



**Six-Month Progress Report of the 2024 National Action Plan  
for Georgia's European Union Integration**

2024

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by Legislative Herald of Georgia

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## 1. General Overview

This report presents information on the progress of the 2024 National Action Plan for Georgia's European Union (EU) Integration covering the period from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024, inclusive.<sup>1</sup>

The six-months report of the EU integration action plan includes, almost in all aspects, **important activities implemented in terms of both the approximation to the EU acquis, and institutional approximation, sectoral integration, international cooperation, and the enhancement of human resources**, including commitments that were not fulfilled under the 2023 action plan.

During the reporting period, in accordance with the requirements of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, the following activities were carried out in the field of approximation of the national legislation of Georgia with the legislation of the European Union:

- **The draft law on Agriculture and Rural Development was adopted (12.6.2024).**

The following legislative amendments were made to the legislative acts given below:

- **Law of Georgia on Accounting, Reporting and Auditing (29.5.2024)**
- **Waste Management Code 21.2.2024**
- **Law of Georgia on Trademarks (21.2.2024)**
- **Law of Georgia on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism (30.5.2024)**
- **Maritime Code of Georgia (15.5.2024)**
- **Law on Social Work (27.6.2024)**
- **Law of Georgia on Traffic and the Administrative Offences Code of Georgia (27.6.2024)**
- **Law of Georgia on Energy Efficiency (27.06.2024).**

In the first half of 2024, **a meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Council, and a meeting for a strategic dialogue on security issues, were held**, and the sub-committees on customs and aviation issues were established. **In addition, under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Georgia**, the 71<sup>st</sup> meeting of Georgia's EU Integration Commission was held at the national level, during which ongoing issues in the process of integration into the EU were discussed and appropriate decisions were made.

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

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

### 2.1 Cooperation in the Field of Foreign and Security Policy

During the reporting period, Georgia continued to align itself with EU positions within the framework of **the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)**. On the basis of the data of the first half of 2024, the rate of Georgia's accession to the declarations and sanctions of the European Union is 45%, and the rate of accession to the declarations of the European Union in various international organisations is 80%.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the information presented in the report goes beyond the scope of the reporting period.

At the European Parliament's plenary session, the European Parliament's annual reports were debated and voted, which concerned the implementation of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

In this regard, it is worth noting that consultations have started regarding possible cooperation between the Levan Mikeladze Diplomatic Training and Research Institute (DTRI) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and **the European Defence Agency (EDA)** in the context of holding CSDP courses in Georgia.

In order to sign an Administrative Agreement with the European Defence Agency (EDA) and implement practical cooperation, another round of consultations was held with EDA representatives in February and May in Brussels, where information regarding the current status of the 3 selected areas (recovery and rehabilitation of captured persons; the European network of ammunition; fighting against improvised explosive devices (IED)) was exchanged.

**For the purpose of establishing a cybersecurity laboratory in the Cyber Security Bureau** 4 meetings (virtual) were held with NATO (NSPA). The final details of required equipment and training have been agreed upon.

4 meetings were held to establish a **Cyber Security Operations Centre (SOC)** in the new building of the Cyber Security Bureau. The Georgian side was given the Georgian and English versions of the design developed by the United Kingdom for the construction of the building.

## 2.2 Peaceful conflict resolution

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination and close cooperation with other relevant agencies/Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, continued its efforts and during consultations in relevant formats, both in Brussels and Tbilisi, focused on topics related to further strengthening coordination between the parties in the context of Georgia's reconciliation and engagement policy.

At the beginning of 2024, 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, the European Commission and other partners, regarding the implementation of the reconciliation and engagement policy, including the efficient implementation of the peace initiative '**A Step to a Better Future**', as well as in terms of the role and engagement of the EU in the process of confidence building between artificially divided communities.

Regular consultations also covered topics such as **the Geneva International Discussions**, the functioning of **incident prevention and response mechanisms** and the need to achieve tangible results, the current situation in the occupied territories, human rights violations, including illegal detentions of civilians and strict restrictions on free movement, the strengthening of cooperation with the EU and the allocation of financial assistance, implemented and planned projects in the occupied territories, the deepening of dialogue and confidence building between the divided communities, and other issues related to peaceful conflict resolution.

During the reporting period, the Georgian side emphasised the **role and importance of the EU Monitoring Mission**, the need to further strengthen the mission and extend the mandate at all possible levels during bilateral and multilateral meetings with representatives of the European Union and its member states. As for now, **the mandate of the EUMM has been extended to December 2024.**

The relevant structures of Georgia continued to use the ‘**Hot Line**’ mechanism operating through the mediation of the European Union Monitoring Mission, despite the fact that the occupation regimes has attempted to politicise the ‘**Hot Line**’.

In the first half of 2024, two rounds of the Geneva International Discussions were held, the 60<sup>th</sup> round - on April 4-5, and the 61<sup>st</sup> round - on June 25-26. The Office of the State Minister led the second humanitarian working group. Within the framework of the meetings, the participants from Georgia discussed the difficult humanitarian situation in the occupied regions and the gross violation of human rights, including discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, restrictions on free movement, prohibition of receiving education in the native language, restrictions on access to medical care, sources of subsistence and property, and matters related to cultural heritage. At the Geneva International Discussions, the issue of the release of illegally detained persons in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and the punishment of those responsible for encroaching on the lives of the citizens of Georgia were raised with particular emphasis. Moreover, the implementation by the Russian Federation of the Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 concluded with the intermediation of the EU, and the return of IDPs and refugees to their homes should also be mentioned, however the Russian Federation continues to politicise the issue and undermines the possibility of progress in this direction.

Regular communication and meetings continued with all three **co-chairs** of the Geneva International Discussions, **Toivo Klaar (EU)**, **Cihan Sultanoglu (UN)**, and **Viorel Mosanu (OSCE)**, during which the issues on the agenda of the second working group were discussed.

During the reporting period, the Office of the State Minister took part in three meetings under **the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRM)** held in Ergneti (on 13 February, 21 March, 16 May), during which representatives from the central government of Georgia placed strong emphasis on the issues of safety, human rights and the humanitarian situation of people living on both sides of the occupation line, who have suffered from the conflict. In addition, they demanded the unconditional and immediate release, based on a humanitarian approach, of illegally detained citizens of Georgia, and the restoration of free movement in the direction of Akhlagori. In addition, active work continued with international partners, primarily with the co-chairs of the **Geneva International Discussions**, to restore **the IPRM meetings in the occupied region of Abkhazia**, which have been suspended since 27 June 2018 as a result of deliberate provocative actions by the occupying forces.

In the first half of 2024, the Government of Georgia continued an active and result-oriented **reconciliation and engagement policy** through the effective implementation of the directions and status-neutral mechanisms envisaged by **the engagement strategy and action plan**, as well as the peace initiative ‘**A Step to a Better Future**’, which aims to improve the socio-economic conditions of the population living in the occupied regions of Georgia affected by the conflict, as well as to promote dialogue, and restore trust and cooperation between the artificially divided society considering their common interests. Within the framework of the **peace initiative**, the provision of **simplified access to public services, including a passport of a citizen of Georgia**, continued for the population living in the occupied regions.

It should be noted that despite the current situation in the occupied territories of Georgia and the on-going occupation, which makes the effective implementation of the peace-keeping policy extremely difficult, **the number of those people living in the occupied territories is increasing**, and they express an interest in the opportunities opened up within the reconciliation and engagement policy and the desire to be engaged in peace initiatives, which is an important step in achieving the ultimate objectives of the said policy.

In order to finance **specific trade and economic projects and initiatives** across the demarcation lines and thus to deepen dialogue and cooperation around common interests among the artificially divided society, as well as to provide social and economic support to people affected by the conflict, the financial instrument created within the framework of the peace initiative called '**Peace Fund for a Better Future**' continues its result-oriented activities.

From 15 April to 24 May, **the 5<sup>th</sup> grant competition of the 'Peace Fund' was held**, within the framework of which **62 business applications** were registered from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. The submitted business applications involve the engagement of 195 people, of which 35% are women. In the next reporting period, the winning projects will be identified and appropriate funding will be provided.

**In order to ensure quality education for young people living in occupied regions**, in 2024, the simplified access to and preferential conditions for continuing studies in higher educational institutions of Georgia continued: the possibility of enrolling in higher educational institutions with state funding without examination; the possibility of enrolling on the Georgian language training educational programme, the so-called '1+4' programme on the basis of the Abkhazian and Ossetian language exams, as well as passing the Unified National Examinations of their own accord.

In order to promote the strengthening of the role of young people in the peace process, the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality continues in 2024 to hold the annual competition 'Peace Award for Youth' established in 2021. On 24 June 2024, a grant competition was announced to identify the winner in three nominations: '**Best Peace Activity**', '**Best Peace Idea**', and '**Best Peace Message**'.

In the reporting period, intensive work was carried out with both partner states and international organisations, including the EU, in order to keep the issue of the Russia-Georgia conflict high on the international agenda. Some of the main topics of each visit, meeting, public speech and participation in international forums, were the severe security and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, and the necessity for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

**International formats** were actively and regularly used during the reporting period: the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly and its main committees, and the Human Rights Council; the OSCE Permanent Council, the Parliamentary Assembly; the Committee of Ministers at Deputy Level of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

In addition, several **international documents** were adopted on the issue of the Russia-Georgia conflict. Among them, the following are especially noteworthy: the Resolution of the UN General Assembly on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia (4 June); the Report of the Secretary-General of the UN on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia (29 April); the 29th Consolidated Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the Conflict in Georgia (24 April); the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers at Deputy Level of the Council of Europe 'The Council of Europe and Conflict in Georgia' (7 May); the Annual Resolution of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (26 January); the OSCE Bucharest Declaration (29 June - 3 July); the Declaration of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (27 May); the Declaration of NATO at the Washington Summit; US State Department Human Rights Report (April 23); US State Department's 2023 Report on Religious Freedom in Georgia (June 26); the Country Report on Human Rights Practices of the U.S. Department of State (23 April); the 2023 Report of the U.S. Department of State on International Religious Freedom in Georgia (26 June).

The Government of Georgia actively continued to support interaction, **confidence building projects, and public diplomacy** among the artificially divided communities. The Office of the State Minister used all opportunities, including formal and informal channels, to communicate with the Abkhazian and Ossetian communities and actively worked to create new opportunities for dialogue and confidence building. Employees of the Office of the State Minister continued to participate in various projects of international and non-governmental organisations, the goal of which was to build confidence and conduct a thematic dialogue between the communities divided by war. In terms of communication between the artificially divided communities, the effective functioning of the coordination mechanism operating within the framework of the '**Engagement Action Plan**' of the Government of Georgia is important, which maintained informal contacts between Tbilisi and Sokhumi, regularly provided the Abkhazian region with various types of medical and agricultural supplies, and also assisted international organisations in implementing confidence building projects. During the reporting period, approval was granted for 33 new projects submitted by international and non-governmental organisations in relation to the occupied territories.

In 2024, the provision of medical supplies to the Abkhazian region, in particular, immunization and flu vaccines, and medicines for diabetes and AIDS continued through the coordination mechanism, with a total value of approximately **GEL 380,000** during the reporting period. In order to address local challenges in the field of agriculture and to continue the fight against pests, various plant and animal protection products, including preparations against the Asian brown marmorated stink bug, with the value of more than **GEL 500,000**, were provided to the **Abkhazian region** through the said coordination mechanism.

Moreover, identifying the needs of affected populations in villages adjacent to the demarcation line remains an important priority, including through the direct communication between the State Minister and representatives of the Office of the State Minister with the populations of villages located along the demarcation lines. In the first half of 2024, meetings were held with the **local populations of 4 villages** located along the demarcation line.

Within the framework of the Interim Government Commission for Responding to the Needs of Affected Populations in Villages Adjacent to the Demarcation Line, there was work underway to implement separate socio-economic, infrastructural, agricultural, healthcare and educational projects to address the needs of the affected populations in the villages adjacent to the demarcation line. For the provision of heating to the local population during the winter, **14,526 families** were reimbursed for the cost of natural gas consumed for heating; **1,502 students were financed** with tuition fees for the spring semester of the 2023-2024 academic year.

During the reporting period, rehabilitation works were completed on 28 houses damaged as a result of the **2008 Russian-Georgian war in the village of Zardiaantkari**, the owners of which did not receive compensation from the State and were provided with temporary housing only; as a result of the effective spending of the allocated funds (GEL 1.8 million), a decision was made to use the free funds for ensuring better conditions for these families. During the reporting period, based on the inventory and study of additional needs of families, additional construction/renovation works were carried out.

In cooperation with **the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**, the programme of searching for persons who went missing in Georgia during the 1990s armed conflict and the 2008 Russia-Georgia war continued, which aimed to determine the fate and location of the missing persons and to support their families.

During the reporting period, **the identified remains of 12 persons** (10 military personnel, 2 civilians) who went missing during the armed operations of the 1990s were brought from the occupied territory of Abkhazia. Their family members were informed and, in agreement with them, the transfer of the remains, civil funeral and

burial ceremony with military honours were organised, and the covering of funeral expenses was coordinated. Taking into account the desire of the said families and in cooperation with the relevant municipalities, the remains of the identified individuals were buried with due respect at various locations, including at ancestral cemeteries.

The 16th meeting of the coordination mechanism consisting of **Georgian and Abkhazian participants functioning under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** on matters related to the searching for persons who went missing, was held in Istanbul. The 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the **Working Group for Forensic Medicine and Anthropology** operating within the framework of the same mechanism, was also held.

Within the framework of the service for genetic forensic diagnosis, genetic examination of 55 biological samples of family members and biological relatives of persons who went missing as a result of the armed actions in Abkhazia in the 1990s was carried out. A workshop was held with the participation of the State Minister and the ICRC Envoy, the aim of which was to initiate a discussion on developing long-term approaches to supporting the families.

During the reporting period, the Georgian side, within the framework of high and highest-level visits and meetings with partner countries and international organisations, in bilateral and multilateral formats, constantly raised the need **for unrestricted access to the occupied territories of Georgia by international human rights mechanisms, as well as the European Union Monitoring Mission**. Special emphasis was also placed on Russia's destructive steps, the need for the Russian Federation to implement the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement concluded with the intermediation of the European Union, as well as the need to develop specific implementation steps for the Ceasefire Agreement, including the withdrawal of Russian armed forces from the territory of Georgia and the creation of international security mechanisms in the occupied regions.

As a result, the International Community actively called on the Russian Federation, through various documents, to allow the EU Monitoring Mission into the occupied territories of Georgia and to let the Mission implement its mandate without restrictions throughout the territory of Georgia. The International Community has consistently emphasised the need for international human rights organisations to be allowed into the territories of the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

The mentioned issues were reflected, *inter alia*, in the report of the Secretary-General of the UN on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia, in the 29th Consolidated Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and in the decision of the Committee of Ministers at Deputy Level of the Council of Europe on the 'Council of Europe and the Conflict in Georgia'.

Except for the above, some of the main topics of each visit, meeting, public speech and participation in international forums, were human rights and the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, and the necessity for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It is worth noting that during the reporting period, work was underway to ensure appropriate EU support for the '**Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List**'.

The 2023 consolidated report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'On Human Rights Violations in the Territories of Georgia Occupied by Russia' has been distributed to international organisations.

During the reporting period, the Georgian delegation, while discussing humanitarian and human rights issues within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions, focused on the problems and rights of women affected by the conflict. In addition, this topic was discussed both with the co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, as well as with other international organisations and partner countries, so that in

the process of the peaceful resolution of the conflict due attention is paid to the proposals presented by women's organisations and to the needs of women affected by the conflict.

Representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with other members of the Georgian delegation to the Geneva International Discussions, and with the support of UN Women in Georgia, held regular meetings with representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organisations, defenders of women's rights, women affected by the conflict and internally displaced women. During the reporting period, work was underway to hold the next meeting in the second half of the year. In addition, on April 25-27 of the current year, a training was held on the topic: 'Inclusive Peace Processes, Negotiations, and Gender Perspective.' The training was led by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UN Women in Georgia. The training was attended by employees of public agencies working on issues related to the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict.

Strengthening the role and involvement of women in the peace process remained a key priority, including, in line with commitments under UN Security Council resolutions on 'Women, Peace and Security', by supporting women's participation in public diplomacy initiatives and confidence building projects, on the one hand, and by identifying and responding to the needs of women affected by conflict, on the other hand. Bilateral and multilateral meetings were held in various formats between the State Minister and representatives of the Office of the State Minister with representatives of non-governmental organisations working on issues related to women, as well as with women living in conflict-affected villages located along the demarcation lines.

In order to further develop the existing initiative - 'Practical Entrepreneurship Course - How to Start a Business' in order to increase the knowledge and skills necessary for economic activity and the economic empowerment of conflict-affected women living along the demarcation line, negotiations were held between the Office of the State Minister and UN WOMEN in Georgia, with the involvement of the Academy of the Ministry of Finance. Agreement was reached on the content and format of the training course, as well as the selection process.

In order to provide information on the prevention and suppression of violence against women, as well as on existing safeguards in this regard, in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, information meetings were held with women affected by conflict and their family members living along the demarcation lines (in the village of Bozhami, Kaspi Municipality, and the village of Karkushaani, Dusheti Municipality, attended by **a total of 66 local residents, including 2 persons with disabilities**) on the issues of domestic violence and the state services available in this direction.

It is notable that in their statements, press releases, or comments, the representatives of the EU and its Member States have openly supported the territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. Among them, representatives of the European Union and its member states strongly condemned the Russian presidential elections held in both occupied regions in March of the current year and the so-called parliamentary elections held in the Tskhinvali region in June.

The issues of resolving the Russia-Georgia conflict were discussed at the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU-Georgia High-Level Strategic Dialogue on Security Issues on January 23, at the meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Council on 20 February, and at the Eastern Partnership Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on March 14, at a meeting with the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the European Union on 10 April, and at a meeting with participants of the General Affairs Council of the European Union on 30 April.

In order to establish contacts with the population living in the conflict region and raise their awareness of human rights, during the reporting period, the Public Defender's Office of Georgia conducted monitoring in 6 villages of Gori Municipality located near the occupation line.

In March 2024, a subsection of the Public Defender's parliamentary report on the rights of the population affected by conflict was prepared, which reflected the recommendations/suggestions submitted to the Government. **A Consolidated Report of the Council of Europe and an Information Document for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights** were prepared.

**In order to support the integration of IDPs into Georgian society**, 1,062 displaced families were provided with long-term dwellings; 17 dwelling places owned by the IDPs were financed in order to improve their living conditions; 10,735 IDPs were provided with one-off financial aid (in emergency cases) and 613 families were provided with temporary dwellings.

