



# Government of Georgia: Program for 2021 – 2024

## Towards Building a European State

February 2021

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## Vision

Idea of building a state of Georgia is based on the main democratic principles and values: freedom, equality, rule of law and protection of human rights. It serves the mission of well-being for every citizen, thereby strengthening the sovereignty and de-occupation of the country by restoring territorial integrity and full integration of Georgia into European and Euro-Atlantic space.

The crisis caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has posed new challenges to Georgia, like the rest of the world. The pandemic affected all areas of public life.

Accordingly, the main goal of the Government Program for 2021-2024 branded as For Building a European State is to overcome the crisis created by the pandemic, thereby ensuring a rapid recovery and development of the economy to create a stable and secure environment for every citizen.

At the same time, the country will continue to take steps towards the consolidation of democracy and the pursuit of European and Euro-Atlantic integration in the foreign arena, as well as efforts to resolve the Russia-Georgia conflict peacefully. The main task of the following years will be the institutional, economic and social preparation of the country for filing an application for a full membership in the EU in 2024.

Based on the above goals, the Government of Georgia will focus on the following four key areas in 2021-2024 for a rapid recovery and development of economy in the country, as well as for building a strong, united and democratic state:

- **Foreign policy, security, peaceful resolution of the conflict and human rights.** Security is the basis of development in the country. In the conditions of occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia and in the face of growing external threats, it is important to deepen cooperation with strategic partners of the country and to integrate into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, while maintaining a defense system compatible with international standards, internal security and law enforcement on the other hand. At the same time, it is important to adhere to a high standard of human

rights. Besides, deepening of economic, trade, transport, communication and energy ties with the EU will be an important aspect on the way to full integration with the EU.

- **Economic Development.** Economic policy of the Government of Georgia will be geared at economic growth. The starting point will be to promote a post-crisis rapid recovery and development of businesses, which in turn should ensure job creation and eradication of extreme poverty. At the same time, by using all the tools of economic policy at its disposal, the State will help to create additional incentives for economic development.
- **Social Policy and Human Capital Development.** The state should enable the strengthening of human capital as an important factor of economic development, development of a decent social security system, further development and effective management of the health care system and establishment of a quality-driven, affordable and technology-based approaches in the education system notwithstanding the barriers born by the pandemic.
- **Governance.** Strong public institutions, qualified and conscientious officials are an important resource for building a strong state. As part of the fight against the crisis, the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration is crucial, as it must become visible and tangible for every citizen.

## 1. Foreign Policy, Security, Conflict Resolution and Human Rights

### 1.1 Foreign Policy

In the current security environment, European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia, deepened cooperation with strategic partners and strengthened sovereignty of the country, restored territorial integrity with the involvement of the international community become

particularly important for strengthening the national security of Georgia. In this context, the Government of Georgia continues to pursue a policy of peaceful settlement of the Russia-Georgia conflict.

At the same time, recent developments in the region have created new challenges. In this situation, it is important for Georgia to support initiatives that serve to establish appropriate negotiation formats with a strong Western presence in response to new threats and challenges.

The first task for Georgia in the international arena, as well as in the **relationship agenda of partners with Russia, is to maintain and strengthen the topic of peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict at a high level.**

At the same time, the country continues its proactive and result-oriented engagement in the **Geneva International Discussions (GID)** to address the security and humanitarian challenges posed by the Russian occupation. Work will be continued in an intensified manner to raise the issue of the GID to a high level and provide effective international support for the agenda of partners, which will also include a high-level presence of Georgia's strategic partners ensured in this format.

Work on de-occupation continues to be actively pursued to achieve concrete, tangible results. This means taking practical steps to **fully implement the EU-brokered Ceasefire Agreement dated August 12, 2008.** Confirmation and fulfillment of the commitment made by the Russian Federation to non-use of force and withdrawal of its forces from the occupied territories, is essential. In parallel, ensured establishment of international security mechanisms on the ground and increased international engagement in this process is an important area of action.

Provision of access to the occupied territories of Georgia to the **European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM)** is an important priority in order to enable a full implementation of its mandate.

