of 31 December 2019 of the Government of Georgia ‘On Approval of Minors’ Referral Procedures’, the Centre is working with minors’ referral institutions.

4. Trade and Trade-related Matters

Within the scope of measures supporting the Georgian exporters to participate in trade fairs and missions, there were a total of 48 cases of co-financing and 44 unique beneficiaries during the first two quarters. Overall, **34 Georgian companies** participated in 6 events held in the territory of the European Union:

- ✓ 3 Georgian companies participated in the Paris Fashion Week;
- ✓ 2 Georgian companies participated in the event ‘Pitti Immagine Bimbo’ held in Florence, Italy;
- ✓ 4 Georgian companies participated in the event ‘Playtime Paris’ held in Paris;
- ✓ 5 Georgian companies participated in the event ‘Biofach 2020’ held in Nuremberg, Germany;
- ✓ 3 Georgian companies participated in the event ‘MICAM’ held in Milan, Italy;
- ✓ 17 Georgian companies participated in the Paris Fashion Week WF2020.

Outside the territory of the EU, **with the support of the LEPL Enterprise Georgia**, 14 Georgian companies participated in the event ‘GulFood 2020’ held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

During the first two quarters, the LEPL Enterprise Georgia provided consultations to more than 10 interested persons regarding the **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)** platform.

As of the first 6 months of 2020, **the Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology** registered in all **945 standards** as Georgian standards, including the following:

- ✓ Georgian Standard ISO (international standards) – 141
- ✓ Georgian Standard IEC (international electrotechnical standards) – 223
- ✓ Georgian Standard EN (European standards) – 581

In the second quarter of 2020, in areas of measurement that are internationally recognised **in the field of metrology**, the Metrology Institute of the Agency issued ‘26 new services – Calibration and Measurement Capabilities (CMC)’ records, 2 CMCs of which are in the area of pressure, and 24 CMCs of which are in the area of temperature measurement. In all, as of the first 6 months of 2020, the number of recognised records of the Agency is 58 CMC records. In addition, 1 CMC record in the field of length measurement is also considered as recognised (the right of the BIPM to affix the ‘CIPM MRA’ logo to calibration certificates as an exception). In order to maintain international recognition and to ensure the traceability of measurements, the standards and measuring instruments of the Agency are sent for calibration to the National Metrology Institutes of the following countries: the National Metrology Institute of Germany (PTB), Ukrmetrteststandart (Kiev, Ukraine), CMI Czech Republic, Belarus (BelGIM), United Kingdom (NPL).

As of the first 6 months of 2020, **within the framework of the process of upgrading the equipment of reference laboratories** in priority areas, the following instruments were purchased: a theodolite and a glass scale for the Geometric Measurements Reference Department, an α and β radiation detector for the Radiation Measurements Reference Department, and an electromagnetic field meter (a gauss meter) for the Department of Radiophysics, Optics and Acoustics. Within the framework of the German regional project, in order to comply with the requirements related to the COVID 19 pandemic in terms of the calibration of so-called non-contact infrared thermometers, the German party has planned and is carrying out procedures for purchasing appropriate reference equipment, and within the framework of the same project, it is planned to develop the direction of density measurement and to purchase relevant reference equipment.

The final version of the feasibility study has been prepared in the Georgian and English languages for the membership of the **Accreditation Centre** of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

In terms of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the relevant EU normative acts under Annex XI-B to the Association Agreement, the following ordinance of the Government of Georgia has been adopted:

- ✓ Ordinance No 404 of 2 July 2020 of the Government of Georgia ‘On Approval of the Technical Regulations on the Rules for Fighting against the Potato Flea Beetles: *Epitrix cucumeris* (Harris), *Epitrix papa* sp. n.; *Epitrix subcrinita* (Lec.) and *Epitrix tuberis* (Gentner)’.

The following draft ordinances of the Government of Georgia have been prepared:

1. a draft ordinance of the Government of Georgia ‘On Approval of Edible (Food) Enzymes’;
2. a draft ordinance of the Government of Georgia ‘On Technical Regulations on Flavourings and Certain Food Ingredients with Flavouring Property(Properties) for Use in/on Foods’;
3. a draft ordinance of the Government of Georgia ‘On Approval of Technical Regulations on the Rules for Fighting against Chinese Citrus Longhorned Beetle *Anoplophora chinensis* (Forster)’;
4. a draft ordinance of the Government of Georgia ‘On Making Amendments to Ordinance No 337 of 13 June 2018 of the Government of Georgia on Approval of the Procedures for Certification of Seed and Planting Material of Agricultural Plant Species Subject to Mandatory Certification’.

The following testing methods have been introduced and accredited at the Department of Food Testing:

- ✓ testing for the presence of Staphylococcal Enterotoxins (SEs) in food products in compliance with EU requirements;
- ✓ determination of water content in frozen poultry in accordance with EU requirements;
- ✓ determination of nitrites and nitrates in food in accordance with EU requirements;
- ✓ determination of macrolides and tiamulin in honey with a Triple Quadrupole Liquid Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer (LC-MS/MS);
- ✓ determination of aflatoxin M₁ in milk with high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC);

- ✓ determination of heavy metals in water with an atomic emission spectrometer Agilent AES MP-4200.

The following testing methods have been introduced and accredited in the area of diagnostics of plant harmful organisms:

- ✓ detection, and morphological, biochemical and PCR identification of the bacterial tumour causative agents *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* and *A. vitis*;
- ✓ detection, and morphological, biochemical and PCR identification of the bacterium *Xanthomonas fragariae* causing strawberry angular leaf spots (ALS);
- ✓ detection of the blueberry scorch virus (BlScV);
- ✓ detection of the blueberry shoestring virus (BSSV);
- ✓ detection of the Arabis mosaic virus (ArMV).

The EU technical assistance twinning project '**Supporting the Accession of Georgia to the Convention on a Common Transit Procedure (CTC) and Launching of the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS)**' has been completed. Within the framework of the project, work on primary and secondary legislation compliance analysis has been completed. Appropriate draft amendments have been prepared. A document on the functional and non-functional requirements of the NCTS electronic system software has been drawn up.

After consultations with the European Commission, a **draft Law on Post** was improved and the comments of the Commission were incorporated into the draft law. The subordinate normative acts determined by the transitional provisions (the national postal rules, the conditions for conducting an open tender for the appointment of a designated operator, and the criteria for selecting a designated operator) are being prepared with the engagement of EU experts, which will be completed in September. It is planned to submit the draft law for review at the autumn session of the Parliament.