In the first half of 2024, 74 applications were submitted within the **framework of the Grant Programme for the Support of Resettled IDPs and Eco-Migrants**, of which 30 beneficiaries were identified as winners.

### 2.3 Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Continuing and deepening cooperation with the European Union is one of the important directions for Georgia in terms of improving the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats.

During the reporting period, a number of meetings were held to improve **CBRN Threat Reduction Capabilities**, where representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Division of Inter-Agency Coordination, participated and made relevant statements at the following events: 1) 22-27 January - a working visit of the Georgian Inter-Agency Delegation to relevant US Government agencies was held in Washington, D.C., to familiarise themselves with the institutional arrangements for chemical safety and best practices and activities in chemical safety. The mentioned visit was carried out with the support of **the Office of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Terrorism (WMDT) of the U.S. Department of State** within the framework of the project 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity in the Area of Chemical Safety in Georgia'. The project aims to improve the legislative framework and institutional capacity in the field of chemical safety. The delegation of Georgia held meetings with representatives of relevant departments of the U.S. Department of State, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Defence Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), the Emergency Management Service, the Chemical Safety Council, the Coast Guard, Internal Security, the Department of Commerce, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Transportation Security Administration. 2) 7-8 February, a **meeting of the working group of the G7 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction** was held in Rome. The main emphasis was placed on security challenges, including the consequences of the war initiated by Russia, the threats related to Ukraine's nuclear reactors, especially the difficult situation in Zaporizhzhia, as well as Russia's disinformation campaign. The Georgian side emphasised the importance of mobilising collective efforts against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials. The statement focused on the threats emanating from the occupied territories of Georgia and the importance of international verification and monitoring on the ground. 3) 5-7 March - the Second International Symposium in Brussels, the Kingdom of Belgium, on the topic: **'2024 International Symposium on Insider Threats Mitigation'**. The event was organised by **the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) of the US Department of State, the Belgian Federal Agency for Nuclear Control, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**. Georgia, within the

framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has joined National Statement on Mitigating Insider Threats, which was adopted in 2016. The main goal of the event was to fulfil/implement the commitment which was undertaken at the national level. 4) 16-17 May 2024 – a preparatory meeting for the Tenth Conference of States Parties (CSP10) to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), where the working groups, within the framework of the Treaty, presented documents to be approved at the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference, on which discussions were held. 5) 20-24 May - the Second International Conference on Nuclear Safety (ICONS) held in Vienna. At the conference, the importance of the Agency was emphasised in the field of nuclear and radiological non-proliferation and security. The recent steps taken were reviewed and the importance of active international cooperation was underlined. 6) 16-17 May, **a meeting of representatives of the national responsible authorities of the OPCW Eastern European member states** was held in Budapest, jointly organised by the Government of Hungary and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The issues related to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), as well as the main areas of activity of the responsible national authorities were discussed. 7). 26-27 June - the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, dedicated to the current security situation in the OSCE area. During the special session, **in terms of the reduction of CBRN threats**, a number of annual reports were prepared during the reporting period: 1) annual report of the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOG); 2). Chemical Weapons Convention's Annual Declaration on Past Activities (ADPA) and Annual Declaration on Anticipated Activities (ADAA); 3); annual report of Georgia under the Biological Weapons Convention's National CBM reports; 4) annual reports under Protocols 5 and 2 of the UN Convention on **Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW)**; 5) annual report under the **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**.

During the reporting period, amendments were made to the Waste Management Code (**Law No 4041-XIV06-X03 of 21 February 2024 on Making Amendments to the Waste Management Code**), which determined new requirements related to the extended obligation of the producer, including administrative offences and relevant fines, as well as other administrative sanctions related to waste management.

During the reporting period, **15 CBRN reconnaissance off-road vehicles** were delivered to relevant units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within the framework of an ongoing project supported by the US Department of Energy (DoE) and the Nuclear Smuggling Detection and Deterrence (NSDD) Service.

### 3. Democracy, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; Strengthening Institutions

#### 3.1 Human Rights

During the reporting period, a 2023 report on the implementation of the 2023-2024 Action Plan for Fighting Against Trafficking in Human Beings was developed.

**The Human Rights Action Plan for 2024-2026** includes a relevant goal (chapter) and planned activities to combat torture and ill-treatment.

In the first half of 2024, within the framework of the Interagency Coordination Council for Implementing Measures against Trafficking in Human Beings, active work was underway to develop **a State Strategy to Protect Children Living and/or Working on the Streets from All Forms of Violence, including Trafficking in Human Beings**. In particular: 9-10 March 2024, with the financial support of the European Union project - 'Support to the Reform of the Justice System in Georgia', a workshop was held with the participation of the member

agencies of the Coordination Council to work on the draft of the 2025-2030 State Strategy for the Protection of Children Living and/or Working on the Streets from All Forms of Violence, including Trafficking in Human Beings (the Strategy). The workshop was also attended by an international expert on juvenile justice matters. The findings of the meeting were reflected in the existing draft strategy. Also, on 3-4 June 2024, with the financial support of the European Union project - 'Promoting the Reform of the System of Justice in Georgia', a workshop was held with about 10 local self-government representatives. The purpose of the meeting was to analyse the current situation in the process of providing services to children living and/or working on the streets and their families, and, to this end, to discuss the challenges and needs. The workshop was also attended by an international expert on juvenile justice matters. The recommendations and comments developed as a result of the meeting were reflected in the existing draft of the 2025-2030 State Strategy for the Protection of Children Living and/or Working on the Street from All Forms of Violence, Including Trafficking in Human Beings. The strategy and its implementation action plan are scheduled to be approved in 2024.

For the purpose of preventing trafficking in human beings, the following awareness raising activities were carried out during the reporting period:

- 25 January 2024, the manager of the Tbilisi Shelter for Victims of Human Trafficking and Violence held an awareness raising meeting at the LEPL College, Gldani Vocational Training Centre on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, as well as on the services available at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking for victims of human trafficking and violence, which was attended by about 40 participants;

- 23 February 2024, the head of the Legal Support Department of the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking participated in the event 'Strengthening Cooperation and Coordination': a partnership between municipalities and state agencies for the prevention and effective fight against violence against women/domestic violence, on the topic - 'strengthening cooperation and coordination between municipalities and government agencies, civil society organisations and other engaged parties to improve the prevention of and responsive mechanisms to violence';

- 6-8 March 2024, the head of the Legal Support Department of the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking participated in the training seminar 'Strengthening Women's Participation in the Civil Integration Process', on the topic - 'human rights, gender equality and women's rights, state support mechanisms and services', which was attended by about 40 participants;

- 9 April 2024, a meeting was held with the employees of the new Kutaisi No 2 Maternity Hospital, organised by the Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, which had 12 attendees. The meeting was led by the head of the Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, where attendees were introduced to the services available at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking for victims of violence against women, domestic violence, and human trafficking;

- 12 April 2024, a meeting was held with the employees of the Imereti Police Department, organised by the Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, which was attended by the heads of the Imereti regional police departments and the witness and victim coordinator, a total of 15 attendees. The meeting was led by the head of the Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence and a lawyer, where the attendees were introduced to the services available at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking for victims of violence against women, domestic violence, and human trafficking;

- 15 April 2024, a meeting was held with members of the Gender Council of the Baghdati Municipality City Hall and Sakrebulo, organised by the Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, attended by 20 employees of the Sakrebulo and the City Hall. The meeting was led by the head and specialist of the Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, where the attendees were introduced to the services available at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking for victims of violence against women, domestic violence, and human trafficking;
- 17 April 2024, a meeting was organised by the Ozurgeti Crisis Centre for Victims of Violence at Ozurgeti Public School No 4, attended by 3 public school teachers and 12 school students. The meeting was led by a lawyer/head and social worker from the Ozurgeti Crisis Center for Victims of Violence, where the attendees were introduced to the services available at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking for victims of violence against women, domestic violence, and human trafficking;
- 13 May 2024, a meeting was organised by the Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence with representatives of the Zestaponi Municipality City Hall and Sakrebulo, which was attended by 25 employees of the City Hall and Sakrebulo;
- 15 May 2024, a meeting was held with representatives of the Samtredia Municipality City Hall and Sakrebulo, organised by Kutaisi service institution for victims of violence, attended by 50 employees of the City Hall and Sakrebulo (city council) - the meeting was led by the senior specialist of Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, where the attendees were introduced to the services available for victims of violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking;
- 16 May 2024, a meeting was held with members of the Gender Council at Terjola Municipality City Hall and Sakrebulo, organised by Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, which was attended by 20 employees of the City Hall and Sakrebulo;
- 16 May 2024, a meeting was held with members of the Gender Council at Kharagauli Municipality City Hall and Sakrebulo, organised by Kutaisi Service Institution for Victims of Violence, which was attended by 20 employees of the City Hall and Sakrebulo;
- 4 June 2024, the head/social worker of Marneuli Crisis Centre for victims of violence held a meeting with senior students from public schools in Gardabani villages (Vakhtangisi, Jalinino, Nazarlo) (12 participants) at the Nazarlo Public School organised by the 'Nazarlo Community Centre', within the framework of the project 'Azerbaijani Girls towards Light'; the topic of the meeting was 'Let's Unite to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls', and the attendees were also informed about the services available at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking;
- 14 June 2024, the head of Gori service institution for victims of violence participated in the event (information meeting) 'Various Aspects of Working on Gender Equality' organised by the EU Monitoring Mission, who provided the audience with information about the services of shelters and crisis centres, and introduced the attendees to the services available at the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking. The meeting was attended by 12 non-governmental organisations.

In terms of the protection of human rights, one of the important priorities is the **fight against domestic violence, violence against women, crimes committed by minors and against minors, and discrimination and hate crimes**. During January-June 2024, **135 employees were re-trained** on matters related to domestic violence and violence

against women in cooperation with the MIA Academy and the Human Rights Protection Department of the MIA.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has been conducting the campaign ‘Do Not Deprive of Childhood’ for five years, the main goals of which are to prevent early marriage and domestic violence against women by raising public awareness, as well as informing the public on the importance of timely reporting to law enforcement bodies about this category of crimes. Employees of the Human Rights Protection Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, together with representatives of local police units, met with more than 1,100 students from schools in 6 regions and from schools in Tbilisi, more than 400 parents, teachers, representatives of school administration and gender councils of local municipalities, as part of the information campaign ‘Do Not Deprive of Childhood’. The aim of the meetings was to raise awareness about the harmful consequences of child marriage, the existing legal regulations in this field, and the measures taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to eradicate child marriage.

In order to disseminate information about the services of children’s psychological and social service centres, with the **involvement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and funding from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)**, booklets were printed and distributed in the Georgian (1,500 copies), Azerbaijani and Armenian (200 copies each) languages.

The information campaign lasted for a month and covered a number of events, including:

- meetings with various target groups in the regions of Georgia;
- as part of the meetings, children were given branded materials produced with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);
- an essay competition was also held as part of the campaign.

**The Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia** conducted 3 training activities on issues of violence against women and domestic violence. 35 employees of the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia were trained.

**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 and against minors, by assessing the adequacy and quality of the response of police officers to the notifications and data entered into the electronic system. When identifying shortcomings and findings raised during the monitoring process, appropriate recommendations were prepared and thematic activities were planned for their eradication. During the reporting period, monitoring was carried out on approximately 1,800 criminal cases of crimes committed by/against minors.

In addition, with the coordination and involvement of the Human Rights Protection Department, on the basis of the 2024-2027 Medium-Term Action Plan of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, work has recently begun on procedures for arranging children’s rooms in two police departments. Also, from 2024, the Juvenile Affairs Division has started functioning at the Adjara Police Department.

8 training activities were carried out by the **Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia** with regard to **human rights** and **anti-discrimination** issues. A total of 54 prosecutors and investigators from the Prosecutor’s Office were retrained within the framework of the training activities. A unified report on crimes motivated by intolerance on the grounds of discrimination was published on the website of the National Statistics Service.

2 training activities were conducted by **the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia** on the topic of gender-based violence. 32 employees of the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia were trained. Criminal cases of crimes motivated by intolerance on the grounds of gender were analysed and an analysis document was made up.

6 service agencies (**shelters**) for victims of human trafficking and violence, and 7 **crisis centres** for victims of violence are operating under the **LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking**, in particular: Tbilisi (2 shelters), Batumi, and Sighnaghi service agencies (shelters) for victims of human trafficking, Gori and Kutaisi service institutions (shelter and crisis centre combined) for victims of violence, and Tbilisi, Ozurgeti, Marneuli, Telavi and Zugdidi crisis centres for victims of violence.

**During the reporting period**, a total of 80 victims (19 from Tbilisi; 7 from Batumi; 19 from Gori; 12 from Kutaisi; 15 from Sighnaghi) and 52 dependents (9 from Tbilisi; 6 from Gori; 21 from Kutaisi; 13 from Sighnaghi) benefited from **service agencies (shelters) for victims of human trafficking**, of which 76 victims received psychosocial and social assistance/rehabilitation, 84 of them received legal assistance/consultation, and 24 victims were provided with medical services.

A total of 169 victims (114 from Tbilisi; 16 from Gori; 12 from Kutaisi; 13 from Ozurgeti; 4 from Marneuli; 7 from Telavi; 3 from Zugdidi) and 109 dependents (82 from Tbilisi; 1 from Gori; 4 from Ozurgeti; 6 from Marneuli; 11 from Telavi; 5 from Zugdidi) benefited from the services of the crisis centres for victims of violence; of these, legal services/consultation were provided to 83 persons, psychological and social services to 71, and medical services to 10 persons;

From January to June 2024, **4 victims of trafficking benefited from the services of the institution (shelter) for victims of human trafficking and violence**, and 5 victims were provided with such services from the crisis centre. Each of them was enrolled in the aforementioned services on the basis of a contract. One beneficiary was placed in a 24-hour shelter for homeless children. The victims received psychological, social, legal, and medical services. Compensation for damages caused to victims of human trafficking was issued to 3 victims of trafficking during the reporting period (July to December inclusive).

From 1 January to 30 June 2024, 2 645 calls were made to **the hotline (116 006)** for assistance to victims of violence, operating under the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking.

During the reporting period, the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia held 2 meetings with students, 1 meeting with schoolchildren, and 2 meetings with women from ethnic minorities living in rural areas on the issues of gender-based violence, domestic violence, and gender equality, including early marriage. The Office of the Public Defender also conducted a 2-day training on the topic of femicide with prosecutors and managers. Representatives from various regions attended the training.

**As part of monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, the quality of inclusive education was assessed in 11 higher educational institutions. Based on the monitoring results, a report 'Monitoring of Inclusive Education in Higher Educational Institutions' was prepared and published. In order to popularise the above-mentioned Convention, 2 information meetings were also held during the reporting period at Gori Municipality Resource Centre with employees/beneficiaries of the Day Centre located in the same municipality.

During the first 6 months of 2024, **as part of the deinstitutionalisation of large institutions for persons with disabilities**, 6 persons with disabilities were transferred from Martkopi Boarding House for Persons with Disabilities to an alternative service, namely, a small family-type service for supporting independent living for persons with disabilities located in the city of Zugdidi.

For the purpose of strengthening the inclusion of persons with disabilities in public and economic life and ensuring their better accessibility to public spaces, from January 2024, personal assistant services have been

introduced to the regions of Imereti (Baghdati), Guria (Chokhatauri), Adjara (Batumi, Shuakhevi, Keda). Home care services were provided nationwide in the regions of Imereti (Kutaisi, Baghdati), Guria (Chokhatauri), and Adjara (Shuakhevi, Keda). A new organisation providing family support services has been added to Terjola (Early Childhood Development Support Sub-Programme). Children's rehabilitation/habilitation programmes have been implemented in Ambrolauri and Tkibuli.

**In order to disseminate information among different groups of society about anti-discrimination legislation and the practice of the Public Defender**, the Office of the Public Defender held 11 meetings with school children, students and representatives of private sectors, on the issues of equality and the prohibition of discrimination, in which 285 persons participated and obtained relevant information.

### 3.2 Penitentiary and Probation System Reform

In accordance with the mandate under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), in the first half of 2024 the Public Defender's Office carried out 18 preventive visits to places of restriction/deprivation of liberty, namely: 14 visits to a penitentiary institution, 1 visit to a temporary detention isolator, 1 visit to the Department of Forensic Psychiatry of the National Forensics Bureau, 2 visits to psychiatric institutions, 2 visits to defence facilities. During the reporting period, the 2023 Annual Report of the National Preventive Mechanism was prepared and published, which also reflected the status of the implementation of recommendations; **a report from the psychiatric hospital of Batumi Medical Centre was published; a study on the situation of prisoners with mental health problems in the criminal justice system** was prepared with the involvement of an international expert.

In the first half of 2024, 85 cases were brought **to the Juvenile Referral Centre**. During the reporting period, 2 workshops were held with representatives of municipalities within the framework of the Council of Europe and the European Union project, with the aim of exchanging information on activities and improving further cooperation.

**The tool for assessing the risks and needs of adult convicted persons and the procedures for the management of cases** was introduced to all penitentiary institutions. 29 social workers were involved in the current process. As of June 2024, case management is ongoing with 781 convicts.

As of June 2024, 12 general rehabilitation programmes have been implemented in the probation and penitentiary systems; 6 beneficiaries are engaged in the 'Programme of Preparation for Release of Persons Sentenced to Life Imprisonment'.

In order to expand the use of alternative measures of imprisonment, increase the use of existing forms of non-custodial punishment and introduce new forms, as well as to increase the capabilities of the probation service, during the reporting period, 10 PROBBOX devices purchased with the support of the US (INL) have been placed across the country. As of January-June 2024, low-risk probationers used PROBBOX 113,081 times. The National Agency for Crime Prevention, Enforcement of Non-Custodial Sentences and Probation also purchased 100 units of electronic surveillance equipment and a corresponding server, while 50 units of electronic surveillance equipment were provided free of charge by the US (INL).

At this stage, 12 general rehabilitation programmes have been implemented in the probation and penitentiary systems; 6 beneficiaries are involved in the programme for the release of persons sentenced to life imprisonment.

In the first half of 2024, 912 beneficiaries, 508 of whom are unique beneficiaries, participated in the rehabilitation and resocialisation programmes for probationers, former prisoners, and diverted persons and benefited from rehabilitation services. During the reporting period, with the support of the Council of Europe, **a joint rehabilitation programme 'Positive Parenting'** was created with the involvement of relevant specialists from the penitentiary and probation systems and international experts, and 6 beneficiaries (parents) were involved in the piloting process.