Special attention will be paid to **improving the humanitarian situation and ensuring the protection of human rights in the occupied territories of Georgia.** In this regard,

consolidation of international efforts and effective use of negotiation formats will continue. Work will progress proactively on the individuals included in the **Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List** in order to gain support for the imposition of restrictive measures by various countries and international organizations.

Intensification of efforts for the **safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees** from the occupied territories of Georgia is a priority area of action.

Also, consolidation through the policy of non-recognition of the occupied territories of Georgia, prevention of existing risks and response to individual cases, mobilisation of international effort is a priority direction of the country.

Aim and goal of the country is **to peacefully settle the conflict**, within the framework of which, the policy of **reconciliation and engagement**, along with the de-occupation of the territories of Georgia, is of special importance. The cornerstone of state policy is to ensure the sustainable development of Georgia so that the country becomes attractive to people living on both sides of the occupation line. For the people living in the occupied territories, it means sharing the goods and services achieved on the path of democratic and economic development of the state and European integration.

Priority will be given to an effective implementation of the Peace Initiative developed by the Government of Georgia branded as a Step Towards Better Future. Until the conflict is fully resolved, it will be one of the main tasks assumed by the Government of Georgia and special attention will be paid to caring for the population living in the occupied regions and in the vicinity of the occupation lines, dialogue between divided communities, restored trust and development of cooperation based on mutual interests. Active work will continue to further mobilize the international support.

**Resolution of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) released on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 in the case of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War** will be actively used in all possible legal and political formats to protect state interests of Georgia, to strengthen its sovereignty and ensure the return of IDPs. Protection of state interests will continue in the Courts of Strasbourg and The Hague, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

and the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH). In 2021, the ECHR will announce its decision on the 2008 War Case and begin enforcement proceedings. The investigation of the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague will move to an even more active phase and cooperation will continue to protect the interests of the Georgian state and people.

**On the path of European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia, the component of full-fledged integration into the EU is of special importance.** To this end, the country will further intensify certain areas of the integration agenda set out in the EU Integration Roadmap. First and foremost, the effective implementation of the Association Agreement (AA) and the use of related opportunities, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) component, will continue to be actively pursued.

In addition, in order to achieve tangible results for the citizens of Georgia, it will be especially important to continue work towards integration into the European single market.

**Security and defense cooperation with the EU, as well as sectoral integration, will be substantially deepened.** Particular attention will be paid to involvement in EU programs and cooperation with specialized agencies.

In the relationship with the EU, significant emphasis will be placed on finding new opportunities within the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and their effective implementation. In this regard, it will be necessary to further empower the association partners - Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – the so-called Association Trio by ensuring maximum coordination and common positions on European integration issues.

An important area of action is to **further strengthen the transit role of Georgia in relation to the European Union** and to reap the benefits of a component related to the membership of the European Energy Community (EEC) and integration into the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). All these activities, as well as the search for new opportunities of integration, serve to the main ambitious goal - to prepare for a formal application for membership in the EU by 2024 and to ensure the ultimate membership in the EU.

One of the most important foreign policy goals of the country is **to join the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance**. To this end, decision made at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 and the commitments enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia will be firmly fulfilled. As an aspirant country, Georgia will continue to work on the effective use of key instruments for integration into the Alliance (NATO-Georgia Renewed Substantial Package (SNGP), Annual National Program and NATO-Georgia Commission). Steps will continue to be taken to ensure greater NATO presence in Georgia (exercises, trainings, etc.).

A special aspect of NATO-Georgia cooperation is the dimension of **Black Sea Security**. Georgia is positioning itself as a reliable partner of the Alliance on its eastern flank and is ready to contribute in this direction. Proof of this approach is the plan to develop a strategic vision of the country in the context of Black Sea Security. Accordingly, the process of developing a **National Strategy on Black Sea Security will be initiated**.

Intensive work will continue to ensure further deepening of **strategic cooperation with the key strategic partner of the country - the United States of America**. Priority areas will be intensified, such as: security cooperation, strengthening defense capabilities and Euro-Atlantic integration, de-occupation of the country and strengthening the policy of non-recognition of the occupied territories, deepening trade and economic cooperation, as well as further US support for economic development and democracy.