Within the framework of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the Directive on privacy and electronic communications (2002/58/EC), the Directive on authorisation (2002/20/EC), the Directive on access (2002/19/EC) and the Framework Directive (2002/21/EC), draft amendments to the **Law of Georgia on Electronic Communications** have been prepared, the notes and comments from the private sector have been collected/analysed, and a table of correspondence with the EU legal acts is being drawn up. It is planned to submit the draft law for review at the autumn session of the Parliament.

A draft Law of Georgia on **E-commerce** has been drawn up, a table of correspondence with EU legal acts has been prepared, and currently work on the improvement of the draft law is being carried out. It is planned to submit the draft law for review at the autumn session of the Parliament.

Under complex reform in the field of public procurement, **the State Procurement Agency** prepared draft legislative amendments **on the new institutional organisation of the public procurement dispute resolution council**, which will ensure a high level of independence and impartiality in the council. On

2 July 2020, the Parliament of Georgia adopted, at the third hearing, the amendments to the Law of Georgia on **Public Procurement** and respective amendments were also reflected in three laws, namely, **the Law of Georgia on Public Service, the Law of Georgia on Conflict of Interest and Corruption in Public Institutions, and the Law of Georgia on Remuneration in Public Institutions**, according to which, as from 1 January 2021, the dispute resolution council will start functioning with a new institutional organisation. Currently, the job descriptions and regulations for members of the dispute resolution council and office are being prepared, in order to recruit in a timely manner members and staff through a competition.

Regarding the new draft Law of Georgia on Public Procurement, the State Procurement Agency has completed work on the draft law, which was sent to the Government of Georgia and interested bodies for notes. At this stage, the notes related to the draft law are being reflected in the final version of the draft law. A new draft Law of Georgia on Public Procurement incorporates all the phases of legislative approximation provided for by the DCFTA, and the enactment of the obligations corresponding to each phase gradually and within the time limits provided for by the DCFTA.

During the first 6 months of 2020, **the Competition Agency** conducted **6 events for raising public awareness**. The target group of the events comprised representatives from the business sector, the Bar Association, media, non-governmental organisations, judges, and the academic sector. In January, a closing event of the EU project **'Support to the Georgian Competition Agency'**, which was being implemented at the Competition Agency for three years, was held. A glossary of competition terminology that was prepared under the project was presented at the event, which will facilitate the establishment of uniform terms and concepts in the field of competition. In addition to the glossary, a guide **'Judicial Control in Competition Law'** was also presented, which will especially assist judges in the process of reviewing cases in the area of competition law. Meetings were held with representatives from media, non-governmental organisations, international donor organisations, and the academic sector, who were acquainted with competition news, planned legislative changes, and challenges in the area of competition. In addition, **8 events** were organised for the purpose of upgrading the qualifications of the employees of **the Competition Agency**.

On 23 January 2020, **a meeting of the EU-Georgia Sub-Committee on Geographical Indications**, envisaged by the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, was held in Brussels. At the meeting, a representative from 'Sakpatenti' signed, on behalf of Georgia, **Decision No 1/2020 of the Geographical Indications Sub-Committee amending Annexes XVII-C and XVII-D to 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.**

Within the framework of the project 'Global Forest Watch' (GFW), **in order to improve the forest and land use information and decisions support system, the Forest and Land Use Atlas of Georgia (atlas.mepa.gov.ge)** has been developed within the system of the Ministry of Environmental Protection

and Agriculture of Georgia, which is the main point of accessing and obtaining information on spatial data.

The final version of the 2021-2030 Climate Change Action Plan (CAP) for the energy, buildings, agriculture, transport, industry, forest and waste sectors has been prepared for all sectoral chapters, with appropriate mitigation aspects incorporated in the draft CAP.

The final version of the **adaptation, mitigation, inventory and support chapters of the Fourth National Communication of Georgia (FNC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** has been prepared.

5. Economic Cooperation

According to a preliminary estimation, the decrease in real gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to 7.7 % in June 2020, compared to the same period of the previous year, and the average index is -5.8 % in the first six months of 2020.¹

The EU technical assistance twinning project ‘Supporting the Accession of Georgia to the Convention on a Common Transit Procedure (CTC) and Launching of the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS)’ has been completed. Work on primary and secondary legislation compliance analysis has been completed. Appropriate draft amendments have been prepared. A document on the functional and non-functional requirements of the NCTS electronic system software has been drawn up.

For the purpose of the harmonisation of the legislation of Georgia with Council Directive 2006/112/EC of 28 November 2006 on the common system of value added tax, **draft amendments to the Tax Code of Georgia have been submitted to the Parliament of Georgia and are under review..**

A consolidated annual report on the development of the state internal financial control system has been prepared.

During the first and second quarters of 2020, a number of activities were carried out in order to improve/modernise the system of the website eAuction.ge. During the first and second quarters, as a result of collaboration between the Service Agency and the Public Service Development Agency, a new, further improved service was introduced and launched, which involves the real-time access of the

¹<https://www.geostat.ge/media/32814/%E1%83%94%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9C%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9B%E1%83%98%E1%83%99%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%96%E1%83%A0%E1%83%93%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%AC%E1%83%98%E1%83%9C%E1%83%90%E1%83%A1%E1%83%AC%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98-%E1%83%A8%E1%83%94%E1%83%A4%E1%83%90%E1%83%A1%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%90---%E1%83%98%E1%83%95%E1%83%9C%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1%E1%83%98-2020.pdf>

Service Agency to the electronic database of the Public Service Development Agency, and the provision of filtered/specific data for the purpose of the identification of natural persons, and access to the necessary data of the identified persons in the process of their registration on the website www.eauction.ge.

The Financial Monitoring Service of Georgia has prepared and approved, by an order of the Head of the Financial Monitoring Service of Georgia two subordinate normative acts determined by the Law of Georgia **on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism**. Namely, Order No 1 of 5 June 2020 of the Financial Monitoring Service of Georgia ‘On Approval of the Procedures for Registering, Storing and Submitting by an Accountable Person the Information on Transactions to the Financial Monitoring Service of Georgia’ and Order No 2 of 5 June 2020 of the Financial Monitoring Service of Georgia ‘On Approval of the Procedures for Identification and Verification of Clients by an Accountable Person’.

The report of the State Audit Office of Georgia concerning the Government’s report on the Annual Execution of the State Budget of Georgia for 2019 was prepared and presented to the Parliament of Georgia

On the basis of the recommendations of the Global Assessment Mission and the Generic Law on Official Statistics drawn up by Eurostat, Geostat has prepared a **new version of the Law of Georgia on Official Statistics**. In the third quarter, the new draft law will be submitted for review to bodies that keep statistics, administrative data sources, and users.