**In order to improve the qualifications of employees of the National Agency for Crime Prevention, Enforcement of Non-Custodial Sentences and Probation**, the following trainings were conducted during the reporting period: **Specialisation Course in Juvenile Justice** - 14 participants; **Professional Burnout** - 29 participants; **Practical Guide to Mental Health** - 2 participants; **Personal Data Protection** - 1 participant; **Introductory Course for Probation Officers** - 20 participants; **Special Training Course for Probation Officers** - 7 participants; **Personal Data Protection** - 2 participants; **First Aid** - 8 participants; **Quantitative Data Processing and Basic Statistical Analysis Using SPSS** - 1 participant; **Inter and Intrapersonal Communications, Team Building and Motivation** - 28 participants; **Personal Data Protection Officer Certification Course** - 1 participant; **Special Training Course for Probation Officers** - 14 participants; **Occupational Stress and Burnout Prevention** - 14 participants; **Updated Procurement Legislation** - 2 participants.

In all penitentiary institutions, **medical units** are equipped and staffed, and infrastructure is being gradually upgraded. A new penitentiary facility provided with modern equipment and devices has been opened in the city of Laituri. Medical aid stations have been fully renovated at facilities N2 and N8.

### 3.3 Rights of the Child

Within the framework of monitoring the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Code of the Rights of the Child, 14 institutions were monitored, of which 10 were small family-type homes and 4 facilities for mothers and children. A corresponding chapter of the Public Defender's parliamentary report was prepared.

In the first half of 2024, the Department of Child's Rights of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia held 29 information meetings with a total of 444 children. Of these, 17 were held in a public school, 3 in a private school, 1 in a community centre, 1 in a youth centre, 7 in a small family-type home. Also, on 31 May 2024, an event dedicated to the Children's Rights Day was held in the Imereti region with the participation of children. Child-friendly information materials have been updated including brochures, posters, infographics, presentations, and videos in three languages - Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani.

On 27 June 2024, amendments to the Law on Social Work were approved. **The law regulates issues related to additional social guarantees for social workers and the promotion of social work.** On the basis of the amendments, the opportunity of being employed as a social worker will also be given to a person whose skills and competence are as close as possible to those of a qualified social worker and who will be able to perform certain functions to ensure the work of the relevant institution during the transitional period; as a result of passing certification or acquiring appropriate practical experience during the transitional period, the said person will continue to perform the functions of a social worker in a complete and highly qualified manner.

Within the framework of the 'State Programme for Social Rehabilitation and Child Care for 2024', **a sub-programme for providing services in small family-type homes is in place**, a component of which is the management of difficult behaviour in specialised small family-type homes. The goal of the programme is to

rehabilitate juveniles deprived of parental care who have antisocial behaviours, and to promote their socialisation.

Within the framework of the State Programme for Social Rehabilitation and Child Care, the sub-programme for providing shelter to homeless children, there are a total of four 24-hour shelters operating, namely: in Tbilisi - 2, in Rustavi - 1 and in Kutaisi - 1. In addition, there are 5 day centres operating throughout Georgia, namely: in Tbilisi - 3, in Rustavi - 1, in Kutaisi - 1. Within the framework of the above-mentioned sub-programme, 4 mobile groups consisting of a social worker, a psychologist and a peer-educator operate in Tbilisi, 1 in Rustavi and 2 in Kutaisi (the second mobile group in Kutaisi was added in 2024). From 1 January to 30 January 2024, the mobile groups established 303 new contacts; from 1 January to June 2024, 9 new beneficiaries were admitted to the shelter for homeless children, and 25 beneficiaries to the day centre; 48 hotline messages were responded to accordingly.

In accordance with the data from the first 6 months of 2024, a total of 1,324 children are in foster care, of which 410 are persons with disabilities; 137 children are in kinship foster care, and 221 children are in small family-type homes. In accordance with the data from the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking, 451 children were re-integrated into biological families during the reporting period.

In the direction of working on the deinstitutionalisation of children, from 1 January 2024 until the present, the territorial units of the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking have registered 16 new foster carers in terms of alternative care services.

The Prosecutor's Office carried out 6 training activities on the issue of **the rights of the child**. A total of 47 prosecutors and investigators from the Prosecutor's Office were retrained within the framework of the training activities.

### 3.4 Reform of the Judiciary

**In order to prepare comments on the Norms of Judicial Ethics, on 24 March 2023**, the High Council of Justice established a **working group**, which is composed of judges of the courts of all three instances. The working group is at the final stage of preparing comments on the Norms of Judicial Ethics.

A working group comprising members of the High Council of Justice, court managers, and judicial officers, is at the final stage of preparation of the draft of the organisational work and case management procedures at common courts. The project will be finalised with the engagement of the members of the working group, judicial officers, the IT Group of the High Council of Justice, and the statistics sector of the Analytical Department of the Supreme Court.

During the reporting period, the High School of Justice conducted the following trainings:

- 'Problematic Issues of the Code on the Rights of the Child' on 25 May 2024. A total of 3 judges and 14 public servants were trained.
- 'In-depth Training Course on Judicial Ethics' on 24-25 February and 20-21 April 2024. In total, 7 judges and 13 public servants were trained. In 2024, the training 'In-depth Training Course on Judicial Ethics' was conducted.
- Training on 'the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction on 20-21 April 2024. 8 judges and 8 public servants were trained.

- Training on ‘Law on Personal Data Protection’ and ‘Access to Public Information’ on 6-7 April 2024. 12 public servants were trained.
- Training on ‘Matters of Labour Relations in the Public Service’ on 27 April 2024. 15 judges were trained.
- Training on ‘Prohibition of Discrimination - Domestic Legislation and International Standards’ on 22-23 June 2024. 1 judge and 14 public servants were trained.
- Training on ‘Matters of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing’ on 25-26 May 2024. 2 judges and 6 public servants were trained.
- Training ‘Trafficking in Human Beings’ on 1-2 June 2024. 2 judges and 8 public servants were trained.

Regarding the Statistics Sector of the Supreme Court, with the assistance of the local expert of the joint projects of the Council of Europe and the European Union ‘Promoting the Modernisation of Court Management in Georgia (PGG III)’ and ‘Supporting Better Assessment of the Results of Judicial Reform in the Eastern Partnership Countries (Dashboard Eap)’, during the current year, **an online form for recording the flow of civil cases in courts of first instance and instructions for filling it out was created**, which has already been agreed upon with the project managers.

Three pilot courts have been selected in the judicial system, in which the aforementioned electronic file will be filled out in a test mode. The introduced innovation will facilitate the calculation of indicators on the flow of civil cases in the CEPEJ questionnaire.

Additionally, in order to implement the recommendations of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), the Group of Experts on Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the GREVIO Group of Experts), and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the CEDAW Convention) during the reporting period, new paragraphs have been added to the quarterly (annual) statistical reporting forms in effect in courts since 2024: in civil cases - on disputes related to ‘compensation by the perpetrator for damage caused by violence against women and/or domestic violence’, and in administrative cases - on disputes related to ‘compensation to be granted to victims of violence against women and/or domestic violence’.

It is also worth noting that, within the framework of the Council of Europe project Promoting Effective Mechanisms for Equality and Non-Discrimination in Georgia, a joint report of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor's Office and of the Court for 2023 was published on the website of the National Statistics Service of Georgia, on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding. The judicial part of the aforementioned report is also posted on the website of the Supreme Court.

During the reporting period, **10 decisions against Georgia made by the Strasbourg Court in 2024 have been translated into Georgian by the Analytical Department of the Supreme Court of Georgia**, and also 20 cases have been translated for publishing at the Georgian language interface of the electronic search system of Strasbourg Court Decisions (HUDOC). Additionally, the department prepared 30 analytical papers on international standards on the basis of requests from judges and assistant judges on specific legal issues. It is also noteworthy that in order to generalise national judicial practice, collections of national court decisions on the following topics were prepared in 2024 within the framework of the Research and Analysis Centre of the Analytical Department: labour disputes; construction disputes; tax disputes; current case law regarding residence permits; legal obligations; contractual disputes; law of obligations; civil proceedings and law of things.

The Legal Aid Service has completely updated the website of the provider network, changed its concept, and adjusted the functionality that network members have access to. In addition, information on planned trainings and other network activities is posted in the form of a calendar. One of the important changes concerned the activation of voting functionality, which makes the decision-making process by member organisations efficient and flexible. A 'Frequently Asked Questions Field' has been added to 'Resources'. 'Successful cases' will also be posted in the relevant section of the website.

New members have been added to the network of legal aid providers, including: Georgian Court Watch, National University of Georgia, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Ilia State University, the Law Clinic of the Free University and others. For detailed information regarding the changes made, please visit the following website: [www.freelaw.ge](http://www.freelaw.ge)

The Mobile Consultation Centre of the Legal Aid Service conducted 62 consultation meetings, including for the population living in rural and mountainous regions. Both persons with disabilities and the displaced population benefited from on-site legal consultations. A total of 1,600 beneficiaries were provided with legal aid within the framework of the consultation.

### 3.5 Civil Service Reform and the Fight against Corruption

During the reporting period, a number of activities were implemented in the fields of **civil service reform** and the **fight against corruption**.

During the reporting period, the Civil Service Bureau resumed work on the Integrity Strategy Document of the Bureau. The process began in 2023 with the assistance of the European Union project 'Support to the Public Administration Reform in Georgia (PAR)' and is based on the Bureau's integrity risk assessment, the formation of an integrity risk register, and the development of an institutional strategy of integrity and documents of the action plan. Based on an analysis of information provided by the heads of structural units of human resources management in ministries and municipalities, and by representatives of civil society and donor organisations, and the interviews conducted therewith, an integrity risk assessment document was prepared. At the next stage, a risk register and a strategy structure document were developed.

At the initiative of the Civil Service Bureau and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UK Aid of the government of the United Kingdom, **a unified electronic platform for learning and development was created - Elearning.csb.gov.ge**. The mentioned platform is administered by the Civil Service Bureau. It was developed on the basis of Moodle and allows professional public officers and other interested parties to take/purchase various courses offered by training providers. During the reporting period, two e-courses were fully uploaded and became operational on the electronic platform - (1) Management and Leadership and (2) Public Policy Planning, Monitoring and Analysis.

During the reporting period, the Bureau, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the involvement of local experts, completed work on an online self-guided course, '**Persons with Disabilities in Public Service: How to Create an Equal Work Environment.**' At this stage, the course is being uploaded to the unified electronic learning platform ([elearning.csb.gov.ge](http://elearning.csb.gov.ge)), which will be available to interested parties.

Taking into account the challenges and priorities in public service and in order to improve the professional development system, the Civil Service Bureau prepared a draft amendment to Ordinance No 242 of 22 May 2018 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the Procedures for Determining the Professional Development Needs of a Professional Public Officer, the Professional Development Standards and Rules, which

was approved by the Government of Georgia on 12 January 2024. The goal of the amendment was to add mandatory basic courses to the professional development programmes of public officers in order to develop the necessary skills for public officers.

With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the government of the United Kingdom, UK Aid, a methodology was developed on 'Non-formal Learning for the Professional Empowerment of Women in the Public Service'. The goal of developing the methodology was to demonstrate the need for the development and support of women in public service, and at the same time, to identify the shortcomings that such support programmes should address, with a special focus on non-formal learning methods. The methodology also focused on its implementation stage and, in addition, contained recommendations on how non-formal learning can be introduced to the Georgian public service and what should be recommended to be considered in this process.

During the reporting period, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Civil Service Bureau held **'the HR Forum'**, the aim of which was to strengthen the human resource management system in public service and promote the implementation of standardised approaches to process management, encourage data-based decisions, and introduce e-learning platforms. The forum was attended by both employees of the Civil Service Bureau and representatives of the human resources management department of the Government, with a total of 34 participants. The forum discussed news related to the professional development system and the electronic learning platform - Elearning.csb.gov.ge.

In order to promote the systematic implementation of the organisational structure of public institutions, **an organisational self-assessment tool** has been created, the purpose of which is to assess the current state of the organisation in relation to established indicators and identify areas for improvement. The tool sets out key, baseline indicators that public institutions must meet to ensure the smooth functioning and effective implementation of their mandate. The organisational self-assessment tool is published on the Bureau's website.

In addition, in order to facilitate the practical implementation of the organisational self-assessment process, **a training module was developed**, the aim of which was **to raise public officers' awareness of the processes of functional and institutional analysis of public institutions**, the main directions, role and importance of organisational self-assessment, as well as the use of the institutional self-analysis tool and the interpretation of the results. On the basis of the training module, 5 training sessions were conducted by employees of the Bureau with the participation of 75 representatives of central public institutions.

By Ordinance No 66 of 16 February 2023, the government of Georgia approved 'the **2023-2026 Public Administration Reform Strategy and its 2023-2024 Implementation Action Plan**'. As of July 2024, the implementation process of the Action Plan has been in an active phase. The Secretariat of the Public Administration Reform Council has prepared the first progress report of the implementation of the Action Plan covering the first three quarters of 2023, and the annual monitoring report. The annual monitoring report assessed the progress of task implementation and activities carried out during the year. Currently, the process of preparing a monitoring report on the implementation of the Action Plan is underway, which will cover the reporting period for Q1 and Q2 of 2024.

The first annual report on monitoring the implementation of the 2023-2024 Action Plan for the Implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2023-2026 is available on the website [www.gov.ge](http://www.gov.ge).

The Action Plan of Open Government Georgia (OGP) for 2024-2025, which is one of the key policy documents of the government of Georgia, was approved by Ordinance No 555 of 29 December 2023 of the Government of Georgia, which aims to improve the quality of access to information and transparency, strengthen the mechanisms of accountability of public institutions to the public, and increase opportunities for their engagement.

The Action Plan for Transparency, Accountability, and Citizen Engagement covers 10 major commitments, including those to improve the existing standard for requesting public information electronically and for its proactive publishing, and those to adopt an Open Government Data Act.

The Open Government Georgia Action Plan for 2024-2025 is available on the website [ogp.gov.ge](http://ogp.gov.ge), in both Georgian and English.

From August 2024, **the powers of the Anti-Corruption Bureau will be further expanded** and will include the development and implementation of programmes on ethics, integrity, and accountability in public service; as well as the study and generalisation of the practice of compliance with ethical norms by public officers and the development of appropriate recommendations. Currently, these issues fall under the mandate of the Civil Service Bureau. In June 2024, the Bureau launched a situational analysis to assess the effectiveness of the existing regulatory framework and identify existing challenges. **A concept for international, comparative legal studies to be conducted by the Anti-Corruption Bureau has been created**, one of which includes research on integrity. The studies are planned to be conducted in countries that were considered to have fully or partially implemented the most integrity-related recommendations in accordance with the GRECO's 5th round evaluation report, such as North Macedonia, Luxembourg, Latvia and The Netherlands.

**The Georgian National Anti-Corruption Strategy and its Implementation Action Plan** should, inter alia, be based on the results of corruption risk assessment in relevant bodies and organisations. Accordingly, in June 2024, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, with the support of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), began working with a German expert to create a **Corruption Risk Assessment Methodology Document**. A visit to Georgia was planned for the expert to meet with the Anti-Corruption Bureau and other relevant agencies. The expert began working with the Anti-Corruption Bureau on developing questionnaires and creating a framework document. In parallel with these works, the work is underway on a situational analysis to create a national anti-corruption strategy.

5 training activities were carried out **on the issues of the investigation and criminal prosecution of crimes of corruption**. A total of 20 prosecutors and investigators from the Prosecutor's Office were retrained within the framework of the training activities.

**The Digital Governance Strategy of Georgia for 2024-2029** has been developed and it is in the process of being approved. It reflects modern trends in digital governance and forms a vision for the development of digital governance in the country's public administration over the next 6 years, and determines ways to address the challenges it faces. One of the goals of the strategy was to strengthen the governance model with public-private partnerships, which creates the basis for the obligations outlined in the action plan under this goal to be fulfilled according to a predetermined plan and within the deadlines. The 2024-2025 Action Plan determines the following: the creation of a digital governance communication platform - creation of a forum within the framework of public-private partnership; the formation of thematic groups of digital governance; the development of an architectural model for a unified integrated system (ecosystem) of the state's digital governance; the development of a reporting mechanism on projects implemented in the country in the field of digital governance.

In 2024, 4 trainings were held in the areas of public service development (design), provision, quality assurance and determining rates (development - 1, provision - 2, determining rates - 1) and 64 representatives of 27 public service providers were retrained.

Moreover, the implementation of **the European quality management model - the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** for the organisational self-assessment - was completed at the LEPL Public Service Hall; the implementation of **the Common Assessment Framework** was underway at the LEPL National Bureau of Enforcement; **a customer satisfaction survey methodology** was introduced to the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking; the LEPL National Archives of Georgia implemented **unified approaches to the formation and provision of services**; the LEPL Public Service Development Agency completed the implementation of **the Common Assessment Framework, customer satisfaction survey and rate determination processes**. As a result, the Agency is one of the first in the country to have implemented new, unified approaches in all five of the above-mentioned areas as of June 2024; the implementation of a Common Assessment Framework and customer satisfaction survey has been completed at the LEPL National Agency of Public Registry. As a result, the National Agency of Public Registry has also implemented new, unified approaches to all five areas; the LEPL National Agency of State Property has completed the implementation of **rate formation**. As a result, 3 areas have been introduced to the Agency.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Public Services for 2022-2025 approved within the framework of the Public Administration Reform, from 2022 to June 2024, **at least one area has been implemented in a total of 9 agencies**.

**In the area of construction and opening of houses of justice**, the House of Justice was opened in Samtredia during the reporting period. The construction of the House of Justice has been completed in Khashuri and renovation works are at the final stage. The construction of the House of Justice in Akhmeta is at the foundation arrangement stage; the construction of the structure of the House of Justice in Terjola has been completed. The House of Justice in Zoti is at the foundation arrangement stage. The House of Justice in Tsaishi is at the structural arrangement stage.

**In terms of raising awareness about digital literacy and cyberculture among public servants**, by Ordinance No 3 of 12 January 2024 of the Government of Georgia, an amendment was made to **Ordinance No 242 of 22 May 2018 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the Procedures for Determining the Professional Development Needs of a Professional Public Servant, the Professional Development Standards and Rules**. In accordance with the amendment, among other things, cyberhygiene has been added as one of the topics to the basic professional development programme for professional public officers.

With the assistance of USAID, a basic cybersecurity course is being offered on the [www.elearning.ge](http://www.elearning.ge) platform to train public officials in various state bodies. At this stage, three state agencies have completed the course.

In order to deepen international cooperation and share the experience of partner countries in the area of the prevention of and the fight against corruption, several events were held in the period from 1 January to 1 July 2024, in which representatives from the State Security Service participated, including the following:

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the regional interagency Black Sea Anti-Corruption Working Group held in Tbilisi (Georgia) with the support of the Transnational Anti-Corruption Partnership (TAP) programme of the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the USA, the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training (OPDAT) of the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).
- A webinar organised by the Interpol Financial Crime and Corruption Prevention Centre, within the framework of Operation FIRST LIGHT, on the topic: Financial Crime Analysis Files (FINCAF).