Intensive work will continue in all key areas envisaged by the Strategic Partnership Charter (the so-called Sectoral Cooperation Component). The Government of Georgia aims to deepen defense and security cooperation with the USA and to seek an agreement on a relevant new legal framework to that end. Work on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the USA (for the ultimate endorsement of the document) will be intensified, as well as efforts to encourage US investments in Georgia and the Black Sea region at large. A special focus will be made on maintaining and strengthening a solid support for Georgia from the US Congress.

In the current environment, it is particularly important **to strengthen the bilateral relations** with partners of Georgia, taking the existing formats of cooperation to a qualitatively new



level and finding new areas of interaction. The State will ensure the **strategic level of bilateral partnerships** with European countries, the continuation and further deepening of partnerships with traditionally allied European countries.

Active efforts will be made to pursue a policy of **balanced and mutually beneficial partnership cooperation** in the region. As Georgia is positioned as an actor in the wider Black Sea region, special attention will be paid to intensifying regional cooperation between the respective states of the Black Sea basin in bilateral and multilateral formats. In this context, strategic and political ties with the respective countries, as well as sectoral cooperation, will be deepened.

It will be important to continue the delimitation-demarcation process of borders in accordance with national interests, based on strategic partnerships and good neighborly relations.

**Given the growing role and opportunities of the regions of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and South America**, further action is needed to further increase the political visibility of the country in these regions and to enhance the economic prosperity of Georgia.

Against the background of rapidly changing geopolitical challenges, **active involvement in global and regional international organizations within multilateral formats** is of particular importance to Georgia. Therefore, one of the important directions of the foreign policy of the country will be the active involvement in international organizations and the pursuit/positioning of policies in line with the national interests of the country.

Given the current challenges and opportunities, the **Georgian Diaspora** needs special attention and support. To do this, it will be important to continue various grant programs and projects to introduce a systematic approach to diaspora relations and to encourage diaspora initiatives. Particular attention will be paid to the implementation of projects already implemented, along with efforts that will be continued to establish and develop new cultural and educational centers for compatriots living abroad.

**Caring for Georgian citizens living overseas**, effectively protecting their rights and legitimate interests will remain an important priority.

## 1.2 Strengthening the Defense Capabilities of the Country

Given the current security environment and modern challenges, it is important to strengthen the defense capabilities and resilience of the country through the institutional development and enhancement of inter-agency cooperation with high combat readiness, modern capabilities, mobile and NATO-compatible defense forces.

Further introduction of total defense elements and development of its military component will continue. In parallel with the strengthening of the defense forces, which is inter alia based on the development of five key priorities - intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) and engineering capabilities.

Participation in international peacekeeping missions with the Alliance members and partner countries to enhance world security will be continued. At the same time, the defense forces will be ready to provide support to civilian authorities in the event of natural disasters and man-made crises within the country.

Involvement of Georgia in the Alliance missions and operations, as well as the Ministry of Defense expenditures within 2% of GDP, will continue to be ensured. Active cooperation with the United States will continue in Georgia in terms of the sustainable combat readiness and territorial defense capabilities of the country. One of the most important elements of US-Georgia defense cooperation is the Georgian Defense Readiness Program (GDRP), which includes training and institutional development components. GDRP helps to identify the need for infantry battalion training and equipment, thereby ensuring a consistently high-level of combat readiness. The successful completion of the GDRP in 2021 will focus the bilateral efforts on improving and maintaining brigade combat readiness levels.

With the help of partners, the Ministry of Defense of Georgia will continue to develop combat modeling and simulation capabilities.

These capabilities will be strengthened by 2024 within the framework of the NATO-

Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC). Also, the Civilian Office of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the Defense Forces will work with JTEC to develop scenario modeling, high-level training and operational concepts for strategic land, air, naval and cyber operations at strategic, operational and tactical levels.

JTEC will be shaped into an operational training and assessment center affiliated with NATO and will be staffed with representatives of both Georgian and NATO member and partner countries.

At the same time, the implementation of the agreements signed with the USA in 2020 will provide the NATO-Georgia National Training and Assessment Center with state-of-the-art systems and create a world-class training environment that will support the readiness of not only Georgia, but also NATO and US forces.