A draft law has been drawn up on the basis of the Directive **on Supplementary Supervision of Credit Institutions, Insurance Undertakings and Investment Firms in a Financial Conglomerate**, which was prepared together with an appropriate body, the Insurance State Supervision Service of Georgia. The draft law was also sent to sector representatives for information. Consultations are on-going regarding the submission of the draft law to the Parliament.

For the purpose of approximation to Directive 2009/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 ‘on the coordination of laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS)’ and Commission Directive 2007/16/EC of 19 March 2007 ‘implementing Council Directive 85/611/EEC on the coordination of laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS) as regards the clarification of certain definitions’, on 14 July, the Parliament of Georgia adopted **the Law of Georgia on Investment Funds**. With regard to the second phase, parts of the draft subordinate acts (namely, procedures for licensing and operation of an asset management company, procedures for operation of a specialised depository, procedures for authorisation of an investment fund) have been prepared and work is on-going for the purpose of their

further improvement. Work on the remaining draft subordinate acts has started and, together with the other drafts mentioned above, they will be finalised and issued this year, within two months after the promulgation of the Law of Georgia on Investment Funds.

The draft Law of Georgia **on Making Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Payment Systems and Payment Services**, and a draft Order ‘On Making Amendments to Order No 29/04 of 28 February 2017 of the President of the National Bank of Georgia **On Approval of the Procedures for Registration and Regulation of the Payment Service Providers**’ have been prepared in compliance with Chapters 1-3 and 5 of Title IV of Directive (EU) 2015/2366 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 ‘on payment services in the internal market’. The draft law has been submitted to the appropriate representatives of the private sector, and consultations with them are being actively carried out. In addition, based on Directive (EU) 2015/2366, the draft ‘Procedures for Calculation of Initial and Current Capital of a Payment Service Provider’ have been prepared, in which Articles 6-9 of the said Directive and related EU acts were taken into consideration.

Regarding the mandatory introduction of the profession of an actuary at insurance companies, the Insurance State Supervision Service of Georgia has prepared **draft amendments to the Law of Georgia on Insurance**, which were sent for review to the Government of Georgia. The actuarial function will be introduced on the basis of the harmonisation with Directive 2009/138/EC (Solvency II), within the framework of a project of the EU-funded public services twinning programme, which is being implemented at the Insurance State Supervision Service.

6. Other Fields of Cooperation

6.1 Transport

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to **Directive 2007/59/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council, a draft normative act has been prepared which determines the conditions and procedures for the certification of train drivers (locomotives and trains).

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to **Regulation 1370/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 (on public passenger transport services by rail and by road)**, a normative act has been adopted which will create a legal basis for public service obligations (PSOs) in the rail sector.

For the purpose of the implementation **in the field of rail transport** of **Directive 2008/68/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council ‘on the inland transport of dangerous goods’, a draft normative act has been prepared.

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to **Directive 1999/63/EC**, the **accession to the Maritime Labour Convention** is planned in 2020, according to which this Directive will be implemented. On 9 March 2020, the Maritime Transport Agency received departmental comments regarding the text of the International Labour Convention, according to which a memorandum of agreement was prepared. Moreover, a draft **Law of Georgia on Seafarers' Labour** was prepared, which was submitted to the Tripartite Committee for notes.

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to **Directive 2010/65/EU**, an interagency council was established by Ordinance No 108 of 20 January 2020 of the Government of Georgia, according to which the Maritime Transport Agency must, before 1 August 2020, submit to the Government of Georgia a feasibility study, financed by the U.S. Embassy in Georgia, and being carried out by the company DevGate. The first phase of the Directive includes an inventory of all services in the maritime sector, and an analysis of the reduction of the existing bureaucracy, and the second phase includes the development and launching of the software.

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to **Directive 2003/59/EC** of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2003 (on the initial qualification and periodic training of drivers of certain road vehicles for the carriage of goods or passengers), the preparation of a construction project of a training centre for the practical training of drivers has been completed.

6.2 Cooperation in the Field of Energy

On the basis of Ordinance No 246 of the Government of Georgia, on 16 April 2020, a **concept of the electricity market model** was approved.

On 21 May 2020, the Parliament of Georgia approved the **Law of Georgia on Energy Efficiency** and the **Law of Georgia on the Energy Efficiency of Buildings**.

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to **Directive 94/22/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 1994 'on the conditions for granting and using authorizations for the prospection, exploration and production of hydrocarbons'**, respective legislative amendments have been prepared which, together with other amendments to be made to the Law of Georgia on **Oil and Gas**, will be submitted to the Parliament of Georgia as a single draft law.

The draft **Wholesale Market Rules** have been prepared, which regulate the operation of the balancing and ancillary services markets, and the obligations of a transmission system operator and a market

operator in relation to grid balancing. Public administrative proceedings have been initiated in order to issue a normative act.

Moreover, it is notable that within the scope of activities planned under Georgia's European Union Integration Roadmap (RoadMap2EU) beyond the Association Agreement, the following activities were carried out during the reporting period:

A draft resolution of the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission (GNERC) on the approval of the **Retail Market Rules** was drawn up, which includes procedures for changing a provider, the provider of last resort procedure, and the universal service provider procedure. Public administrative proceedings have been initiated to adopt the above resolution.

Resolution No 9 of 27 March 2020 of the GNERC 'On Approval of **the Rules of Certification of Transmission System Operators**' was adopted, which establishes procedures, conditions and requirements for the certification of transmission system operators by the GNERC, including the procedure for the notification of the separation of a transmission system operator, as well as procedures and conditions for submitting a certification application, and other documents, data and information required for certification, and the procedure for making decisions on the certification of a transmission system operator by the GNERC.

Elaboration of the draft **strategy for regulating the introduction of smart metering** is in progress. The strategy for regulating the introduction of smart metering is being drawn up within the framework of an EU-funded twinning project. As for now, a cost-benefit analysis of the introduction of smart metering has been performed for the natural gas and electricity sectors.

6.3 Environmental Protection

In accordance with Directives 2008/50/EC and 2004/107/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, a draft ordinance of the Government of Georgia '**on air quality assessment criteria, and the number, location and operation of observation points**' was drawn up. The draft ordinance is in the process of internal review, and will be submitted to the Government in the coming months.