- An online meeting of the Anti-Transnational Financial Crime Working Group, organised by the Interpol Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre.
- An international conference held in Tbilisi, organised by the LEPL Anti-Corruption Bureau: Corruption Prevention: Anti-Corruption Reform in Georgia and International Practice, which was attended by representatives of the anti-corruption bureaus of Germany, Lithuania, Spain and Moldova.
- The 24th meeting of the Working Subgroup on Combating Corruption and Money Laundering held within the framework of the Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM), in online format.
- A meeting with representatives of the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, who were on an official visit to Tbilisi, within the framework of the OSCE project - Promoting the Fight against Corruption in Uzbekistan.

In addition, the State Security Service employees who were trained within the framework of the EU-funded Partnership for Good Governance (PGG II) Project of the Council of Europe successfully continued to hold information meetings on the fight against corruption. The main goal of the meetings was to provide information on measures to fight against corruption, the role of corruption prevention in this fight, and the importance of their involvement.

During the reporting period, with the engagement of the State Security Service and relevant agencies, **7 draft agreements on the exchange and mutual protection of classified information and 2 draft agreements on cooperation in the area of crime, including the fight against corruption**, were initiated and the respective consultations/negotiations are being carried out with partner countries. In addition, the State Security Service has initiated, and respective consultations are being carried out with the relevant agency of a partner country on, a draft memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the area of the fight against corruption.

## 4. Freedom, Security and Justice

### 4.1 Personal Data Protection

In order to facilitate the provision of effective leverage to **the Personal Data Protection Service**, as well as to implement internationally recognised standards for personal data protection in national legislation, **the following normative acts have been adopted in accordance with the new law**:

- The criteria for determining incidents posing a significant threat to fundamental human rights and freedoms, and the procedure for notifying the Personal Data Protection Service of an incident.
- The criteria for determining the circumstances giving rise to the obligation for a data protection impact assessment and the procedure for assessment.
- The determination of the circle of data controllers and data processors, who are not obliged to appoint or designate a personal data protection officer.
- The procedure for registering a special representative by the Personal Data Protection Service.

**The Personal Data Protection Service** has prepared thematic and sectoral **guidelines, recommendations, and translations** related to personal data protection:

- Recommendations on Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA);
- Processing of personal data for personal purposes and/or within the framework of family activities (theory and international practice);
- Methodology for producing annual statistics on the state of personal data protection, the conduct of covert investigative actions and the control of activities carried out in the central bank of electronic communication identification data;
- Recommendations on the implementation of video monitoring and audio monitoring;

- Recommendations on the processing of the personal data of minors;
- Recommendations on rights related to automated individual decision-making and profiling;
- Recommendations on the principles of personal data processing;
- Recommendations on the personal data protection officer;
- Recommendations on data processing using unmanned aerial vehicle systems;
- Recommendation on the implementation of measures related to an incident;
- Guidelines 04/2022 on the procedure for calculating administrative fines under the General Data Protection Regulation;
- Guidelines 02/2021 on virtual voice assistants;
- Guidelines 8/2020 on the targeted selection of social media users (offering information to a desired group of people);
- Guideline recommendation 3/2019 on the processing of personal data by video devices;
- Guideline recommendation on automated individual decision-making and profiling for the purposes of Regulation 2016/679;
- Recommendation on the right to the transmission of data;
- Guideline recommendation 4/2019 on Article 25 prioritising greater data masking as an initial default method used before choosing an alternative approach when creating a new product or service;
- Guideline recommendation on the right to data portability;
- Guideline recommendation 2/2019 on the processing of personal data in the context of the provision of online services to data subjects pursuant to Article 6(1)(b) of the GDPR;
- Guideline recommendation 05/2020 on consent;
- Guideline recommendation on the principle of transparency.

Guideline documents, recommendations, and translations are published on the website of the Service.

In order to take into consideration personal data protection standards, **75 internal national draft legal acts have been examined**. The process continues without interruption based on the referral of the agencies. In addition, **the legal review of 8 draft international treaties/agreements** to be concluded on behalf of Georgia was carried out.

Consultations have been held with public institutions, private organisations, law enforcement agencies and natural persons on issues related to personal data protection. **11,201 consultations** were provided during the reporting period.

**In 124 incidents** the Service imposed fines and warnings as administrative sanctions. 7 fines were imposed as administrative sanctions as a result of inspections started in 2023 and completed during the reporting period, and 72 fines were imposed as a result of inspections started and completed during the reporting period.

Out of the imposed **45 warnings**, **11** were imposed as a result of inspections started in 2023 and completed during the reporting period, and **34** were imposed as a result of inspections started and completed during the reporting period.

In addition to imposing administrative sanctions, in order to eliminate the deficiencies identified and to remedy the shortcomings, the Service provides recommendations and assigns mandatory tasks. The Service has assigned and provided **208 tasks and recommendations** for public institutions, private organisations and law enforcement agencies. Out of 203 assigned tasks, **49** were related to inspections started in 2023 and completed during the reporting period, and **154** were related to inspections started and completed during the reporting period. Out of **5** provided recommendations, **3** were related to an inspection started in 2023 and completed during the reporting period, and **2** were related to inspections started and completed during the reporting period.

In order to raise awareness among public servants, representatives of the private sector, interested persons, and different target groups on issues of personal data protection, the Service conducted **87 trainings** in which **5246 trainees** participated.

**6 statements and 2 decisions** related to cases of high public interest were published on the official website and social network page of the Personal Data Protection Service.

## 4.2 Migration and Asylum

During the reporting period, **the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues**, together with its member agencies, reviewed the consolidated version of the 2023 Report on EMN Migration and Asylum several times (in 3 phases) and shared their general comments with the network. The consolidated report will be published in July.

At the same time, the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues, together with its member agencies, prepared the 2023 National Report on Migration and Asylum, the final version of which was submitted to the network on 21 June.

Moreover, the country review document, which will be published in July, has been reviewed in 2 phases.

From 1 January to 30 June 2024, **1,807 non-biometric passports were cancelled**, leaving 215 non-biometric passports valid. During the same period, **153,382 biometric passports were issued**. As of 30 June a total of **3,254 753 biometric passports have been issued, of which 1,861,039 are valid**.

During the reporting period, under readmission agreements concluded by Georgia, **the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia** reviewed the readmission applications of **2,124 persons, 2,115** of which were decided positively, and **9** of which were decided negatively.

In addition, based on the Eurostat database, in the first 6 months of 2024, **5, 080** initial asylum applications from citizens of Georgia were registered in EU/Schengen area countries, which is a **59% decrease compared to 2023 (12, 365** initial applications). On the basis of the data from the first 6 months of 2024, 1,395 citizens of Georgia applied for asylum in Germany, which is a 72.9% decrease compared to the same period in 2023 (5,155).

On 1 May 2024, a protocol, which was signed on 16 February 2023 between **Georgia and Spain on the implementation of the ‘Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation’**, entered into force.

On 18 December 2023, **an Agreement on Migration and Mobility was signed between the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany**. The Agreement aims to strengthen cooperation between Georgia and the Federal Republic of Germany in the areas of labour migration and education. In addition to the above, the Agreement envisages strengthening the fight against illegal migration, which implies deepening cooperation in ensuring the readmission and reintegration of those citizens of Georgia who violate the visa-free travel regime.

In addition, negotiations are underway with a number of EU member states to sign implementation protocols to the Agreement between Georgia and the European Union on the Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorisation.

Within the framework of the State Programme for Supporting Reintegration of Returned Georgian Migrants, **160 beneficiaries were engaged in the programme and obtained financing**.

Within the framework of programmes supporting the integration of persons with international protection, 74 beneficiaries are involved in various integration activities.

### 4.3 Border Management

In order to deepen cooperation in the border sector with the border agencies of partner countries, the head of **the Border Police** visited Armenia on **22-24 April of the current year**, together with accompanying persons. A bilateral meeting was held with the Commander of the Border Troops of the Republic of Armenia, where issues of deepening cooperation between the two countries in the field of border security and best practices in border protection were discussed.

With the financial assistance of the US Government, it is planned to upgrade the infrastructure of administrative and auxiliary buildings of two border sectors on the protected sections of the Georgian-Russian state border, namely, Sector No 1 (Mamisoni) of Division No 8 (Java-Oni) and Sector No 7 (Omalo) of Division No 5 (Lagodekhi) of the Land Border Protection Department. The development of the initial version of the construction design for both border sectors was completed in June 2024. At this stage, the final versions of the projects are being developed and the necessary procedures for obtaining construction permits are underway.

**In order to deepen cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX)**, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is actively involved in events organised by the Agency. During the reporting period, the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs participated in **14 joint return operations**, as a result of which **828 persons** returned to Georgia.

### 4.4 Combating Organised Crime

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia continues to take action **against organised criminal groups**. For this purpose, during the reporting period, as a result of measures taken by the Central Criminal Police Department against criminal groups for the purpose of detecting, eliminating and preventing organised crime, **criminal proceedings were brought against 107 participants in 27 criminal groups**.

In addition, active measures are being taken against the 'criminal underworld' both within the country and abroad, in close cooperation with our foreign colleagues. During the reporting period, **criminal proceedings were brought against 5 'thieves in law'**, and criminal prosecutions started against 25 persons on charges of participating in 'gatherings of thieves in law', membership of the 'criminal underworld', supporting the 'criminal underworld', and contacting a 'thief in law'.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, together with the EU member states, participates in the work of a **joint investigative group**, the purpose of which is to combat illegal migration. In addition, information exchange with foreign colleagues is actively pursued. 4,653 pieces of operational information were exchanged with foreign colleagues through various communication channels.

During the reporting period, a police attaché was sent to Kazakhstan. Also, a new country was covered by the current attaché, namely: San Marino (covered by Italy). As a result, Georgia has a total of 19 attachés sent, covering 38 countries, as well as liaison officers placed to Europol Headquarters and NATO. Currently, accreditation procedures are underway from Monaco (to be covered by France).

**The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia** continued active work in respect of **intelligence-led policing and community-oriented policing**. An **intelligence-led** policing strategy and action plan have been approved, within the framework of which a sustainable policy is being implemented. In order to develop intelligence-led policing (ILP):

- Within the framework of the EU-funded project, 'Enhancing the Reform of the Justice System in Georgia', a training was held on the topic 'Use of Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)' in Investigation and Analysis. 21 employees of the MIA participated in the training;
- Within the framework of the EU-funded project 'Training and Operational Partnership Against Organised Crime' (TOPCOP) 5 employees of the MIA have been trained;
- The relevant logistical base was updated (20 computers and 20 external hard drives were purchased).

In addition, in order to ensure a complete and systematised recording and processing of crimes registered in Georgia, **the process of developing an electronic platform for the detailed recording and processing of registered crimes is underway**. The goal of the platform is to automatically extract data from the electronic investigative programme (crimcase) and display it on the platform. After the implementation of the above, an information analytic module will be created for analysts to process and analyse the information displayed on the platform.

During the reporting period, the working group established to develop community-oriented policing activities completed the development of **the draft strategy for the development of community-oriented policing activities for 2024-2027**. This strategy was approved on 11 July 2024 by Order No 1/282 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

30 public order officers completed the special professional educational programme for basic police training at the LEPL MIA Academy of Georgia. As of 30 June 2024, 3 public order officers continue to be trained under this programme. In addition, 8 public order officers participated in two events organised with the support of donors.

The total number of law enforcement officers assigned to the Batumi City Division of the Police Department of the Adjara Autonomous Republic of the Ministry of Internal Affairs comprises 29, of which 14 are public order officers and 15 are public order officers.

Active work is being carried out by the **Special Investigation Service** for the purpose of the effective and unbiased investigation of cases assigned to its investigative jurisdiction.

The following documents have already been developed by the Special Investigation Service: Instructions for the use of handcuffs; recommendations on receiving information about a possible crime, guidelines on the methodology and survey of communication with persons with disabilities, and a code of ethics. Work is underway on instructions for using a police body camera.

The Special Investigation Service, in close coordination with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia and the LEPL Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions, implemented a campaign to raise awareness on issues of invasion of privacy. Within the framework of the campaign, meetings were held in 70 (seventy) public schools across Georgia. Of these, the information campaign covered 22 schools in Tbilisi, 9 in Shida and Kvemo Kartli, 11 in Kakheti, 11 in Imereti, 11 in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, and 6 in Samegrelo.

For the professional development of employees, 7 training activities were carried out during the reporting period, which were attended by 135 people.

**31 releases were prepared and distributed on cases of high public interest** and activities carried out by the Special Investigation Service, as well as 29 informational videos on various topics.

New regional offices are being built to ensure geographic accessibility. During the reporting period, in **Gori**: an e-tender has been announced for the procurement of services for preparing design and cost estimation documentation for construction works and the selection and evaluation of a bidder(s) is underway. In **Rustavi**:

as a result of the e-tender, an agreement has been signed on the procurement of construction works and the relevant works are underway. **Head Office (Tbilisi)**: as a result of the e-tender, an agreement has been signed on the procurement of construction works and the relevant works are underway.

#### 4.5 Combating Illegal Drugs

Georgia continues to actively fight against illegal trading in drugs. During the reporting period, **156 drug dealers were arrested**. Also, 58 people were arrested on charges of illegally importing drugs into Georgia.

During the reporting period, the Central Criminal Police Department **arrested 17 individuals involved in online trading in drugs and closed 7 online illegal drug trading stores**.

During the reporting period, a **draft Action Plan for the Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy for 2024-2026** was developed, which is currently being developed together with thematic agencies at the consultation stage.

A conceptual framework for an Early Warning System has been developed, which provides the system's structure, operating principle, and implementation stages. The adoption of the system is one of the main priorities of Georgia's drug policy, therefore this issue is included in the agenda of the Interagency Coordination Council on the Fight against Drug Abuse. Consultations are underway with thematic agencies on the issue of implementing the system.

**The monitoring process of the implementation of the 2023-2024 Action Plan of the National Strategy on Drug Policy is ongoing.** To date, two interim monitoring meetings have been held in accordance with the pre-determined agenda, in July and December 2023. The minutes of the meeting have been prepared. Two more interim monitoring meetings are planned to be held by the end of 2024. A unified document for evaluating the monitoring of the implementation of the 2023-2024 Action Plan will be prepared in Q4 of 2024.

**Interagency Coordination Council on the Fight against Drug Abuse and the EMCDDA** are in active collaboration with the project of the EMCDDA - **EU for Monitoring Drugs**. During the reporting period, preparatory work for the European Web Survey on Drugs (EWSD) was underway, in particular, the survey questionnaire was translated and adapted, and a recruitment plan was prepared. The data collection phase has been changed to take into account external factors, and if the project is ready, the next round will be planned for 2025. The process of data collection and analysis within the framework of the study 'Wastewater Analysis (WWA) has been completed, and the report preparation process is underway. In addition, the data collection phase of the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) has been completed and the process of data analysis is underway, after which the final report of the survey will be prepared.

#### 4.6 Fighting against Terrorism/Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism

Within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of fighting against terrorism, from 1 January to 1 July 2024, 15 employees of the State Security Service of Georgia participated in 12 events organised on the topic of the counter-terrorism (including in trainings and meetings).

During the reporting period, Georgia joined the new phase of the EU-funded counter-terrorism project '**CT INFLOW**' ('**Counter-Terrorism Information Exchange and Criminal Justice Response**'), which will start on 1 July 2024. The project has been implemented by CEPOL since 2015 and aims to support partners in improving best practices in information exchange, cross-border investigations and prosecutions of terrorist crimes.

From 1 January to 1 July 2024, an Agreement on the Exchange and Protection of Classified Information between Europol and Georgia, was signed by Europol, which was ratified on 18 April 2024 and entered into force on 1 July 2024.

In addition, 6 draft agreements on the exchange and protection of classified information and 2 draft agreements on cooperation in the area of crime, including the fight against terrorism, were initiated and the respective consultations/negotiations are being carried out with partner countries.

In order to further align the supervisory framework of the National Bank of Georgia with the relevant standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on the financing of terrorism and to promote its effectiveness, the following subordinate legal acts have been revised and updated:

- 'Procedures for completing and submitting information on the supervision of money laundering and terrorist financing risks of currency exchange offices';
- 'Procedures for completing and submitting information on the supervision of money laundering and terrorist financing risks of microfinance organisations';
- 'Procedures for completing and submitting information on the supervision of money laundering and terrorist financing risks of non-bank depository institutions - credit unions';
- 'Procedures for completing and submitting information on the supervision of money laundering and terrorist financing risks of lending entities'.

In addition, in April and June of the current year, information meetings/trainings on the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing were held in several stages for lending entities, which were attended by 148 representatives of the above-mentioned sector.

The National Bank of Georgia actively continues to comply with FATF recommendations, including Recommendation 15, which addresses virtual assets and virtual asset services. In addition to the development of the Registration and Regulation Rules (2023) and the Regulation on Information Accompanying the Transfer of Virtual Assets (2023 Q4), the measures taken included the approval of the Procedures on Fines to be Applied to Virtual Asset Service Providers, the development of a Guide to Warning Signs, the update of the risks of the virtual asset service sector, etc. Therefore, an application has been made for reclassification from the current Partially Compliant (PC) to Largely Compliant (LC) status of FATF R15 Recommendation in Q1 of 2024.

In order to combat money laundering and terrorist financing related to virtual assets and virtual asset services, **virtual asset service providers are registered with the National Bank of Georgia**; a supervisory framework has been developed in accordance with the standards set by FATF Recommendation 15; awareness of ecosystem representatives regarding risks and controls related to virtual asset services has been increased; international practices and experiences have been taken into account in the above activities.

On 30 May 2024, **the Law of Georgia on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism** was adopted, thereby taking into account the recommendations of MONEYVAL.

On 29 May 2024, an amendment was made to **the Law of Georgia on Accounting, Reporting and Auditing**, on the basis of which, in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism, accountable persons subject to the Service for Accounting, Reporting and Auditing Supervision (an accountant providing professional services, an accounting firm, a certified accountant, an auditor and an audit firm) cannot be convicted or sentenced for committing an intentional economic crime (including a crime in the field of financial activities) or for committing an intentional, serious or particularly serious crime, and their conviction must be expunged. The mentioned amendment is addressed

by the fifth round of evaluation reports of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (Moneyval) (2020): Towards meeting the compliance criteria (Fit and proper measures), as set out in criterion 28.4(b) of the evaluation report.

**On 26 January 2024, the Service for Accounting, Reporting and Auditing Supervision** held an information meeting for accountable entities within the framework of the Law of Georgia on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism. The topic of the meeting was the procedure developed by the Service on the study of the ownership and control (governance) structure of a client by an obliged entity and the identification and verification of the beneficial owner.

On the basis of Article 131(2) of the Law of Georgia on Accounting, Reporting and Auditing, SARAS recognised **5 continuing education providers and approved 6 continuing education programmes**, which aims to provide annual continuing education courses for obliged entities (accountants providing professional services, accounting firms).

In order to comply with the requirements of the 2012 Special Recommendation No 6 of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on the Financing of Terrorism (on financial sanctions related to terrorism and terrorism financing), the implementation of targeted sanctions regimes based on UN Security Council resolutions was ongoing; a meeting of the State Commission on Security Council Issues was held on 28 March 2024. At the meeting, the Commission supported the issue of leaving all four individuals on the list of sanctioned individuals established on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution No 1373 (2001) unchanged. In order to ensure compliance with the UN Security Council sanctions regimes, best international practices were studied and cooperation continued in a permanent format with various European countries (Portugal, Croatia, Hungary, Armenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Germany, Ireland).

Workshops were held with obliged entities regarding the implementation of targeted sanctions regimes on the basis of the UN Security Council resolutions.

On 18-19 April 2024, within the framework of the EU PGG Phase III project (consolidation and Strengthening of the Institutional and Operational Framework for Preventing and Combating Corruption, Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism in Georgia), a two-day workshop on supervision issues was held, which was attended by 10 persons. Within the framework of the same project, the initial version of the guidelines for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism for obliged entities has been developed.

The supervision policy for the LEPL National Agency of Public Registry and for notaries has been improved, namely: In order to prevent, identify and suppress money laundering and the financing of terrorism, as well as the financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Georgia, the Money Laundering Inspection and Supervision Department was established within the Central Office of the Ministry of Justice, which ensures supervision of the activities of the above-mentioned obliged entities. In addition, relevant thematic departments have been established within the offices of the obliged entities, which will monitor the fulfilment of obligations stipulated by the Law of Georgia on Facilitating the Prevention of Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism and relevant subordinate normative acts by persons employed at the LEPL National Agency of Public Registry and the LEPL Notary Chamber of Georgia.

#### 4.7 Legal Cooperation

**The MIA Academy** represents an entity for the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) in Georgia, coordinates CEPOL Exchange Programmes and residential and online training courses.

During the reporting period, CEPOL's activities at the national level were mainly carried out through **the funding of the EU-funded project the Training and Operational Partnership Against Organised Crime (TOPCOP)**.

During the reporting period, one Georgian law enforcement officer improved qualifications within the framework of the CEPOL exchange programme (Navarra, Spain), two officers in an online English language course, and one officer at a training course (Budapest, Hungary).

Within the framework of the project Training and Operational Partnership against Organised Crime (TOPCOP), 10 training sessions were conducted during the reporting period, during which 54 law enforcement officers from Georgia were retrained. Two international meetings and a final project event were also held.

Since 2022, preparatory procedures have been actively underway to make the 2005 Convention on Choice of Court Agreements binding. In addition, in order to fully implement the document, the Ministry of Justice discussed the need to make amendments to the legislation of Georgia based on the Convention. As a result, the Ministry of Justice prepared relevant draft legislative amendments to the Civil Procedure Code of Georgia and the Law of Georgia on Private International Law. The draft laws were agreed upon with the High Council of Justice and the Supreme Court of Georgia.

At this stage, the full package has been submitted to the Parliament of Georgia for the purpose of recognising the Convention as binding.

Preparatory work is underway related to recognising the accession of the respective states to the 1980 **Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction**.

On 15 December 2023, **the Hague Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance and the Protocol of 23 November 2007 of the Hague Convention on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligation** were ratified by the Parliament of Georgia. The Convention and the Protocol will enter into force for Georgia on 1 September 2024. The preparation of guidelines has begun for the full implementation of the Convention and the Protocol.

Internal instructions and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document for citizens have been developed to implement the 1965 Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters (HCCH 1965 Service Convention) and the 1970 Convention on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters (HCCH 1970 Evidence Convention).

## 5. Trade and Trade-related Matters

A **draft plan for the Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) Mutual Recognition Agreement** process has been developed by DG TAXUD, and the plan is currently under review. The BCPs have been identified and presented for the purposes of the AEO mutual recognition mechanism.

At the meeting of the Georgia-EU Customs Sub-Committee (6 June), the Georgian side provided updates related to the AEO programme. The parties agreed to continue working on AEO programme issues in the future.

Regarding accession to the Common Transit Convention (CTC) and the Convention on Single Administrative Document (SAD), the agencies' comments and remarks were received on the texts on internal procedures. A meeting was held with representatives of the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs, where the accession procedures provided for by the Convention were discussed.

**In order to support the participation of Georgian companies in international events, trade fairs and missions in EU Member States**, during the 6 month period in 2024, with the help of the LEPL Enterprise Georgia, representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises participated in 7 international exhibitions and 1 fashion week showroom held in Germany, Spain, Italy and France. In total, 59 co-financing events have been carried out by the Agency.

**Within the framework of the co-financing programme to support small and medium-size enterprises**, during the reporting period, 337 loans/leases were approved for 310 companies within the framework of the universal programme, with a total approved volume of GEL 262 million. Within the framework of the above projects, it is planned to make investments of a total amount of GEL 624 million, and to create more than 3 000 new jobs.

During the first 6 months of 2024, two certification courses for export managers of small and medium-size enterprises were held in Tbilisi and Batumi. In total, 46 managers were trained

About 40 companies registered on the 'Trade with Georgia' platform in Q1 and Q2 of 2024.

As of the first 6 months of 2024, 12 companies have been funded under the Export Stimulation Technical Assistance Programme.

Based on a risk analysis carried out by the **LEPL Market Surveillance Agency**, in 2024, the following market surveillance procedures were carried out in Q2 of 2024:

- ✓ 183 types of marketed construction products were inspected on the local market;
- ✓ appropriate recommendations were produced for 37 types of locally marketed construction products;
- ✓ 14 types of marketed paints were inspected on the local market;
- ✓ 1 type of pressure equipment was inspected on the local market;
- ✓ 109 types of marketed toys were inspected on the local market;
- ✓ 41 types of appliances burning gaseous fuels were inspected on the local market;
- ✓ 13 types of marketed personal protective equipment were inspected on the local market;
- ✓ 42 types of marketed electrical equipment were inspected on the local market and appropriate recommendations produced;
- ✓ 28 types of marketed radio equipment were inspected on the local market and appropriate recommendations made;
- ✓ 44 ordinances adopted regarding restrictive measures were verified;
- ✓ samples of 33 types of construction products were taken and sent to appropriate accredited laboratories;
- ✓ samples of 100 types of toys and PPE were taken and sent to appropriate accredited laboratories.

The following advance notices from **7 Customs Clearance Zones of the Revenue Service** were inspected in January-June 2024:

- ✓ advance notices of the import of 7417 items of construction products;
- ✓ advance notices of the import of 1796 items of machinery;
- ✓ advance notices of the import of 1701 items of toys;
- ✓ advance notices of the import of 629 items of personal protective equipment;
- ✓ advance notices of the import of 1073 items of appliances burning gaseous fuels.

By Ordinance No 106 of 28 March 2024 of the Government of Georgia, an amendment was made to the Technical Regulations on Construction Products and 101 new construction products were determined.

The number of internationally recognised Calibration and Measurement Capabilities (CMC) records of the Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology has been maintained at 65 CMC records.

In order to maintain international recognition and ensure the traceability of measurements, the Metrology Institute of the Agency has prepared calibration programmes for standards and measuring instruments for 2024. The standards and measuring instruments and devices have been sent for calibration to relevant organisations in Turkey and Germany, and it is planned to send the remaining standards/measuring instruments to the Czech Republic and Poland.

In order to adopt international and European standards, including harmonised standards of sectoral directives specified in Annex III-A of the DCFTA, as Georgian standards, as of 6 months of 2024, **a total of 5,531 standards have been registered as Georgian Standards (GS)**, including:

- Georgian Standard ISO (international standard) – 213;
- Georgian Standard EN (European standard) – 5 318.

The following amendments were made to the Law of Georgia on Trademarks:

- ✓ the legislation has been brought into line with Directive 2015/2436/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2015 on Trademarks and Regulation (EU) 2017/1001/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2017 on Trademarks;
- ✓ the powers of the Sakpatenti Appeals Chamber have been increased;
- ✓ the absolute and relative grounds for a refusal of trademark registration have been changed and more clearly prescribed;
- ✓ the period for conducting trademark examination has been reduced. Also, the examination procedure has been simplified, both for Sakpatenti experts and for applicants;
- ✓ it became possible to divide a trademark;
- ✓ the concept of a trademark has changed and been re-established; it has become possible to register a single colour as a trademark;
- ✓ an amendment was made concerning the issue of recognising a trademark as well-known;
- ✓ the way was opened for the registration of new types of trademarks, namely, the registration of three-dimensional trademarks, holograms and certification marks;
- ✓ the classification of goods and services at the examination stage has been regulated in such a way that it is possible to accurately and clearly determine the scope of protection sought. A new chapter has been added to the law, regulating provisions related to certification marks;
- ✓ the Law has been supplemented with norms that regulate the relationship between registered conflicting trademarks;
- ✓ the right of the exclusive licensee to bring a lawsuit without the consent of the trademark holder has been added, unless the trademark holder brings a lawsuit within a reasonable time after notification;
- ✓ the obligation of the trademark holder to submit evidence, along with the cancellation of the registration, that he/she/it has notified the licensee of his/her/its intention to cancel the trademark, has been added, in the event that a license agreement is registered for the relevant trademark.

**In accordance with Annex XI-B to the Association Agreement**, the following ordinances of the Government of Georgia have been approved:

- ✓ Ordinance No 196 of 16 June 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the procedures for recognising business operators producing sprouts;
- ✓ Ordinance No 216 of 3 July 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the technical regulations - exceptional procedures for the maritime transportation of liquid oils and fats;
- ✓ Ordinance No 227 of 11 July 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the list of permitted health claims made on foods, other than those referring to the reduction of disease risk and to children's development and health;

- ✓ Ordinance No 223 of 10 July 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the maximum levels for the presence of coccidiostats or histomonostats in food resulting from the unavoidable carry-over of these substances in non-target feed;
- ✓ Ordinance No 124 of 3 April 2024 of the Government of Georgia on technical Regulations - materials and articles made of regenerated cellulose film that come into contact with food;
- ✓ Ordinance No 191 of 13 June 2024 of the Government of Georgia on making amendments to Ordinance No 587 of 23 December 2022 of the Government of Georgia on approval of the procedures for distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS) testing of new animal breeds and/or new plant species;
- ✓ Ordinance No 190 of 13 June 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the traceability requirements for sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts.

Within the scope of implementing **sanitary, phytosanitary and veterinary border control procedures**:

- veterinary border control was carried out in relation to 4210 goods items;
- phytosanitary border control was carried out in relation to 7161 goods items;
- border control over the safety of food/feed of non-animal origin was carried out in relation to 2047 goods items.

The State Procurement Agency is actively working to develop subordinate normative acts stipulated by the Law of Georgia on Public Procurement. With the support of the Economic Governance Programme of the United States Agency for International Development, 33 subordinate normative acts were prepared with the assistance of a European expert, which must be adopted by 1 January 2025.

**Regarding current issues of competition policy**, during the first 6 months of 2024, employees of the Georgian Competition and Consumer Agency (GCCA) participated in 12 events related to competition policy and its enforcement.

With the support of the EU-funded TWINNING project, **the Georgian Competition and Consumer Protection Agency has approved a Communication (Advocacy) Plan for 2024-2025**, based on which seminars and information meetings are planned to be held with various target groups on current competition policy issues throughout 2024. During the 6 months of the current year, 3 information meetings were held.

Since January 2024, significant activities have been carried out in Georgia towards consumer protection. In particular:

- ✓ the Law of Georgia on Electronic Commerce entered into force, which is fully compliant with EU directives;
- ✓ the Georgian Competition and Consumer Protection Agency adopted a subordinate normative act, an order on the rules and procedure for examining cases provided for by the Law of Georgia on Electronic Commerce, which came into force in January 2024;
- ✓ during the reporting period, with the assistance of the EU TWINNING project, the following guideline documents are being developed/approved:
  - a Pricing Reference Guide;
  - a Guide to Guarantees;
  - a Guide to Green Claims (Green Applications);
  - a Guide to Influencer Activities;
  - a Guide to User Education.
- ✓ In 2024, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, the Agency began work on creating an e-commerce guideline document.

By Order No 1-1/127 of 2024 of the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, the **Medium-Term (2024 - 2026) Action Plan for the Implementation of DCFTA** was approved.

The following activities have been carried out within the framework of measures of compliance with international obligations related to climate change:

The final report **on the implementation of the (2021-2023) Action Plan for the implementation of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)** document has been prepared and posted on the website of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia.

The drafts of the Fifth National Communication of Georgia (FNC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the first Biennial Transparency Report (BTR) has been prepared.

In order to facilitate trade in timber products produced as a result of **sustainable forest management**, during the first 6 months of 2024, 15 additional landings have been fully set up in 3 regions of Georgia: Guria, Kakheti and Tianeti.

## 6. Economic Cooperation

According to a preliminary estimation, the increase in real gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to 7.5 % in June 2024, compared to the same period of the previous year, and the average actual growth in the first six months of 2024 was 9%.<sup>1</sup>

In May 2024, the EU **Twinning** Instrument project Further Strengthening of the Georgian Statistical System was launched in **Geostat**, one of the components of which was the modernisation of statistical information production processes in accordance with the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM). Preparatory work for the implementation of GSBPM is underway, including the translation of GSBPM and GAMS0 into Georgian.

Work is underway in accordance with the 'Harmonisation Plan' for the introduction of the Eurostat NUTS classification of regional statistics in Georgia. As of 1 July 2024, 6 of the 7 tasks to be completed in 2024 have been started/partially completed. The implementation of NUTS is one of the components of the Twinning project launched in May 2024.

**The following sub-indices of the HICP have been developed and disseminated:** 1. HICP-CT (Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices at Constant Tax Rates). 2. HICP-AP (Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices - Administered Prices). HICP inventory (detailed metadata) has been compiled.

**The questionnaires for the 2024 population and agricultural census have been developed**, as well as the census software, which is being tested; the division of the country into census districts has been completed.

In March 2024, an official letter was sent to **Eurostat** regarding technical assistance in the implementation of the European System of Accounts (ESA). As of today, a guideline to transitioning to the ESA 2010 methodology has been prepared.

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<sup>1</sup>National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat). June 2024. Preliminary assessment of economic growth. <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/single-news/3215/ekonomikuri-zrdis-tsinastsari-shefaseba-ivnisi-2024>

Also, at this stage, the international methodology and practice of calculating the value of imported goods at FOB - free on board prices of the exporting country is being introduced.

A report of the State Audit Office regarding the report of Government on the annual performance of the 2023 state budget has been prepared and submitted to the Parliament of Georgia. 6 performance audits, 12 financial audits are underway; 1 compliance audit has been completed and 24 compliance audits are underway; at the same time, a financial audit of the State Budget Tax Revenues is underway, as well as 3 inter-agency compliance audits.

Within the framework of the National Certification Programme for Internal Auditors, 30 internal auditors have been trained in all modules, including 20 internal auditors who participated in the exams during the reporting period, and 9 internal auditors from this group were granted the status of certified internal auditors. Of the 30 participants mentioned above, 10 internal auditors have completed training in all modules; the certification process for an additional 20 internal auditors has begun.

As regards internal financial control, the Government of Georgia approved (Decree No 852 of 13 June 2024) the Consolidated Annual Report on the Development of the State Internal Financial Control System for 2023, submitted by the Ministry of Finance.

In the process of approximation of the legislation of Georgia to Council Directive 2003/96/EC, **draft amendments to the Tax Code of Georgia** have been prepared.

The Order of the Head of the Revenue Service on the Establishment of a Commission and a Working Group for the Purpose of Accession to the Conventions of 20 May 1987 **on the Simplification of Formalities in Trade in Goods and on Common Transit Procedures** (7 March 2024, N5107) has been updated.

An amendment has been made to **Order No 257 of 29 August 2019 of the Minister of Finance of Georgia on the approval of instructions on the movement and clearance of goods in the customs territory of Georgia:**

- the 'holder of the transit procedure' was determined;
- the cases of filling out a transit customs declaration in the transit system (NCTS) by the customs authority and the holder of the transit procedure have been clarified and clearly specified;
- the provisions related to the submission and calculation of the guarantee have been clarified.

Relevant amendments have been made to Order No 381 of 18 October 2023 of the Minister of Finance of Georgia on Making Amendments to Order No 257 of 29 August 2019 of the Minister of Finance of Georgia on the Approval of Instructions on the Movement and Clearance of Goods in the Customs Territory of Georgia.

**On 24-28 June 2024, a monitoring mission of the European Commission's Directorate-General Taxation and Customs Union visited Georgia**, which was to make a decision on the readiness of the Revenue Service to access the conventions and operate the NCTS system, and to make a relevant recommendation to the European Commission so that Georgia can be invited to become a member of the aforementioned conventions and start international transit operations using the system. The mission includes representatives of the customs administrations of Austria, the Netherlands, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Turkey.

Testing of the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) software is underway. Mode 1 was implemented from 19 December 2023 to 21 February 2024. Mode 2 is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2024 (a total of approximately 590 different scenarios). Work is underway on the final stage of the second phase of compliance testing. As part of the third phase of testing, the system was configured and connections were

established between Georgia and Finland, and Georgia and Ukraine. Trial information was successfully exchanged with the above countries.

## 7. Other Fields of Cooperation

### 7.1 Transport

The Association Agreement envisages approximation to EU standards in the areas of **maritime, road, rail and air transport**.

#### Maritime transport

In terms of legislative approximation to the directives provided for by the Association Agreement (Title VI, Chapter 1, Annex XV-D, **Maritime Transport**, technical and operational rules), work is underway on the following Directive:

For the purpose of approximation of the legislation of Georgia with Directive 2010/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2010 (*on reporting formalities for ships arriving in and/or departing from ports of the Member States*) on 15 May 2024 the Law of Georgia on Making Amendments to the Maritime Code of Georgia was adopted, which creates the basis for the introduction of the Maritime Single Window System in Georgia. In accordance with the same law, the Government of Georgia was instructed to adopt an ordinance on the approval of the procedures for the operation and management of the Maritime Single Window System in the Ports of Georgia by 1 October 2024. Work is underway on this ordinance with all interested parties.