With the support of the EU Technical Assistance Project, a working version of the draft ordinance of the Government of Georgia was prepared **to reduce volatile organic compounds in paints and varnishes**. As a result of discussions, the title of the draft ordinance was formulated as follows: '**On the Introduction of Limit Values of the Content of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) in Paints and**

Varnishes, and of Analytical Methods and Control System, including the Mandatory Labelling of Products’.

Furthermore, within the framework of the project, the content of VOCs in locally produced and imported paints and varnishes are being assessed and an appropriate report is being drawn up. The obtained information will be used in the process of determining the limit values of the content of VOCs. Workshops were held with the business sector, in particular with representatives from companies producing, importing and using varnishes and paints, in order to acquaint them with the planned regulations. Training was conducted for inspectors from the Department of Environmental Supervision in order to effectively control the content of VOCs in marketed products.

A draft Law of Georgia **on Water Resources Management** has been uploaded to the e-Government programme.

With the support of the EU project ‘**EU Water Initiative Plus**’, the draft **Alazani-Iori and Khrami-Debeda basin management plans** were prepared, which are currently being reviewed by interested parties.

Underground freshwater was monitored at **56 water points**. The construction of three monitoring stations was planned within the framework of the UNDP-GEF project ‘Mtkvari II’, however the works were suspended in March 2020 due to the situation caused by COVID-19.

Within the framework of the project ‘**Supporting the Implementation of the Environmental Provisions of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Georgia**’, a **draft marine environmental strategy and action programme** has been prepared in the Georgian and English languages. At this stage, the Georgian translation is being reviewed and revised. A draft strategy and action programme has been prepared in consultation with interested parties. Two meetings were held at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, during which the goals, objectives and activities set out in the strategy and action programme were discussed.

In order to study marine environment and biodiversity, the biological monitoring of the Black Sea coast of Georgia is carried out at four permanent stations on monthly basis (**Sarpi, Batumi, Batumi port, Mtsvane Kontskhi (Green Cape)**). Due to the situation caused by COVID-19, it was possible to organise the expeditions planned for 2020 only in **January, February, May and June** (no field trips were carried out in March and April). A total of 32 microbiological and 32 hydrobiological (16 phytoplanktons and 16 zooplanktons) samples were collected. Currently, the samples are being processed.

Within the framework of the EU-funded project ‘**EU Water Initiative Plus for Eastern Partnership Countries**’ (EUWI+ 4EaP), on 29 June 2020, a five-day (29.06 – 03.07) field expedition was launched in order to explore the Georgian coastline of the Black Sea and the pilot transient water bodies. As of 3

July, in all 94 samples have been taken, of which 26 samples were hydrochemical, 10 samples were microbiological, 25 samples were phytoplanktons, 8 samples were zooplanktons, 16 samples were macrozoobenthos, and 9 samples were macrophytes. Currently, the samples are being processed.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia is carrying out the final review of **the draft Law on Biodiversity** and taking into consideration notes submitted by interested parties. The working group meetings are held regularly and the draft law will be submitted for review to the Government of Georgia in the near future.

A project proposal for the **National Adaptation Plan (NAP)** for climate change has been submitted to **the Green Climate Fund (GCF)**. The application is being reviewed by the GCF.

The draft technical regulations for the management of fluorinated greenhouse gases have been prepared. At this stage, the document is being reviewed at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the Montreal Protocol, a package of legislative amendments has been prepared under the Institutional Strengthening Project, which involves the improvement of the **ozone depleting substances management system**. In particular, requirements for the collection, recovery, recycling and disposal of ozone depleting substances are to be established. The legislative package is in the process of internal review.

6.4 Agriculture and Rural Development

During the reporting period, support for agricultural development projects continued. **Within the framework of the Preferential Agrocredit Project**, in the first five months of 2020, banks disbursed 1786 loans amounting to GEL 97 108 252.

During the reporting period, **within the framework of the Agro Insurance Project**, a total of 10 898 policies were issued and 11 322 hectares of crops were insured. The cost of the insured crops is GEL 110 531 300. The share of the Agency in the insurance premium is GEL 5 612 491.

Within the framework of the project 'Co-financing of Agro Processing and Storage Enterprises', during the reporting period, in all 10 projects were approved in the component of storage enterprises with the total cost of GEL 11 655 527, GEL 5 724 422 of which is the amount of co-financing.

Within the framework of the **'Plant the Future'** programme: 1) 217 garden projects to be cultivated on an area of 1034 hectares were approved, and the investment amounted to GEL 13 690 372, out of which GEL 7 554 625 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency; 2) under **the component of**

plant nurseries of the 'Plant the Future' programme, 3 applications were granted and the investment amounted to GEL 1 227 140, out of which GEL 858 089 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency; 3) within the framework of financing the subcomponent of the 'Plant the Future' programme for berries, 333 applications were granted, the area contracted/to be cultivated 127 hectares, and the amount of financing on the part of the Agency was GEL 4 334 985; 4) within the framework of the component of co-financing **the construction of anti-hail systems** under the 'Plant the Future' programme, 7 applications were granted and the investment amounted to GEL 2 230 643, out of which GEL 191 425 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency, and the area in question 35 hectares.

During the reporting period, **within the framework of the Georgian Tea Plantation Rehabilitation Project**, agreements were signed with 2 beneficiaries, the area of rehabilitation plantations being 168 hectares. The total cost of rehabilitation amounts to GEL 419 192, out of which GEL 293 434 is the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency.

Within the framework of **the Agriculture Modernization, Market Access and Resilience Co-financing Programme (IFAD)**, 113 applications were granted in the component of primary production. The total investments of the projects amount to GEL 5 267 143, out of which GEL 2 105 993 was the amount of co-financing. One application was granted in the component of processing and storage enterprises, and the total investment of the project amounts to GEL 741 000, out of which GEL 296 400 is the amount of co-financing. Among the applications, 13 projects were approved for 13 female beneficiaries.

During the reporting period, the following programmes were implemented for the purpose of the **development of agricultural cooperatives**: 1) 6 agreements were concluded within the framework of the State Programme for Supporting **Beekeepers'** Agri-Cooperatives (the beneficiaries were financed to purchase beekeeping equipment, such as beehives, honey extractors, honey storage tanks, honey uncapping knives). Under the agreement, the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency amounted to GEL 79 700. Also, last year's obligation was fulfilled and the amount of the second tranche was transferred to one cooperative; 2) 10 agreements were concluded within the framework of the State Programme Supporting **Viticulture** Co-operatives. Under the agreements, the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency amounted to GEL 4 999 145. Also, last year's obligation was fulfilled and the amounts of the second tranches were transferred to two cooperatives; 3) 3 agreements were concluded within the framework of the State Programme for **Milk Producing** Cooperatives. Under the agreements, the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency amounted to GEL 422 759.