#### Road transport

Within the framework of approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the directives provided for by the Association Agreement (Title VI, Chapter 1, Annex XXIV, **road transport**), the following activities were carried out in the last 6 month of 2024:

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to Directive 2006/22/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 (*on minimum conditions for the implementation of Council Regulations (EEC) No 3820/85 and (EEC) No 3821/85 concerning social legislation relating to road transport activities and repealing Council Directive 88/599/EEC*), and Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 (*on the harmonisation of certain social legislation relating to road transport*), by which the requirements of the Regulation will apply to all vehicles involved in domestic transportation, draft laws on making amendments to the Law of Georgia on Traffic and on making amendments to the Administrative Offences Code of Georgia were adopted by the Parliament of Georgia through all three hearings. (27 June 2024, 4336-XIV06-X03). The projects envisage the roadside checks of motor vehicles in accordance with the requirements of the mentioned Directive.

In order to fulfil the commitments provided for by Article 3(1)(a), (b), (c) and (d) of Regulation (EC) No 1071/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 (*establishing common rules concerning the conditions to be complied with to pursue the occupation of road transport operator*), the Law of Georgia on **Making Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Road Transport** was adopted on **30 November 2023**. In addition, Ordinance No 169 of 21 May 2024 - **on making amendments to Ordinance No 4 of 3 January 2014 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the technical regulations 'Procedures for the Transportation of Passengers and Luggage by Motor Vehicles'** and Ordinance No 171 of 21 May 2024 - **on making**

amendments to Ordinance No 32 of the Government of Georgia of 3 January 2014 on the approval of the technical regulations 'Procedures for the Transportation of Cargo by Motor Vehicles', were adopted.

The applicable legislation of Georgia partially complies with the minimum standards of physical and mental fitness for driving established by Directive 2006/126/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 **on driving licences**, including the definition of restriction codes. It is notable that, taking into consideration the requirements of the Directive in this direction, **a draft joint order of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia and the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia has been drawn up**, which has been submitted to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia for further discussions. In addition, a draft normative act has been developed, in accordance with which the obligation to pass the second stage of practical exams for obtaining the driving licence for 'CE', 'DE'/subcategories 'C1E', 'D1E' will fully come into effect from 1 May 2025.

### **Railway**

Within the framework of approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the Directives provided for by the Association Agreement (Title VI, Chapter 1, Annex XXIV, **rail transport**), the following activities were carried out during the 6 months period of 2024:

For the purpose of approximation of the legislation of Georgia to Directive 2007/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 (*on the certification of train drivers operating locomotives and trains on the railway system in the Community*), on the basis of the Law of Georgia No 2998-XI06-X03 **on Making Amendments to the Railway Code of Georgia**, the main principles of Directive 2007/59/EC was reflected in the legislation of Georgia, and the legislative basis has been laid for full approximation to the Directive. In addition, in order to ensure full approximation with the Directive, a draft of the subordinate legislative act **on the Procedures and Conditions for the Issuance, Renewal and Recovery, Suspension and Cancellation of Train Driver's Licenses and Driver's Certificates** has been developed, which, after consultations with engaged parties, will be submitted to the Government of Georgia for approval.

In order to approximate the legislation of Georgia to Directive 2016/798 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 (*Directive 2004/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 (on Safety on the Community's railways) was replaced by Directive 2016/798*), as a result of the amendments made to the Railway Code of Georgia, the main principles of the Directive were reflected in the legislation of Georgia, **the LEPL Rail Transport Agency of Georgia has been established** and the legislative basis has been laid for full approximation to the Directive. In order to ensure full compatibility with the aforementioned Directive, a draft of the subordinate normative act '**Railway Safety Rules**' has been developed, which, after completing consultations with engaged parties in the sector, will be submitted to the Government of Georgia for approval.

### **Air transport**

Within the framework of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to the directives provided for by the Association Agreement (Title VI, Chapter 1, Annex XXIV, **Air Transport**, Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part), for the 6-month period of 2024, the following work has been in progress for:

For the purposes of the approximation to Regulation No 1321/2014 of 26 November 2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council (*on the continuing airworthiness of aircraft and aeronautical products, parts and appliances, and on the approval of organisations and personnel involved in these tasks*); part-145, part-147,

part-66, Part-CAMO, and part-CAO of the Regulation have been implemented, and part-M is left, the draft of which has been prepared and submitted for industry observations.

## 7.2 Cooperation in the Field of Energy

In compliance with the commitments undertaken under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (Title VI, Chapter 2, **Energy Cooperation**, Annex XXV), the following activities were carried out for the 6 month period in 2024 in order to approximate national legislation to EU legislative acts and international legal instruments:

On 27 June 2024, the Parliament of Georgia approved the State **Energy Policy** of Georgia and its annex - **the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) of Georgia**.

For the transposition into the legislation of Georgia of Directive 2018/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 (*amending Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency*), the amendments to the Law on Energy Efficiency were approved by the Parliament of Georgia on 27 June of the current year in accordance with **the revised EU Directive on energy efficiency**.

From 1 July 2024 **the Georgian Energy Exchange** was opened stage-by-stage. By a decision of the government of Georgia, a transitional model of the electricity market has been put into effect in the country, which envisages the launch of day-ahead and intraday markets in a limited and voluntary regime, and the postponement of the launch of the hourly balancing obligation, as well as the balancing and ancillary services market until 1 July 2025.

In order to implement the requirements set out in the Law on Energy and Water Supply and to develop the remaining secondary legislation to be implemented, some subordinate normative acts have been developed and approved together with relevant engaged parties. The remaining areas (technical documents - transmission network rules, general distribution requirements) are undergoing review stages and their approval is planned in the near future.

Commission Regulation (EC) No 641/2009 of 22 July 2009 (*implementing Directive 2005/32/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to eco-design requirements for air conditioning and heating systems integrated into products*), Commission Regulation (EC) No 107/2009 of 4 February 2009 (*implementing Directive 2005/32/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to eco-design requirements for modems*), Commission Regulation (EU) No 1016/2010 of 10 November 2010 (*ensures the implementation of Directive 2009/125/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to eco-design requirements for household dishwashers*), Commission Regulation (EU) No 1015/2010 of 10 November 2010 (*ensures the implementation of Directive 2009/125/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to eco-design requirements for household dishwashers*), for the purpose of approximation with the European Commission Regulation (EC) No 1275/2008 of 17 December 2008 (*implementing Directive 2005/32/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to eco-design requirements for standby and off-mode power consumption of electrical and electronic household and office equipment*), the final version of **9 eco-design regulations** (along with the main regulation) has been developed, is being discussed with the engaged parties, and is planned to be submitted to the Government for approval by the end of the year.

For the purpose of the approximation of the legislation of Georgia to Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 (*on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources*), in cooperation with the parties engaged, **8 subordinate acts on renewable energy have been prepared and**

**approved.** The process of developing and reviewing 1 subordinate legal act is now underway. The remaining subordinate acts will be prepared and approved within the framework of the EU/KfW technical support.

In order to approximate the legislation of Georgia to Directive 2012/27/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 *on energy efficiency, (amending Directives 2009/125/EC and 2010/30/EU and repealing Directives 2004/8/EC and 2006/32/EC)*, **15 subordinate acts have been prepared and approved.** The remaining 4 subordinate acts are expected to be approved in 2024-2025. 3 draft acts have been developed and their approval is scheduled by the end of this year, while 1 subordinate act is currently in the development stage.

In order to approximate the legislation of Georgia to Directive 2010/31/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 **on the energy performance of buildings**, (*which is a recast of Decision 2009/05/MCEnC of 18 December 2009 related to the implementation of certain energy efficiency Directives*), **4 subordinate acts have been developed and approved.** The remaining 7 draft subordinate acts have been developed and are scheduled for approval by the end of this year, while 1 subordinate act is currently in the development stage.

### 7.3 Environmental Protection

In compliance with the commitments undertaken under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (Title VI, Chapter 3, **Environment**, Annex XXVI, and Chapter 4, **Climate Action**, Annex XXVII), the following measures were taken for the 6 month period of 2024, in order to approximate national legislation to EU legislative acts and international legal instruments:

By Ordinance No 127 of the Government of Georgia of 3 April 2024 the Technical Regulation on the content of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in some paints, lacquer paint, and vehicle refinishing, as well as their import and placing on the market, was approved, which will enter into force on 1 July 2025.

In order to ensure the long-term protection of species, in accordance with the obligations assumed under the Association Agreement, the Bern and Bonn Conventions, and other international agreements, the final version of the **species recovery plan** has been prepared and its approval procedures are underway.

The working version of the draft Government Ordinance on the Approval of the Boundaries of River Basins/Basin Areas is at the stage of completion. A draft Government Ordinance is being prepared on **the Procedure for Elaboration, Review and Approval of River Basin Management Plans.** In accordance with the Law of Georgia on Water Resources Management, a draft Government Ordinance is being developed on the Establishment and Rules of Operation of the Consulting -Coordinating Councils of the Basin Management. In order to develop these and other draft ordinances, on 1 July 2024, the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture approved an order on the establishment of a working group to develop legal acts pursuant to Article 37(1) of the Law of Georgia on Water Resources Management, in the format of which the improvement of the draft ordinance will continue.

The draft **Law of Georgia on Biodiversity** has been submitted to the Parliament of Georgia for approval.

Within the framework of the implementation of **ambient air quality monitoring measures**, the monitoring network was expanded through stationary stations and indicative measurements in various cities of Georgia, and 8 automatic stations were added to the existing 7 stationary automatic stations. During the year, indicative measurements are carried out in four stages in 30 cities. Two stages of measurements have been completed in the current period.

During the reporting period, **groundwater monitoring** was conducted at 68 water points. In order to improve the monitoring network, 2 new automatic stations were additionally installed (making it 70). Water samples are being taken for laboratory analysis. Automatic ('online') groundwater monitoring and the processing of monitoring results conducted in 2024 continue, which will be reflected in the information bulletin.

Flood risk management plans are being developed for the Khobistsqali, Natanebi, Kintrishi and Supsa river basins. An analysis of flood hazard and risk maps developed during the previous stage of the project was conducted. Field work was carried out in the risk zones identified based on the analysis. Currently, preventive measures are being developed, which will be reflected in risk management plans. The development of the plans is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024.

Draft Ordinances of the Government of Georgia **on making amendments to Ordinance No 60 of 15 January 2014 of the Government of Georgia on Approval of Technical Regulations on the Safety of Petrol Stations and Filling Complexes**, and **Ordinance No 65 of 15 January 2014 of the Government of Georgia on Approval of the Technical Regulations on Safe Operation of Oil Platforms**. During the reporting period, in cooperation with state agencies and the Georgian Business Association, the final version of the amendments was developed. The final version of the draft ordinances will be submitted to the government of Georgia for approval in the second half of the current year.

#### 7.4 Agriculture and Rural Development

**Development of the agriculture sector** (Association Agreement, Title VI, Chapter 10), the full utilisation of agricultural potential, and its targeted use, are important for the economic growth of the country. Therefore, approximation to EU standards in the areas of agriculture and rural development is a priority for Georgia.

During the reporting period, support for agricultural development projects continued: 1) 11,987 farms/farmers have been registered under the **Farm/Farmer Registration Project**. 2) Within the framework of **the Hazelnut Production Support Programme**, points were awarded to 63,221 unique beneficiaries and the area amounted to 45,021.39 ha. The amount of points accrued is GEL 22,510,694. 3) Within the framework of **the Preferential Agrocredit Project**, during the reporting period, banks disbursed 2,942 loans amounting to GEL 242,520,552. Co-financing provided by the Rural Development Agency amounted to GEL 80,084,630. 19,270 loans were serviced. 4) Within the framework of **the project of co-financing of the procession and storage enterprises**, 13 projects were approved under the component of processing enterprises with the total cost of GEL 16,364,739, out of which GEL 5,309,521 was the amount of co-financing. 1 project was approved in the component of storage enterprises with the total cost of GEL 2,169,741 of which GEL 350,000 was the amount of co-financing. The establishment of 10 processing enterprises and 24 storage infrastructures have been fully/partially financed.

For the purpose of infrastructural development of agricultural cooperatives, 3 agreements were signed within the framework of **the state programme for co-financing refrigerators for storing berry crops for agricultural cooperatives**. Under the agreements, the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency amounted to GEL 750,000. 3 cooperatives were financed within the framework of the **state programme of co-financing of storage enterprises of agricultural cooperatives**.

**Within the framework of the harvesting equipment co-financing project**, 99 agreements were signed. The total investments of the projects amounted to GEL 23,950,271, out of which GEL 6,691,462 is co-financing on the part of the Agency. 499 beneficiaries were fully/partially financed during the reporting period.

**Within the framework of the Dairy Modernization and Market Access Project (DIMMA)**, 144 agreements were concluded with 144 unique beneficiaries. The total investments of the project amounted to GEL 6,767,284, out of which GEL 4,785,196 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency under the agreement. 218 beneficiaries were fully/partially financed during the reporting period.

Within the framework of the programme '**Pilot Program for Women**' 63 agreements were concluded with 63 unique beneficiaries. The total investments of the project amounted to GEL 1,146,656, out of which GEL 1,031,990 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency under the agreement. 29 beneficiaries were fully/partially financed during the reporting period.

Within the framework of the **Agro Insurance Project**, a total of 12,086 policies were issued and 14,480.07 hectares of crops were insured. The cost of the insured crops is GEL 159,140,082. The share of the Rural Development Agency in the insurance premium is GEL 12,206,474.

**Within the framework of the 'Plant the Future' programme:** (1) 366 garden projects to be cultivated on an area of 2,804.75 hectares were approved, and the investment amounted to GEL 45,029,000, out of which GEL 24,057,547 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency; (2) within the framework of the component of co-financing the construction of anti-hail systems, 14 applications were granted and the investment amounted to GEL 3,567,040, out of which GEL 403,457 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency, and the area in question 63.07 hectares; (3) within the framework of the component of co-financing the installation of drip irrigation systems, 20 applications were granted and the investment amounted to GEL 425,217, out of which GEL 212,723 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency, and the area in question 93.82 hectares; (4) within the framework of the component of co-financing the installation of wells/bore-holes/pumping stations, 30 applications were granted and the investment amounted to GEL 1,139,986, out of which GEL 542,863 was the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency, and the area in question 161.01 hectares.

Within the framework of the **tea plantation rehabilitation state programme 'Georgian Tea'**, during the reporting period, agreements were signed with 3 beneficiaries, the area of rehabilitation plantations being 222.94 hectares. The total cost of rehabilitation amounts to GEL 835,400 out of which GEL 557,343 is the amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency.

**In terms of implementing the technical support programme for existing projects**, 13 beneficiaries have implemented the international food safety standard (HACCP, ISO-22000, development and implementation of a food safety system according to HACCP), and 14 beneficiaries branded their products/company. Agreements (for agricultural cooperatives) on purchasing the equipment necessary for giving the products their final commodity form was concluded with 3 beneficiaries. The total cost of the activities/projects is GEL 758,458.35, out of which GEL 403,789.84 is the amount of co-financing of the activities/projects on the part of the Agency. The amount of co-financing on the part of the Agency is GEL 336,262.

**Within the framework of the State Programme for Co-financing Agricultural Mechanisation for Cooperatives**, 36 agreements were signed. The total investments of the projects amounted to GEL 2,833,744, out of which GEL 1,408,858 is co-financing on the part of the Agency. 22 beneficiaries were fully/partially financed during the reporting period.

During the reporting period, **the following Ordinances of the Government of Georgia** were approved in the field of agriculture and rural development: 1) Ordinance of the Government of Georgia No 196 of 16 June 2024 on the Approval of the Rules for Recognition of Business Operators Producing Sprouts; 2) Ordinance No 216 of 3

July 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the Technical Regulations - Exceptional Procedures for the Maritime Transportation of Liquid Oils and Fats; 3) Ordinance No 227 of 11 July 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the list of permitted health claims made on foods, other than those referring to the reduction of disease risk and to children's development and health; 4) Ordinance No 223 of 10 July 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the maximum levels for the presence of coccidiostats or histomonostats in food resulting from the unavoidable carry-over of these substances in non-target feed; 5) Ordinance No 124 of 3 April 2024 of the Government of Georgia on Technical Regulations - materials and articles made of regenerated cellulose film that come into contact with food; 6) Ordinance No 191 of 13 June 2024 of the Government of Georgia on making amendments to Ordinance No 587 of 23 December 2022 of the Government of Georgia on approval of the procedures for distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS) testing of new animal breeds and/or new plant species; 7) Ordinance No 190 of 13 June 2024 of the Government of Georgia on the traceability requirements for sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts.

In the first half of 2024, 13 new methods were introduced in the laboratory (6 methods for diagnosing plant pests, 4 methods for diagnosing animal diseases, and 3 methods for food research). The implemented methods are in the accreditation process, which will be completed by the end of September 2024.

During the reporting period, a number of international events were held, which were attended by employees of the National Food Agency: 1) In January, a training organised by BTSF was held in Italy: **Law on Animal Health - Aquatic Animals**, which was attended by an employee of the National Food Agency. 2) In January, a practical training organised by BTSF was held in Spain on the topic: **Sheep and Goat Pox (SGP)** 3) In January, a practical training organised by (BTSF) was held in Italy on the topic: **'Inspection and Calibration of Plant Protection Product Application Equipment.'** 4) In June, a practical training organised by (BTSF) was held in the Netherlands on the topic: **'Inspection and Calibration of Plant Protection Product Application Equipment.'** 5) In June, a practical training was held in Turkey, organised by the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme on the topic: **'Antimicrobial Resistance'**

The LEPL National Food Agency held a number of events in Q1 of 2024: 1) 4 internal training on the topic - **'State Control Mechanism - Audit of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points'** (history, standard operating procedure, review of the audit report (attended by 47 authorised persons). 2) 2 external trainings on the topic - **'Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Audit Techniques for Raw Milk Thermal Processing Enterprises'** (attended by 25 authorised persons). 3) 3 internal information meetings, Ordinance No 581 of the Government of Georgia of 10 November 2015 on the Approval of Technical Regulations on Microbiological Criteria of Food (attended by 33 contracted veterinarians and 69 authorised persons). 4) On January 23-25, a workshop was held at the NFA headquarters to discuss Ordinance No 584 of the Government of Georgia on the approval of the Technical Regulation - on Animal Health Affecting Trade in Bovine Animals and Swine. With the assistance of the international organisation Land O'Lakes Venture37 (USDA Food for Progress SQIL), a draft multi-annual strategy for the control and eradication of bovine tuberculosis was developed. The meeting was attended by 8 specialists from the Animal Infectious Diseases Surveillance Department. 5) In February, information meetings were held with business operators (representatives of the Poultry Association) on the development of the State Salmonellosis Control Programme, as determined in the Technical Regulations on **the Procedures for the Control of Salmonella and Other Zoonotic Agents** approved by Ordinance No 172 of the Government of Georgia of 13 March 2020. The meeting was attended by 5 business operators. 6) In February-March, information meetings were held with business operators on Ordinance No 581 of 10 November 2015 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of Technical Regulations on Microbiological Indicators of Food. The said meetings were held in Kutaisi (attended by 7 business operators) and Tbilisi (attended by 18 business

operators). 7) On 29 March, taking into account the recommendations issued by the EU Audit, regional inspectors were trained on inspecting hazelnut enterprises, filling out a new form of the conformity assessment act during the inspection, and filling out the sampling act. 8) A meeting was held at the National Accreditation Centre with laboratories that conduct research on exported hazelnuts and provided them with information on the mandatory research methods and sampling procedures for mycotoxin control specified in EU Regulation 401/2006 (Government of Georgia Ordinance No 567). 9) In May-June, an information meeting was held to raise awareness about the newly approved regulations in the field of food safety for business operators involved in the HoReCa sector: in Borjomi (attended by 70 business operators and 12 authorised persons of the Agency); Stepantsminda (attended by 48 business operators and 13 authorised persons of the Agency); Telavi (attended by 82 business operators and 20 authorised persons of the Agency); 10). From 17 May to 23 June, workshops were held in different regions of Georgia (Kakheti, Shida Kartli, Tbilisi, Adjara and Imereti) in accordance with Ordinance No 59 of the Government of Georgia - Technical Regulation - on the Approval of the Content of Undesirable Substances in Animal Feed on the conditions for storing and transporting animal feed in order to prevent food contamination with aflatoxin. 11) On June 4-6, a workshop was held in Kvareli, within the framework of ENPARD IV, on the topic: procedures for the implementation of state control and other official activities in the fields of food/feed, veterinary medicine and plant protection. During the workshop, changes were made to the second working version of the draft Ordinance. 12) June 10 - 12, at the headquarters of the SES, within the framework of ENPARD IV, a workshop was held between the donor and the agency's staff. The meeting discussed the cost assessment of the GCP/GEO/02/EC - legislation on phytosanitary control.

**In order to promote Georgian agricultural products**, 4 international exhibitions were held during the reporting period. In addition, **the following activities were carried out for the purpose of the development of extension and scientific and research activities in the area of agriculture**: 24 trainings were held; 30 articles were published; 219 recommendations were produced; 40 conferences were held; 15 grant projects were prepared; 1 monograph/book/leaflet was published; 1468 varieties and species of vegetables, fruits, legumes and technical crops were sown; 175 hectares of experiment and demonstration plots of land were used; 61 collection plants of fruit varieties (including 28 local varieties) were cultivated; the corresponding number of processed samples of agricultural products included in the research is 30; the number of certified nurseries - 35; the number of certified seed and planting material is 1 804 tonnes. The genetic resources of annual and perennial crops were collected with 506 patterns, (including local forms and patterns - 460, wild - 46), 220 varieties and forms of fruit; 108 saplings of the main collection of mulberry; 450 saplings of the main collection of mulberry; 342 saplings of mulberry rootstock plantation; 20 saplings of mulberry seed collection; the number of specimens stored in the in vitro bank: 1865 (including potato - 1760, vine - 50, sweet potato - 15, goji berry (WolfBerry) - 20, and chrysanthemum - 20); specimens stored in the plant genetic resources bank: 50 specimens of wheat and 39 specimens of corn; soil on some hectares of land was investigated by 91 samples; 5 experienced biological preparations were tested; collection plants of local tea varieties - 11, local varieties and forms - 6 000. Conservation of the Georgian gene pool of agricultural animals: bovine animals - 332 (including Georgian mountain cow - 22, Caucasian chestnut cow - 230; Ajarian cow - 25, Megrelian cow - 55; Kakhetian pig - 500; sheep and goats - 432 (including soft woolled and semisoft woolled sheep - 47, Imeretian sheep - 280, Tushetian sheep - 57, Megrelian goat - 48); poultry - 1010 (including hen - 600, Jersey Buff turkey - 230, Mottled duck - 30, Javakhetian goose - 150); fish: crossbreed of Parioni and mirror carp with biomass - 30 kg; crossbreed generation of Paravani and Rioni carp (Pharaoni) with biomass - 150 kg; bees - 62 families; Mulberry silkworm - 65 species.

## 7.5 Employment, Social Policy and Equal Opportunities

An important priority is approximation to EU standards in terms of employment, social policy and equal opportunities (Association Agreement, Title VI, Chapter 14, Annex XXX).

**Within the framework of the 2024 Employment Support Services Development Programme**, 1375 job seekers were registered in the system, (in total, 373,360 job seekers are registered in the system), and 798 employers registered 10 676 vacancies. Supported Employment Consultants provided support services to 70 job seekers from vulnerable groups, of whom 63 were persons with disabilities and 7 were less competitive job seekers. Individual consultations were provided to 2, 580 job seekers. Consultations on career planning and professional consultations were provided to 1 220 job seekers. **5 employment forums were held.**

**Within the framework of the 2024 State Programme for Qualification Raising for Job Seekers**, 13 training organisations (2 state and 11 private) were registered for participation in the Programme. 1 040 beneficiaries were engaged in 52 professions in demand. 5 employers and 13 interns were engaged in the internship component of the State Programme for Professional Training, Retraining and Qualifications Raising of Job Seekers.

During the reporting period, 4 collective labour dispute mediations were underway. 2 disputes ended without agreement, and 2 of them are ongoing.

**In order to develop interstate cooperation in the field of labour migration and expand opportunities for temporary, legal employment abroad**, in the first half of 2024, draft agreements were prepared with Greece and Slovakia; work is underway to finalise them and sign bilateral cooperation agreements.

**In terms of labour safety and labour rights**, during the reporting period, technical training was provided to employed labour inspectors; 13 meetings/training sessions on 27 normative acts were conducted within the framework of the III stage of internal training of labour inspectors (a total of 30 training hours).

**With the support of the United Nations Development Programme**, work was completed on the Guiding Principles for Labour Inspectors on 'Identifying and Preventing Discrimination on Racial, Ethnic and Religious Grounds in the Workplace,' in accordance with which a series of employee training sessions were conducted, including training of trainers and accompanying trainings with employee engagement. **With the support of UN Women**, guidelines for labour inspectors on 'Assessment of harmful and/or particularly risky working environments for pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women' were developed, in accordance with which an e-learning course was developed. In addition, guidelines were developed on the guiding principles of **supervision of equal pay issues in the workplace** and instructions for its use, and labour inspectors carrying out supervision in this direction were retrained. **With the support of the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)**, labour inspectors were trained on issues of fair and ethical employment in the field of migration.

**With the support of the OSCE**, a simulation training on trafficking was conducted.

**With the support of the Council of Europe project 'Strengthening Protection of Social and Economic Rights in Georgia'**, the employees of the Labour Inspection Office were retrained in persuasive communication techniques.

**Within the framework of the EU Gender Equality Project**, work has been completed on the guidelines for labour inspectors 'Gender-Responsive Labour Inspection' - the guidelines are available in Georgian on the official website of the Office.

With the support of the EU Twinning Project of Public Institutions - ‘Improving a Safe and Healthy Working Environment in Georgia in line with EU Standards and Best International Practices’ (GE 21 NDICI SO 02 23), in order to effectively implement the obligations assumed under the Association Agreement, during the reporting period, 2 draft technical regulations developed in accordance with 3 directives were updated. The said directives are: *Directive 2009/104/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 September 2009 concerning the minimum safety and health requirements for the use of work equipment by workers at work* (second individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of 89/391/EEC Directive, codified version, amended by 95/63/EC and 2001/45/EC Directives); *Council Directive 92/91/EEC of 3 November 1992 concerning the minimum requirements for improving the safety and health protection of workers in the mineral- extracting industries through drilling* (eleventh individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC); *Council Directive 92/104/EEC of 3 December 1992 on the minimum requirements for improving the safety and health protection of workers in surface and underground mineral-extracting industries* (twelfth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC).

In accordance with the Law of Georgia on Labour Inspection, in the first half of 2024, the LEPL - Labour Inspection Office carried out 2263 activities (primary and subsequent inspections, before eliminating violations, monitoring) at 1273 facilities (facilities inspected within the framework of the primary inspection); 8944 instructions were issued by the Office in response to the violations identified as a result of the inspections carried out.

## 7.6 Healthcare

In accordance with tobacco control legislation, a state health promotion programme is underway within the framework of the tobacco component.

Within the framework of the EU Twinning project - ‘Support in Implementation of Health Impact Assessment Practice in Georgia’, a guide to **Health Impact Assessment** was prepared for Georgia: ‘Integrating health in environmental assessments’ - English and Georgian versions. The final editing of the Georgian version is currently underway.

In the first half of 2024, 2 laboratories of the **National Antimicrobial Resistance Network** were accredited according to ISO 15189 requirements.

Consultations on joining the **One Health/AMR** (Antimicrobial Resistance/One Healthcare) partnership are actively underway with the involvement of representatives of the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health and the relevant ministry.

During the reporting period, a **draft of the subordinate normative act ‘on approval of the procedure for performing immunohematological tests’** was developed and discussed with blood banks; a draft of the Order of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia has been prepared and the approval procedure is underway. The draft subordinate normative acts ‘on approval of the procedure for the selection of donors of blood and blood components and for the conformity assessment’ and ‘on approval of the procedure for the collection of blood and blood components’ are being agreed with the relevant agencies for their approval.

## 7.7 Cooperation in the Field of Innovation

**In order to deepen bilateral cooperation with EU Member States in the direction of innovations and technology**, 2 memorandums of understanding have been concluded between international technology companies (HiQo Solutions, Partisia Blockchain) and the Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency.

Within the framework of events (conferences, seminars) organised by the European Union and other countries to promote participation in online and physical start-ups, Georgian start-ups participated in:

- Hardware Startup incubator;
- Italian Innovation and Research Day;
- Investment ecosystem meeting VOL.3;
- A large-scale competition held in France - Viva Tech.

The following activities were carried out in terms of connecting angel and venture investors and/or mentors with Georgian start-ups (organisation of pitching sessions and B2B meetings); within the framework of the events, 500 Global in Eurasia | Demo Day was held. During the 6 months of the current year, one demo day of the co-financing grants programme was held, where the evaluators were independent experts and investors from the global entrepreneurial ecosystem.

During the reporting period, the Senaki TechnoPark was opened, and work is underway to open the Kutaisi Technology Hub.

**Within the framework of financing innovative and technological projects**, the following were financed at the current stage: Co-financing grant programme - 20 beneficiaries, regional grants - 24 beneficiaries.

1,046 students, including 562 women, enrolled in ICT training courses in Tbilisi and the regions.

## 7.8 Cooperation in the Field of the Information Society

In accordance with the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting, on 27 June 2024, **the Communications Commission approved the following subordinate normative acts:**

- codes of conduct for on-demand audiovisual media services providers and video-sharing platform services providers;
- guidelines on defining a small audience and a low income audiovisual media services provider for the purpose of exemption from the obligation of marketing European productions;
- standards for continuous and progressive availability of media services for persons with disabilities;
- an information portal accessible to persons with disabilities (where it will be possible to receive complaints), and the procedure for the development and operation of such portal. In accordance with the law, the portal must be operational by 1 January 2027.

## 7.9 Tourism

During the 6 month period, the LEPL Georgian National Tourism Administration participated in the following **international tourism fairs** organised in EU Member States: MATKA (Helsinki, Finland, 18-21 January); FITUR (Madrid, Spain, 24-28 January); Madrid Fusion (Madrid, Spain, 29-31 January); Health Tourism Expo (Berlin, Germany, 2-3 February); ITB (Berlin, Germany, 7-9 March).

In April 2024, the National Tourism Administration launched a **marketing campaign** featuring celebrity chef Jamie Oliver. As part of the campaign, two videos on Georgian gastronomy were produced and will be posted

on Jamie Oliver's website and social media. Target (EU member) countries: Germany, Italy, Spain, Eastern Europe.

**In order to promote the business tourism potential of the country**, during the first two quarters of 2024, the Georgian National Tourism Administration participated in the following international business tourism events held in EU Member States:

- ✓ **MCE Central & Eastern Europe** (4-6 February, Republic of Austria, Salzburg), within the framework of which the bureau's representatives held more than 35 meetings with leading companies and clients from various countries, invited from the field of business tourism. A presentation was also held about Georgia's tourism potential.
- ✓ **Pure Meetings and Events** (14 March, France, Paris), within the framework of which 25 meetings were held in B2B format with potential partners - representatives/customers of leading French companies.
- ✓ **Amour Forum 2024** (25-28 April, Sardinia, Italy), within the framework of which approximately 30 meetings were held with representatives of wedding planning companies and potential clients invited from different countries.
- ✓ **Imex Frankfurt 2024** (14-16 May, Frankfurt, Germany) - 10 member companies of the Bureau (Sheraton Grand Metechi Palace, TravelShop, Lopota Lake Resort and Spa, BTL Georgia, Paragraph Tbilisi Luxury Hotel, Swiss Hotel, Georgian Bus, Silk Hospitality, Georgia Travel Group) and the Department of Tourism and Resorts of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara participated in the exhibition, along with the Convention Bureau. In order to deepen partnership in the direction of business tourism, presentations business negotiations and meetings were held with representatives from up to 50 international and local companies and associations.

The National Tourism Administration hosted **14 press and information tours** from EU member states (France, Sweden, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Hungary and Greece) during the first two quarters of 2024.

### 7.10 Education, Science, Youth

As of June 2024, the negotiation process was successfully completed and **Georgia joined the following European partnerships**:

- **BIODIVERSA+** - Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia;
- **Water4ALL** - Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia;
- **Animal Health & Welfare** - State Laboratory of Agriculture;
- **Safe & Sustainable Food Systems** - National Food Agency, State Agricultural Laboratory.

Georgia has become a member of the international **Eurydice Network**. This network is part of the Erasmus+ programme and is open only to EU member states and Erasmus+ associated countries. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, as countries of the EU enlargement package, were given the opportunity to join the network. By Decree No 341 of the Government of Georgia of 12 March 2024, the Grant Agreement to be concluded between the European Education and Culture Executive Agency and the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia (Project 101167319 — ENU-GEORGIA, Registration No 3022 of the Ministry of Finance; 28.3.2024)

was also approved, within the framework of which a grant was allocated by the European Commission for the functioning of the Eurydice Unit.

**By receiving the status of a candidate country for membership in the European Union, Georgia was granted the opportunity to be included in seven working groups of the European Education Area (EEA) Strategic Framework. These groups are:**

- Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care;
- Working Group on Schools, including - Sub-group on Pathways to School Success - Sub-group on Learning for Sustainability;
- Working Group on Higher Education;
- Working Group on Vocational Education and Training and the Green Transition;
- Working Group on Adult Learning: Opening Up Opportunities for All;
- Working Group on Digital Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment;
- Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training.

By receiving the status of a candidate country for EU membership, Georgia was given the opportunity to participate in the **European Commission's group of experts on skills and qualifications - Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (ACVT), DG for Vocational Training (DGVT), European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) Network**. Information about the selected candidates was provided to the European Commission during the reporting period.

**In order to strengthen the grant offices of Horizon Europe** in universities and research institutions, in the first half of 2024, the Horizon Europe Georgia's National Office operated in 12 public and 4 private universities. During the reporting period, the National Office held 15 information events, with a total of more than 500 participants; as of June 2024, 36 projects with the participation of 32 organisations were funded under Horizon Europe, with a direct EU contribution of EUR 4.5 million. In total, 218 project applications have been submitted by 120 organisations from Georgia.

The National Office of the Horizon Europe is involved in three EU-funded National Contact Point Network projects: **NCP4Missions; NCP4HE; NCPWIDERA-NET FSTP**, the aim of which is to promote and strengthen the participation of scientists and innovators from Georgia in grant projects of the relevant sub-programme.

In order to strengthen the participation of Georgian academic and non-academic institutions in the **European cooperation tool - 'COST Actions'** - , during the reporting period, more than 20 individual and group consultations were conducted. Information about the 60 new COST actions and the rules of participation approved in May 2024 was provided to all higher education institutions, as well as to young researchers who won the doctoral and scientific grant competitions of the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia. During the reporting period, 12 researchers were involved in various COST actions.

In terms of improving access to professional programmes and non-formal education recognition services, two institutions gained the right to recognise non-formal education during the reporting period. As of June 2024, **13 facilities have the right to recognise informal education:** Public College NATALY ACADEMY LLC; Tegeta Academy LLC; Academy of Business and Technologies LLC; Business Academy of Georgia LLC; LEPL College Black Sea; LEPL - College Spectrum; LEPL - College Iberia; - Iakob Gogebashvili College of Georgia LLC; Non-entrepreneurial Non-commercial Legal Entity (NNLE) Institute of Culture; Non-entrepreneurial Non-commercial Legal Entity (NNLE) INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ACADEMY BDC; LEPL - College Gldani Vocational Training Center, LEPL College Mermisi, International Training Center Genesis LLC. **The**

**service of granting the right to recognise informal education is available in 11 areas:** business and administration, information and communication technologies, personal services, engineering, security services, education, healthcare, architecture and construction, agriculture, production and processing, and art. As of the first half of 2024, one new integrated programme (private college) was added. As of June 2024, out of a total of 91 integrated programmes, 86 programmes are implemented by 23 state institutions and 5 programmes by 3 private institutions. During the first 6 months of 2024, 80 new vocational training/retraining programmes were added to the system, including 13 new providers (12 legal entities, 1 vocational educational institution). **During the reporting period, 1,900 people were enrolled in vocational training and retraining programmes.** Within the framework of the 2024 admission, 776 places have been announced for 28 integrated vocational education programmes.

Since 2024, the project 'INVEST in you' has been implemented within the framework of **the Erasmus+** programme in partnership with the Skills Agency Georgia. International training programmes in Central Europe for students from Armenia, Georgia and Moldova ('INVEST in you: promote international traineeship programmes for Armenian, Georgian and Moldovan students in Central Europe IN-VET'). The following events were held within the framework of the project:

- mobility of teachers and students - training to prepare for international mobility;
- teacher training in organising competitions - to prepare students for competitions to develop their entrepreneurial skills;
- international internship - practical training for students in the area of hospitality in Hungary for 80 days;
- in order to participate in international study visits for vocational education teachers, in the first stage of the initiative, 42 teachers in the fields of agriculture, engineering, construction and hospitality were selected from 21 public vocational education institutions, who participated in one-week training visits to vocational education institutions in Germany, Italy and Latvia.

During the reporting period, **the updated Statute of the Eastern Partnership European School was developed;** the document was agreed upon with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth and the European Union Delegation. Within the framework of the Eastern Partnership European School project, with the financial support of the European Union and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, a new initiative - **the Training Academy** - was created. In the first half of 2024, as a result of a three-stage competition, teachers were selected for all subjects (one teacher each) and the head of the drama and theatre club was also selected. Based on cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia and the European Union, an agreement was reached that the official name of the school will remain Eastern Partnership European School, while the brand name will be European School Tbilisi.