29 agreements were concluded within the framework of the **Co-financing Project for Purchasing Agricultural Equipment**. The total investments of the projects amount to GEL 4 176 734, out of which GEL 1 929 227 is the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency.

Moreover, it is notable that within the scope of activities planned under the Georgia's European Union Integration Roadmap (RoadMap2EU) beyond the Association Agreement, the following activities were carried out during the reporting period:

In order to improve and develop irrigation systems, 47 projects were being implemented on irrigation systems under the capital budget, 10 of which were completed. The cash execution of the capital budget in terms of irrigation systems amounted to GEL 11 810 009. 6 projects were being implemented on irrigation systems under the capital budget, 2 of which were completed. Cash execution of the capital budget in terms of irrigation systems amounted to GEL 3 503 023.

In order to improve and develop drainage systems, rehabilitation works were being carried out on 8 facilities/drainage systems, for which the cash execution of the capital budget amounted to GEL 1 063 513.

Work was carried out on the project of updating the **2021-2023 Action Plan for the Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of Georgia for 2021-2027**, which is planned to be approved in the first quarter of 2021.

6.5 Employment, Social Policy and Equal Opportunities

With the support of the International Labour Organization, **amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia - the Labour Code of Georgia**, with an accompanying package, were prepared and initiated by members of the Parliament of Georgia within the framework of Labour Legislation Reform. The amendments are being reviewed by the Parliament of Georgia.

A draft **Law of Georgia on Labour Inspection**, a legislative act regulating the activities of a legal entity under public law supervising labour legislation and labour conditions, and a draft **Law of Georgia on Employment Support**, were prepared and submitted to the Parliament of Georgia for review.

On the basis of the Directives envisaged by the Annex XXX of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, the following four normative acts related to occupational safety standards were prepared, and have been approved this year: Ordinance No 80 of 6 February 2020 of the Government of Georgia '**On Approval of the Methods for Determining the Priority Sectors of Economic Activities and the Risk Assessment Procedures**'; Ordinance No 99 of 10 February 2020 of the Government of Georgia '**On**

Approval of the Procedures and Conditions for Entering and Inspecting the Facilities Subject to Inspection; Order No 01-20/6 of 14 February 2020 of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia **‘On Approval of the List of Works Harmful and/or Posing Particular Risk to the Health of Pregnant Women, Women Having Recently Given Birth, and Nursing Mothers’**; and Order No 01-15/6 of 30 January 2020 of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia **‘On Approval of the Risk Assessment Procedures in the Workplace’**.

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, 33 recommendations (1 general recommendation and 32 sectoral recommendations) **were produced**, and **6 normative acts approved for the effective execution and supervision thereof, the following two of which are currently in force:** **Order No 01-227/6 of 29 May 2020** of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia **‘On Approval of the Recommendations for Preventing the Spread of the Novel Coronavirus in Workplaces’**, and **Order No 01-56/6 of 6 June 2020** of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia **‘On Approval of the Rules and Procedures for Monitoring and Controlling the Implementation of the Recommendations Produced by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia for Preventing the Spread of the Infection (COVID-19) in Workplaces Caused by the Novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2)’**.

As a result of active cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, certain changes were made to the draft **‘2020 State Programme for Professional Training, Retraining and Qualifications Raising of Job-Seekers’**, and were submitted to the Government of Georgia for approval.

In order to improve the livelihoods of IDPs, to inform IDPs of appropriate state programmes and involve them in the same, and to increase educational opportunities for IDPs, **45 grants were awarded to IDPs** in the first half of 2020; 156 IDPs enrolled at vocational education institutions were provided with assistance, and 34 different information campaigns were conducted.

As of June 2020, **426 families were provided with long-term dwellings; 451 dwelling places were transferred into the ownership** of IDP families; 14 projects were financed in order to improve the living conditions of IDPs; 4512 IDPs were provided with one-off financial aid, and 776 families were provided with temporary dwellings.

On 1 January 2020, **the Employment Support Agency started operating**, which will perform the functions of the Social Service Agency in the field of support of labour and employment. The

Employment Support Agency will continue the implementation of current employment support programmes and services, which include the development of professional skills, training and retraining, internship, subsidies, consultations and career planning; at the same time, new features will be added to the labour market management information system worknet.gov.ge, which will increase its effectiveness.

As of June 2020, **24 729 job-seekers were registered, and 162 employers placed 2050 vacancies in the labour market management information system www.worknet.gov.ge.** In order to provide intermediary services for vacancies posted by employers, 794 job-seekers were selected for the vacancies and referred to employers (including 597 in Tbilisi, 12 in Ajara, 6 in Guria, 150 in Kakheti, 9 in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, 9 in Kvemo Kartli, 3 in Shida Kartli, 8 in Mtskheta-Mtianeti). In all, **49 job-seekers were employed through the intermediary services.**

Supported employment consultants provided supported services to 12 persons with disabilities at 4 service centres of the Agency (including 5 in Tbilisi, 3 in Ajara, 2 in Guria, and 2 in Shida Kartli). **In order to support the employment of less competitive groups, 7 vacancies were found for persons with disabilities. This year, 5 persons with disabilities (including 3 in Tbilisi and 2 in Ajara) were employed through the intermediary services.**

On 28-29 February 2020, **the Employment Forum** was organised by the HR hub, the information support of which was provided by the Employment Support Agency. The information on the Forum was provided to job-seekers registered in the system.

On 7 March 2020, an **employment forum was held for persons with disabilities** (organised by the youth association 'Droni' and the student initiative 'Identify Abilities'). At the forum, persons with disabilities who are seeking a job met with potential employers.

In order to provide the services determined by the programme, the Employment Support Agency announced a competition for professional consultation/career planning and supported employment specialists (the competition was announced at regional centres in Imereti, Guria, Kakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti). Interviews were held to select specialists for vacancies announced at regional centres in Guria, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, and Imereti.

In addition to strengthening the employment and active labour market policy, facilitating the labour/circular migration of citizens of Georgia is one of the priorities of the Government of Georgia. **On 17 January 2020, an Agreement on the Seasonal Employment of the Georgian Labour Force in the Federal Republic of Germany was signed.**

At the beginning of 2020, **the number of inspectors** employed at the Labour Conditions Inspection Department **increased to 100**. In the first half of 2020, the Labour Conditions Inspection Department supervised **151 facilities in 135 companies** in terms of compliance with the requirements established by the Organic Law of Georgia on Occupational Safety. In addition, 33 recommendations were produced for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and, in order to raise awareness of the issue, up to 20 sectoral workshops were held, with approximately 700 representatives from business associations. In order to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations, 4 video tutorials were prepared, which were disseminated throughout Georgia through mass media and social networks. In order to raise awareness, posters and booklets were prepared, to be distributed during the inspections and information meetings.

In order to implement the abovementioned recommendations, **13 101 facilities** were inspected throughout Georgia during the reporting period. In order to raise awareness in this regard, 7 video tutorials were prepared for the construction sector with the support of GIZ. Also, with the support of the International Labour Organization, 11 video clips are being prepared.

During the reporting period, within the scope of its mandate which includes the inspection of working conditions in the workplace, state supervision **of the prevention and response to forced labour and labour exploitation** (under Ordinance No 112 of 7 March 2016 of the Government of Georgia), as well as the implementation of the recommendations prepared for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace as from 1 April 2020, within the framework of the inspections performed throughout Georgia under the direct supervision and coordination of the Labour Conditions Inspection Department, 13 257 facilities were inspected, and raising awareness of child labour among the employers and employees was being carried out. Notably, no cases of child labour were detected during the inspections.

Two meetings of the working group created within the Tripartite Social Partnership Commission were held. During the meetings, draft laws prepared within the framework of labour legislation reform and the issue of providing technical assistance by the UN Women for ratification of No 183, No 156 and No 189 Conventions of the International Labour Organization were discussed, and a draft 2020-2021 Action Plan for the Tripartite Social Partnership Commission was drawn up. Due to infection (COVID-19) caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-COV-2), the meeting of the Tripartite Social Partnership Commission is scheduled for the second quarter of 2020.

6.6 Healthcare

As of June 2020, **25 leading microbiological laboratories** in the country are members of the **Central Asian and Eastern European Surveillance of Antimicrobial Resistance (CAESAR) network** and the

Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (GLASS), which provide microbiological services to more than 200 hospitals across the country. The resistance data are being collected, processed and shared within the CAESAR and GLASS networks on an annual basis. Within the framework of the continuing education programme, a webinar was conducted with representatives from network member microbiological laboratories, during which the external quality panel results and the importance of the programme were discussed.

Two Georgian specialists are engaged in the Mediterranean Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (MediPIET). During the reporting period, they participated in two modules (in January and July).

During the reporting period, preparatory works for research into the use of antibiotics, infections associated with medical services, and the cross-sectional prevalence study of antimicrobial resistance, were carried out at 15 inpatient care facilities. The research will be conducted in autumn at 15-20 inpatient care facilities

According to the 2016-2020 national strategy for the elimination of Hepatitis C in Georgia, screening for Hepatitis C is carried out with an emphasis on the main target population. During the reporting period, **400 000 tests were conducted, 6 020 (4.1%) of which were positive.**

On 15 January 2020, the implementation of the EU twinning project ‘Strengthening Blood Safety System in Georgia’ was started. A draft work plan for 2020 has been prepared and submitted for approval to the Steering Committee of the Twinning project.

A working group has completed work on **the draft Law of Georgia on Human Organ Transplants and the draft Law of Georgia on Tissue and Cell Transplantation**. At this stage, the Law on Transplantation of Reproductive Cells is being improved and finalised. Work has started on the Regulatory Impact Assessment document with the engagement of various experts.

Within the scope of activities planned under the Georgia’s European Union Integration Roadmap (RoadMap2EU) beyond the Association Agreement, during the reporting period:

In order to expand the areas where smoking is prohibited, as from 1 January 2020, according to the law, smoking has been prohibited in stadiums that have the administration.

6.7 Cooperation in the Field of Innovation

Work is in progress on the preparation of the **internal strategy** of Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency. According to the so-called '**digital transformation**', the needs identification for AI and FinTech strategies is under consideration.

The internal repair works of the **Batumi Tech Park** building have been completed, while works for the connection of internal communications are still in progress. The construction of the **Gurjaani** and **Kaspi** Innovation Centres has been completed. In the second half of 2020 (in the third and fourth quarters), it is planned to complete the internal repair works which are currently in progress.

During the reporting period, a memorandum on **bilateral cooperation in the field of innovation and technology** was signed with Belarus, a member of the Eastern Partnership (as well as with several partner countries in Asia).

During the reporting period, **for the purpose of the popularisation of innovations and science**, 10 online events were held, 98 TV programmes were made, 26 information columns were written in the press, and 22 radio programmes were made.

20 beneficiaries were financed within the scope of GEL 100 000 co-financing grants for innovation and technology projects. **3 beneficiaries** were financed within the scope of GEL 650 000 grants.

At this stage, one startup company '**BioChimPharm**' is in the process of registration on the **EEN platform**, which received additional financing of EUR 150 000 from the EU and was awarded the Seal of Excellence under 'Horizon 2020'.

During the period, the international accelerator '500Startup' entered Georgia. Within the scope of '500 Georgia', a 4-week acceleration programme was completed by **15 startups**, which had access to 6 world-class mentors and a relevant network of investors.

Up to 100 entrepreneurs were trained **in e-business in the regions**. Trainings were held on the topics of the basics of programming, animation, and 3D modeling. Entrepreneurship trainings (Start and Improve your Business) were conducted in cooperation with the International Labour Organization. Online programming courses were conducted with the support of the Embassy of Israel in cooperation with 'Developers.Institute', to which representatives from the regions also had access.

6.8 Cooperation in the Field of the Information Society

In light of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the Directive on privacy and electronic communications (2002/58/EC), the Authorisation Directive (2002/20/EC), the Access Directive

(2002/19/EC) and the Framework Directive (2002/21/EC), draft amendments to the **Law of Georgia on Electronic Communications** have been prepared, notes and comments from the private sector have been collected/analysed, and currently a table of correspondence with the EU legal acts is being drawn up. It is planned to submit the draft law for review at the autumn session of the Parliament.

In order to approximate the legislation of Georgia to **Directive 2002/22/EC on universal services**, legislative initiatives are being developed, and it is planned to submit the draft law for review at the autumn session of the Parliament.