Within the framework of the eTwinning programme, 600 new teachers have been registered on the portal, and 295 projects have been activated. Within the framework of STEAM Twinning, 15 schools have been selected to implement club activities and have been given STEAM resources as a gift. During the reporting period, a total of 480 teachers were trained in various modules.

In order to popularise the profession of youth worker and develop short and long-term quality programmes for the training and retraining of youth workers, the **professional educational standard Youth Activities** was registered in the register of professional educational standards and independent modules.

During the reporting period, **the rehabilitation and repair works of the youth camp infrastructure were completed**, bases were prepared; the thematic camps hosted a total of approximately 500 young people. Approximately 100 young people participated in the Ukrainian youth camp.

The youth festival Studfest 2024 was held. Among the directions of the Studfest was the direction of volunteerism - students at universities across Georgia united around a social idea and implemented various initiatives. One winning university was identified within the framework of the competition.

A small grants competition - Support for Regional Youth Initiatives - was held in cooperation with local self-governments, with the aim of implementing youth initiatives. During the reporting period, 1 grant project was funded. A grant competition was also held - Strengthening Youth Organisations - within the framework of which 6 projects were funded.

### 7.11 Cooperation in the Area of Culture and Sport

Deepening cooperation with the EU in the area of culture and sport within the framework of the Association Agreement (Association Agreement, Title VI, Chapters 17 and 19) is an important area. During the reporting period, various activities were planned and implemented to promote Georgian culture and participate in European Union programmes.

**Within the framework of legislative reform** in the field of culture, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Georgia has prepared draft laws in the areas of artistic education and theatre, in the form of relevant legislative packages. For this purpose, working groups were established in the above-mentioned areas, staffed with specialists in the field, and draft laws were prepared based on the concept developed by the working groups. During the reporting period, work on the legislative package on Theatres was completed, and the legislative package on artistic education is being agreed upon with the relevant state agencies. In addition, work is underway to develop legislative projects in various areas of culture.

During the reporting period, the following activities were carried out within the framework of the Creative Europe programme to promote the participation of Georgian representatives in announced competitions: 1) Information and consultation meetings with potential beneficiaries (75 consultation meetings on the Culture sub-programme and 50 meetings on the Media sub-programme); 2).Information meetings about open competitions (4 information meetings - 530 people attended); 3). Awareness-raising activities on funding opportunities (relevant information and examples of successful projects were published on social networks and the Creative Europe Desk Georgia website (10 publications on active issues for the programme and 15 project partner search forms); 4). The desk participated in joint events with other desks (3 meetings).

**In terms of strengthening the strategic approach to youth policy, a number of events were held during the reporting period:** 1) Theatres representing ethnic minorities (LEPL Al. Griboedov Russian Professional State Drama Theatre; LEPL Heydar Aliyev Tbilisi Azerbaijani Professional State Drama Theatre; LEPL Tbilisi Petros Manas Armenian Professional State Drama Theatre) staged 75 performances, including three opening nights. 2) Three museums of ethnic minorities (LEPL Smirnov Museum; LEPL David Baazov Museum of History of the Jews of Georgia and Georgian-Jewish Relations; LEPL Mirza Phatali Akhundov Museum of Azerbaijan Culture) held 115 educational projects and 15 exhibitions. 3) 23 projects/events were funded with the involvement of ethnic minorities and/or in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.

In addition to the activities specified in the curriculum, about 210 activities were carried out in LEPL extracurricular art schools during the reporting period, including: Up to 77 concerts; up to 15 exhibitions;

successful participation of students in up to 42 competitions; up to 25 educational projects and up to 50 other types of events (festival, conference, publication, listening, etc.).

During the reporting period, three competitions were held: 1) 4 winners were identified within the framework of the support of children's/youth private creative studios; 2). Within the framework of supporting children's musical/ballet performances/performances at other costs, 4 winners were identified; 3). 11 winners were identified within the framework of the renewal of instruments in music schools;

**A number of projects were funded through non-competitive means:** 1) Promoting the education of students with special needs; 2). Support for children's literature (translation, creation) (implemented by LEPL Creative Georgia); 3). Promoting inclusive art projects - 8 winners announced. 4) Web portal of Georgian female composers.

In order to promote cultural diversity, and the preservation and appropriate development of cultural and historical heritage values, during the reporting period, the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Georgia continued its cooperation in international forums, including: 1) Georgia participated with a national pavilion at the 18th Venice Architecture Biennale and the 60th Venice Contemporary Art Biennale . 2) The Georgian Festival of Léville was held for the second time in France, in which 39 creative groups, 42 individual artists/masters/athletes, a total of 800 people participated every weekend for a month and a half. In addition, in order to promote the Léville estate and promote its development as a centre of culture and art, it hosted its first artist residency in May 2024. Within the framework of the project 'Sculpture Symposium in Léville', the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts held a student sculpture symposium. 3) Georgian Culture Days were held in the central park of Tokyo, the capital of Japan, where folklore and ethno-jazz concerts, an exhibition of craftsman's works and master classes, sports and entertainment shows were held, in which 110 artists and athletes participated, including 5 creative groups, 4 craftsman and famous sportsmen. 4) In Budapest, Hungary, the Pesti Vegado Gallery hosted an exhibition called 'Female Artist - Face of an Era', in which the works of 7 female artists from different generations were represented. 5) An unprecedented large-scale exhibition of Georgian cultural heritage, 'Golden Fleece - Georgian Art', has opened at the National Museum in Krakow, Poland, featuring more than 800 exhibits from 12 Georgian and 4 foreign museums (Louvre, Jerusalem Archaeological Museum, Berlin Museum, British Museum). A cultural programme was held within the framework of the exhibition, in which the ensembles 'Dziriani', 'Patara Kakhi', as well as the 'Moon Theatre' with the play 'Pirosmani' participated. 6) In 2024, the Georgian Writers' House presented its national stand for the first time at the Paris Book Festival. Within the framework of the festival at **the Grand Palais Éphémère**, with the support of the Ministry, 9 books of various genres, a book-album in French, were specially prepared and printed for publication, in accordance with the exhibition concept - 'From Hagiography to Post-Modernism'.

### 7.12 Regional Development

Regional development is one of the important components in the formation of the sustainable development policy of Georgia, therefore approximation to EU standards (Association Agreement, Title VI, Chapter 21) will facilitate the raising and further development of the quality of life of the population of Georgia using the resource potential of the country and its regions.

During the reporting period, the construction work related to the construction of one regional landfill (solid waste disposal facility) has been initiated by a construction company selected on the basis of a competition/tender, and one solid waste transfer station has also been constructed.

**In order to bring Georgia closer to the European Union’s National Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS)**, an annual (2023) consolidated report on the monitoring of the implementation of the Harmonisation Plan for the introduction of the European Union’s National Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) in Georgia was prepared.

During the reporting period, the Smart Specialisation (S3) planning document in Georgia - ‘2024-2030 EU Smart Specialisation (S3) for Imereti’ was approved by the Imereti Regional Consultative Council (RCC), which was approved by Ordinance No 148 of the Government of Georgia of 24 April 2024; also, a draft Action Plan for the Smart Specialisation Strategy of the Imereti Region for 2024-2027 was prepared and submitted for further response. During the reporting period, internal departmental consultations are also actively underway regarding the implementation of the European Smart Specialisation Platform in other regions.

During the reporting period, **an Integrated Territorial Development Programme (ITDP) document was also developed**, which is undergoing relevant approval procedures. The programme takes into account a long-term vision of regional development and includes new priority areas, such as energy efficiency, human capital development, and social policy.

### 7.13 Financial Services

The purpose of cooperation between Georgia and the EU in the area of financial services (Title VI, Chapter 7, Annex XV-A to the Association Agreement) is to form a fully functioning market economy and to promote trade relations between both parties.

In order to achieve the full approximation with the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on takeover bids, the completed draft legislative amendments, together with an explanatory memorandum and a compliance analysis, have been accepted for consideration by the Government of Georgia.

In order to approximate with the BRRD Directive, a law has been approved (adding an ex-ante resolution fund). After the adoption of the law, it is planned to develop/update related subordinate acts to bring them into line with the law. In particular: 1. Development/approval of criteria for imposing advance contributions by banks to the resolution fund and the procedures for making contributions; 2. Amendment to the ‘Procedures for the Establishment and Administration of the Resolution Fund and the Provision of Temporary State Financing by the Ministry of Finance of Georgia’ approved by Joint Order No 329 – 247/04 of the Minister of Finance of Georgia and the President of the National Bank of Georgia; 3. Amendments to the ‘Criteria for Imposing Contributions and the Procedure for Implementing Contributions for the Reimbursement of Funds Allocated within the Framework of Temporary State Financing’ approved by Joint Order No 328 – No. 246/04 of the Minister of Finance of Georgia and the President of the National Bank of Georgia.

In order to comply with Directives 2008/48/EC and 2002/65/EC, on 31 May an amendment was made to the Order No 32/04 of the President of the National Bank of Georgia of 9 March 2021 on the Approval of the Procedures for the Protection of Consumer Rights when Providing Services by Financial Organisations.

In order to prevent violations/circumvention of sanctions/restrictions imposed by the European Union against the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, obliged entities subject to the supervision of the National Bank of Georgia have taken additional measures and increased the effectiveness of compliance with the sanction requirements:

- in order to increase the efficiency of the process of compliance with sanction regimes, the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) Message Screening Rules were approved by Order No 273/04 of the President of the National Bank of Georgia dated 9 October 2023, which establishes a unified approach to

the screening of SWIFT messages, refers to lists for which SWIFT message screening is mandatory, and takes into account international best practices;

- in order to facilitate compliance with trade restrictions under sanctions regimes and reduce the risks of circumvention of sanctions, guidelines have been developed on the implementation of payment transactions arising from trade restrictions under sanctions regimes, which determines the requirements for examining payment transactions related to the import, export, and re-export of goods, submitting additional documentation, as well as other measures to be taken to comply with trade restrictions. The guideline was shared with the sector through an internal communication channel;
- the effectiveness of the process of compliance with the requirements set out in the sanctions regimes is being verified in commercial banks.

On 18 April 2024, the Order of the President of the National Bank **on the Approval of the Procedure for Publishing Information on Certain Measures Applied by the National Bank of Georgia on the Official Website of the National Bank of Georgia was approved**. The said order, inter alia, provides for the publication of information on sanctions imposed for violations of securities market legislation, thus fulfilling a similar requirement of Directive 2014/65/EC. Also, by order of the President of the National Bank of Georgia dated 29 February 2024, the Procedures for Recording and Maintaining Accounts for Dematerialised Securities were approved. The Procedure, inter alia, takes into account the requirements set out in Directive 2014/65/EC regarding the accounting and segregation of securities.

As regards Directive 2006/48/EC of 14 June 2006 and Directive 2006/49/EC, both of which have been repealed by the CRD Directive, conformity should be assessed in relation thereto. The planned activities in terms of compliance with the CRD Directive have been largely implemented and compliance has been achieved on important matters. Work continues to eliminate remaining non-compliances and achieve further compliance with the CRD. In addition, active monitoring of enforcement and practical issues is underway.

The Order of the President of the National Bank of Georgia dated 29 February 2024 on the Approval of the Procedures for Licensing and Regulating the Central Depository was approved, and the Regulatory Procedures for Securitisation have been approved by Order No 74/04 of the President of the National Bank of Georgia dated 29 March 2024.

The National Bank of Georgia approved an amendment to the Regulation approved by Order No 253/04 of the President of the National Bank of Georgia of 30 November 2018. The aforementioned provision reflects the innovations envisaged by the updated regulation (new articles were added, certain action points were modified, and the name of the provision, which includes a reference to a virtual asset, was also changed - Provision on Information Accompanying the Transfer of Funds and the Transfer of Virtual Assets). Since Georgia is significantly dependent on suppliers of technical/technological solutions from the European market (where the Euro-regulation will come into effect in December 2024) in terms of technical implementation, the normative act approved by the NBG entered into force upon adoption, and payment service providers were given a deadline of 1 January 2025, and virtual asset providers were given a deadline of 31 December 2027, to ensure compliance therewith.

In order to approximate with Directive 2014/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features (the so-called Payment Account Directive - PAD), in parallel with the work on transposing the relevant part of the Directive into Georgian legislation, active work is underway to update the official website of the National Bank, and a new functionality will be added - complete information

about the services offered by providers and their fees/commissions will be available to the user, which will allow him/her to compare prices and make an informed decision.

The draft law on Additional Supervision of Credit Institutions, Insurance Companies and Investment Companies in a Financial Conglomerate, which was developed together with the relevant agency - LEPL Insurance State Supervision Service of Georgia, has been submitted to the Parliament of Georgia and is in the process of adoption. After its draft is adopted through three hearings, the National Bank will begin work on developing the resulting subordinate act(s).

Directive 2002/92/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 December 2002 on insurance mediation, as provided for in the Association Agreement, has been largely implemented. Later, the said Directive was replaced by Directive (EU) 2016/97 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 January 2016 and therefore does not appear in the Association Agreement. However, since the new directive envisages the new regulation of insurance mediation/distribution, its implementation was deemed appropriate. Accordingly, LEPL Insurance State Supervision Service of Georgia prepared a project application in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the purpose of implementing the TWINNING project. After receiving a response from the EU Delegation, future steps will be planned and determined.

In order to harmonise the legislation with the taking-up and pursuit of the business of Insurance and Reinsurance (SOLVENCY II), a working group established at the Service continues to work intensively on a new legislative framework regulating the insurance sector.

In the first half of 2024, in accordance with Article 9(3) of the Law of Georgia on Accounting, Reporting and Audit, 11,251 financial statements of PIEs and first, second, third and fourth category undertakings/relevant groups were inspected and made public on the reporting portal ([www.reportal.ge](http://www.reportal.ge)), including 72 financial statements of undertakings having the status of PIE, 45 financial statements of first category undertakings/groups, 196 financial statements of second category undertakings/groups, 537 financial statements of third category undertakings/groups, and 10,401 financial statements of fourth category undertakings/groups. In addition, in order to maintain and increase the rate of reporting submission and disclosure, in February and April of the current year, the Accounting and Reporting Supervision Department of the Service held information meetings for Category III and IV enterprises in an online format, which addressed topical issues related to the reporting submission process.

In June 2024, a draft law on gradual approximation entered into force, which serves to approximate the requirements of the Law of Georgia on Accounting, Reporting and Auditing and the Law of Georgia on Entrepreneurs with Regulation (EU) No 537/2014. At the current stage, the development of another draft law related to further phased and dynamic approximation to the European Union Directives 2013/34/EU and 2006/43/EU has begun. It is planned to discuss the developed draft document with experts in the second half of 2024.

In the first half of 2024, the monitoring of the quality management systems of 11 firms was completed, while the monitoring of 18 firms is in the current stage and will be completed in the second half of 2024.

It is noteworthy that the Accounting, Reporting and Audit Supervision Service held events and participated in various activities related to the amendments to Directive 2013/34/EU in the first half of 2024, as follows:

in March of the current year, SARAS disseminated information regarding the implementation of new EU corporate sustainability reporting requirements in Georgia;

in the first half of 2024, SARAS began reviewing 21 financial statements for compliance with the IFRS. In the second quarter of the current year, the financial statements of 134 Category III enterprises were reviewed to verify compliance with the IFRS for SMEs standard. It is also worth noting that on 1 February 2024, the Service developed and published an updated unified document on inconsistencies identified as a result of the review of financial statements and review priorities for the attention of entities, their auditors, regulatory/supervisory authorities, and persons interested in reporting.

## 8. Financial Aid, Anti-Fraud and Control Provisions

During the reporting period, **the Human Security Development Programme of the European Union Assistance Action Plan 2023** was signed, which provides for EUR 20 million as financial aid.

Inter-agency consultations are being held within the framework of the working group established to combat fraud and prevent corruption in EU assistance projects.

Successful cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) continues.

## 9. Institutional Cooperation

Meetings in various formats under the EU-Georgia institutional cooperation were held during the reporting period, within the framework of which important issues of cooperation and future plans were discussed.

On 20 February, **the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Committee** was held in Brussels. A joint press release was issued following the meeting.

On 23 January the 6th meeting of the Strategic Dialogue on Security Issues was held in Brussels. After the meeting, a press release was issued by the parties.

On 14 March the Director of the Directorate General for the European Union of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia participated in the Eastern Partnership Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) held in Brussels.

No meetings of the thematic groups of the Subcommittee on Economic and Sectoral Cooperation were held during the reporting period, as the coordination of the issue on the part of the European Union was transferred from the European External Action Service to the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) of the European Commission, which took quite a long time.

## 10. Strategic Communication

During the reporting period, monthly disinformation monitoring documents were developed; the creation of a working group to raise awareness about Georgia's accession to the European Union and combat anti-Western disinformation is also actively underway; an electronic monitoring system for the Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia for Georgia's EU and NATO Membership was launched.

**In connection with the submission of the application for Georgia's EU membership** and in accordance with the official approval by the EU of Georgia's European Perspective, the strategy documents, the strategy text and the logical framework have been adapted and submitted to the Government for approval. During the reporting period, **the annual implementation report of the 2023 Communication Strategy Action Plan** was requested from

the agencies and a report was prepared. Work continued with the working group on developing a strategy monitoring programme.

During the reporting period, the NATO and EU Information Centre, within the framework of various activities and large-scale information campaigns, implemented 470 events, in which 100,316 citizens participated across the country. Among the events organised by the Information Centre, two large-scale information campaigns are noteworthy: 1) Europe Day 2024 - the Information Centre has joined the Europe Day organised by the European Union Delegation to Georgia. 2) Events to celebrate Georgia's Independence Day under the concept What We Planned - On 26 May the Information Centre in Tbilisi, Batumi and Telavi was represented with a stand that responded to Georgia's success on the path to European integration - the granting of the status of candidate for EU membership.

Within the framework of the project Simulation Centre - Disinformation School, 97 simulation trainings were conducted for 2,461 schoolchildren in Tbilisi and the regions to improve the skills required to combat disinformation.

Within the framework of the paid internship programme-project, during the reporting period, 12 young people were given the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in the field of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, be employed in the Centre's representative office, and gain important work experience for future career growth.

As part of the information campaign conducted by the Information Centre through social media, 39 informative posts were prepared from January to June. The information campaign on the Facebook page covered 735,200 people with a total of 3,192,711 views. And the information campaign on the Instagram page covered 125,800 people. Furthermore, the information campaign carried out through social networks, which was also carried out in the languages of ethnic minorities, covered up to 454 548 people.

## **11. Cooperation with Civil Society**

During the reporting period, consultations were held with the Civil Society National Platform on issues related to the implementation of the 9 priorities of the European Council, as well as on the topic of legislative and institutional approximation within the framework of sectoral integration with the European Union.