6.9 Tourism

During January-June 2020, the LEPL Georgian National Tourism Administration participated in the following international tourism fairs organised in EU Member States: **Ferien-Messe - Vienna, Austria; Vakantiebeurs - Utrecht, the Kingdom of Netherlands; MATKA - Helsinki, Finland; FITUR - Madrid, Spain; Balttour - Riga, Latvia.**

During the same period, various marketing campaigns were carried out, and advertisements were placed on international platforms. Under the organisation of the Georgian National Tourism Administration, a promotion campaign was conducted on the international platform CNN. 2 promotional video clips on Martvili Canyon and the Kakheti region were posted on the platform 'GREAT BIG Story'. Through the international platform 'Expedia', an advertising campaign was conducted on three target markets: France, Germany, and Great Britain. The concept of the campaign was as follows: Georgia was going to host influencers from each target market, whose travel would be posted on both social media and the international platform 'Expedia'.

In January-June 2020, the Georgian National Tourism Administration hosted press and introductory tours from the following EU Member States: Italy, Spain, Germany, and Latvia.

6.10 People to People Contacts, Education, Science, Culture, Sport and Youth

In the first half of 2020, in order to bring the vocational education quality assurance system into compliance with the European framework, **amendments were made to the new Law of Georgia on Vocational Education, the Law of Georgia on Special Vocational Education and Training, and the Law of Georgia on Education Quality Improvement.** Also, in February 2020, amendments to Order No 99/6 of 1 October 2010 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia '**On Approval of the Authorisation Regulations and Fees for Educational Institutions**' entered into force. In addition to other

changes, changes involving the introduction of 5 new authorisation standards in the vocational education system **were also approved** in the **authorisation regulations**.

During the reporting period, **6 projects** submitted with the participation of representatives from Georgia won competitions announced within the framework of the '**Horizon 2020**' programme and were awarded a grant by the EU of EUR 1 985 991.

In order to promote the popularisation of science among the general public, the project '**CAPTAIN: Science is the Captain**', submitted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia at the competition '**European Researchers' Night 2020**', announced by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions of the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 'Horizon 2020', **won** and received a grant of EUR 197 500.

Under the 'Horizon 2020' programme, the 'Research Fellowship Programme' with the budget of EUR 1.5 million was developed together with European experts, which provides funding for the fellowships of at least 60 Georgian researchers and innovators working in the field of research and innovation. On 6 July 2020, the submission of project applications in a tender announced by the European Commission ended.

The LEPL Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia is participating in the project 'CALIPER' funded under the 'Horizon 2020' programme, which aims to ensure gender equality in the organisation of the Foundation by increasing the number of female researchers, to improve their career prospects, and to integrate a gender dimension into research.

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia started consultations and preparatory works with the EU on obtaining **the status of an associated country in the 9th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 'Horizon Europe'**.

The first stage of receiving tender applications for contractors implementing the research project for the **transition of Georgia to Erasmus + programme country** has been completed. The service providing consortium/organisation will be selected in August.

29 citizens of Georgia received Erasmus Mundus Master's Scholarships which ranks Georgia the second, after Ukraine, in the Eastern Partnership countries.

During the reporting period, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which was hired by the EU, prepared a concept for the implementation of the second phase of the Eastern Partnership European School project. The student selection process for the 2020-2021 academic year was successfully conducted and 40 students with the best academic performances from 6 Eastern Partnership countries (5 students from Armenia, 5 students from Azerbaijan, 6 students from Belarus, 11 students from Georgia, 8 students from the Republic of Moldova and 5 students from Ukraine) were

selected for the scholarship programme. In addition, on 23 June 2020, the first cohort of students of the Eastern Partnership European School were awarded diplomas of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IB). The programme has 30 graduates who will continue the acquisition of higher education in Europe, the United States of America, and their home countries.

In order to increase the number of teachers in **the online system of the eTwinning plus programme**, the registration of applicants willing to participate in the programme was announced in April 2020. 242 teachers from 162 schools joined the programme. As of June 2020, 1440 teachers from 830 schools are registered on the portal and 222 projects are active. With the assistance of the eTwinning portal, online trainings were conducted and 200 registered teachers were retrained.

In the first half of 2020, **452 trainees were enrolled in a vocational training and retraining programme**, and 149 graduates completed their studies. It is notable that, from 2019 to June 2020 inclusive, 40 legal entities acquired the right to implement a vocational training/retraining programme in 192 programmes. More than 1000 trainees were enrolled in the programmes.

During the reporting period, one educational institution, namely the LLC Community College Nataly Academy, obtained the right to recognise informal education as provided for by the legislation of Georgia, within the scope of the right to implement vocational education, training and retraining programmes.

On 17 July 2020, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a resolution '**On Approval of the Youth Policy Concept of Georgia for 2020-2030**', which determines the state youth policy objectives and strategic priorities, as well as the principles of implementing and monitoring the concept.

A Professional Youth Worker Certification Course was created, the purpose of which is to recognise said activity as a profession. The training course will start in September 2020.

A grant competition was held for strengthening youth organisations, in which a total of 97 projects were submitted from all regions of Georgia, 32 of which succeeded to the third stage. At this stage, 15 projects will be financed.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, various scheduled projects were postponed and/or were not implemented (including, the celebration events for 26 May, concerts and exhibitions of diaspora representatives, and national dances of different peoples performed by Sukhishvili Georgian National Ballet).

In the first 6 months of 2020, up to 10 events were held (8 of them were held remotely) aimed at raising awareness of the creative industries and developing entrepreneurial skills. In terms of the development of creative clusters, the format of the European Union and UNESCO funded project

'Creative Cluster Ecosystem Development in Georgia' has been changed. Activities scheduled until the end of the year have been fully transformed into digital format, and an awareness-raising campaign has been prepared, within the scope of which an article/blog about creative space initiatives in Georgia is published once every 2 weeks.

Within the framework of the EU programme '**Creative Europe**', in the first 6 months of 2020, **5 events were held** with the organisation/co-organisation of the Creative Europe Desks. In addition, since the global pandemic was announced and a state of emergency was declared in the country, online consultations (Creative Europe Hour) are held once a week; within the framework of the 'Creative Europe' programme, 4 projects were financed both under the leadership and with the collaboration of Georgia.

The draft Code of Natural and Cultural Heritage of Georgia is in the finalisation phase; works were delayed due to COVID-19. It needs consolidation. It will be submitted to Parliament for approval before the end of the year.

The preparation of the draft **Law of Georgia on Physical Education and Sport** has been completed, which has been agreed with the authorities and interested parties.

The first draft of a sports tourism strategy has been developed at the ministry level. A working group has been formed in collaboration with other bodies and organisations.

The development of the sports integrity strategy of Georgia has been started. In addition, in the second quarter of 2020, an application was submitted for expert support under the EU TAIEX instrument. An application has been received and the planning of an event has been started.

6.11 Regional Development

The 2019 progress report on the implementation of the 2018-2021 Regional Development Programme of Georgia has been prepared, the final version of which will be published on the website of the Ministry before the end of 2020.

The implementation of an integrated regional development programme for four pilot regions (Kakheti, Imereti, Guria and Racha-Lechkhumi, and Kvemo Svaneti) has started. Under the programme, the first grant competition (GEL 5 million) was announced for the municipalities of the respective pilot regions. The purpose of the competition is to implement infrastructure projects in the municipalities based on the principle of competition, which directly meet the priorities of the programme. The final results of the competition will be announced in the near future.

In order to introduce and promote 'Smart Specialisation' in Georgia, so-called 'mapping' of the respective pilot region was performed, which is currently under the process of review and final agreement with stakeholders. Moreover, with the engagement of European experts, approximately 20 video meetings were held with relevant stakeholders, the main purpose of which was to gather information on business support mechanisms and programmes in Georgia, as well as on the projects that are being implemented or planned with the support of donor organisations. A recommended research document will be prepared based on the obtained information, which will be submitted to the Georgian side in September 2020. The documents will assist Georgia in the process of preparing and implementing the strategy planned for the respective pilot region.

Georgian and European experts have prepared the first baseline study on the identification of the prospects for gradual approximation to the EU Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) and on its possible implementation in Georgia; the study is at the stage of final review and agreement with relevant stakeholders.

The preparation of the project/tender documentation related to the construction of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti regional landfill is in its final stage.

7. Financial Aid, Anti-fraud and Control Provisions

In May 2020, a financing agreement under the assistance programme 'EU Support for Human Rights Protection', envisaged by the 2019 EU Assistance Action Plan, was signed.

Due to COVID-19, during the reporting period, the work of a respective working group, and consultations with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) for the purpose of operating the anti-fraud and fraud control system under the financial assistance of the EU, have not been initiated.

8. Institutional Cooperation

8.1 Institutional Framework

During the reporting period, due to the COVID-19 crisis, the meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Council, the meeting of the Association Committee, and a high-level strategic dialogue on security issues, have not been held.

On 12-13 February, **the 9th meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee** was held in Strasbourg.

On 1 July, a **meeting of the Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security** was held in the form of a video conference.

On 2 July, **the 13th meeting of the EU-Georgia Human Rights Dialogue** was held in the format of a video-conference. At the meeting the parties approved a joint press release.

During the reporting period, meetings of 3 thematic groups of economic and sectoral cooperation sub-committee were held:

- On 13 February 2020, the fifth meeting of the 6th thematic group of the EU-Georgia Association sub-committee on economic and sectoral cooperation '**Employment, Social Policy and Equal Opportunities; Public Healthcare**' was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.
- On 24 June 2020, the fifth meeting of the 2nd thematic group of the EU-Georgia Association sub-committee on economic and sectoral cooperation '**Industrial and enterprise policy and mining activities; Tourism; Corporate law and corporate governance; Consumer Policy; Tax Policy**' was held in digital format.
- On 7 July 2020, the fifth meeting of the 5th thematic group of the EU-Georgia Association sub-committee on economic and sectoral cooperation '**Agriculture and rural development; Fisheries and maritime governance; Regional development, Cross-border and regional level cooperation**' was held in digital format.

During the reporting period, the meetings of the following sub-committees within the EU-Georgia Association Committee in Trade Configuration were held:

- On 23 January, the meeting of the EU-Georgia Sub-Committee on **Geographical Indications** was held in Brussels;
- On 5 June, an online meeting of the EU-Georgia **Customs** Sub-Committee was held;
- On 6 July, an online meeting of the EU-Georgia Sub-committee on **Trade and Sustainable Development** was held.

Representatives from Georgia participated in Eastern Partnership multilateral cooperation thematic platforms, panels and other meetings and events, namely:

- **Platform 2 of the Eastern Partnership** (Economic Development and Market Opportunities) – 17 January, Brussels;
- Environment and Climate Change Panel meeting of **Platform 3 of the Eastern Partnership** (Connectivity, Energy Efficiency, Environment and Climate Change) – 24 June (in the format of a video conference);

- **Meeting of the EU and Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers** – 11 June (in the format of a video conference), during which the participants presented their opinions regarding the future goals of the Partnership;
- **Eastern Partnership Leaders Dialogue** – 18 June (in the format of a video conference), during which the participants presented their opinions regarding the future goals of the Partnership;
- a video conference of the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement with **the Foreign Ministers of the Eastern Partnership** – 1 July, during which issues related to working on the post-2020 agenda of the Partnership were discussed.

8.2 Strategic Communication

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, only an annual report of the ‘2017-2020 Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia for Georgia’s EU and NATO Membership’ will be prepared. In addition, during the reporting period, work began on updating the strategy.

With the organisation and support of the LEPL Information Center on NATO and EU, from January to June 2020 inclusive, work was carried out **to gain the wide and informed support of the population of Georgia for Georgia’s EU and NATO membership**. For that purpose, 203 events both in Tbilisi and in the regions were planned and implemented during the reporting period. It is notable that, during the reporting period, 180 out of 203 meetings held by the Information Center were dedicated specifically to EU-related topics. 6230 people attended the events. It is notable that, at the meetings held by the Information Center during the reporting period, 5061 people attended the discussions held specifically on EU-related topics.

During the reporting year, the Information Center disseminated various information materials and brochures on NATO and EU among the attendants/participants of the meetings, discussions, seminars and other activities. Due to the prohibitions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the second quarter of this year (April-June), the Information Center organised events in a digital format, therefore the participants of the information meetings received the information contained in the brochures through social networks and Zoom/Facebook.

In January-June 2020, **the importance of the rules of visa-free travel in the EU/Schengen area states and the lawful use of those benefits was discussed at 111 meetings** organised by the Information Center on NATO and EU, **which were attended by 3546 participants**. It is important that 12 events were specifically dedicated to informing the public about the visa-free travel rules, during which face-to-face communication was established with 343 citizens.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual international conference ‘Georgia's European Way’ will not be held in 2020.

8.3 Cooperation with civil society

Non-governmental organisations, that are members of the Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, participated in the process of preparing the 2020 National Action Plan for Georgia’s European Integration.

During the reporting period, within the framework of the dialogue on sectoral issues between civil society and state agencies, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 12 February, a meeting was held at the Information Center on NATO and EU between representatives from the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and non-governmental organisations, on **the introduction of European standards in the energy sector and energy efficiency**; on 24 July, a sectoral meeting was held via the online platform ‘Zoom’ between the Youth Agency and non-governmental organisations **on youth-related topical issues**.