The Ministry of Defense of Georgia will reform the Common Military Center to improve the mechanism for sharing typical experience. The center will divide the Georgian Defense Forces into schools focused on ground, armed and mechanized, logistics, medical, aviation, air defense, intelligence, engineering, as well as nuclear, biological and chemical, communications and artillery segments. Also, taking into account the modern requirements, the institutionalization of important segments of the field of military education - training of officers and sergeants and bringing them in line with the standards of the Alliance will continue.

Based on the Strategic Defense Review process, over the next four years, the focus will be on the further development of the Georgian Defense Forces Management and Control System, which will be tailored to the requirements of task management, in order to establish a balanced and sustainable force. Structural and functional reforms of the Special Operations Forces will also be carried out, focusing on strengthening air defense, armor and engineering capabilities, key elements in dealing with hybrid challenges, including intelligence and cyber defenses. At the same time, an important priority is to improve the defense infrastructure and decentralize the logistics management system.

The development of healthcare capabilities of the military will be continued, along with

an increase of the efficiency of healthcare services/rehabilitation of the armed forces, family members of military servicemen, family members of the killed soldiers and civilians, the reintegration and resocialization of wounded/harmed military servicemen in the society. Co-financing of housing and other social projects will continue for the military personnel.

The Ministry of Defense will develop an improved reserve and mobilization system to increase its efficiency and credibility. This vision is based on international experience and analysis of the challenges in the reserve and mobilization system. Based on it, active and mobilization reserves will be defined as the main types of military reserve.

One of the activities of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia will be the creation and serial production of military and dual-use products. In view of the long-term vision, the capacity of LEPL<sup>1</sup> State Military Scientific-Technical Center – Delta - will be improved and its role will be increased.

Cooperation with NATO and EU member states, along with other partners will be successfully continued, including towards an improved and updated legal framework for bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

The Ministry of Defense of Georgia will continue to use the existing NATO-Georgia cooperation mechanisms effectively to ensure membership in the Alliance. The implementation of the initiatives defined within the framework of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) will continue, which will contribute to the development of the defense and security capabilities of the country, strengthen its sustainability, increase compatibility with NATO and the process of preparation for membership in the Alliance.

Relations with the EU in the field of security and defense will be intensified and deepened. In the coming years, a formal application will be made to start cooperation with the European Defense Agency (EDA). The Ministry of Defense of Georgia will also be ready to participate in specific EU Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL)

## 1.3 Security and Public Order

### 1.3.1 *Security and Public Order*

The National Security Council (NSC Office) being a key strategic advisory body in the field of national security will continue to work actively to plan and coordinate national security policy.

The process of updating the two main, fundamental conceptual documents in the field of national security - The National Security Concept Paper and The Threat Assessment Document, will be continued/completed, which is currently in its active phase.

One of the priority directions for the country is cyber security. As a result of adopting the appropriate conceptual and legal framework, the main goal is to create a solid institutional architecture in the field and to strengthen safety standards.

The State will pay special attention to the fight against "hybrid threats". To this end, shortcomings in the field will be addressed and a national strategy will be developed to combat the hybrid threats.

Implementation of a **common, analysis-based criminal policy** and **ensured inevitability of punishment** is crucial for ensuring a safe environment and for maintaining law and order in the country.

To this end, it is necessary **to continue the reforms** initiated in the field of security and law-enforcement, thereby taking measures aimed at **improving the quality** of performance.

In line with the concept of **Systemic Renewal**, further development of the Ministry of Internal Affairs will continue, which implies both structural and substantial changes, along with legislative initiatives.

The **reform of the criminal police** will continue, within the framework of which the clear separation of investigative, operative and precinct directions will be completed throughout Georgia. The gradual replacement of the precinct with a model of community-oriented

policing will continue. The institute of a law-enforcement officer will be developed, the main task of which will be to work on crime prevention. In order to bring it closer to international standards and increase the efficiency of police activities, the legislation regulating operative-investigative activities will be improved.

We will continue to **strengthen the investigation component and increase the quality of the investigation**. In line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, a set of draft amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code will be drafted and submitted to the Parliament of Georgia, which will clearly separate the investigation and prosecution functions, increase the independence of the investigator and his/her responsibility, ultimately improving the quality of investigation. To ensure the readiness of the system for implementation of adjustments, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia will develop an Action Plan designed for several years, which will include the recruitment of new staff, changes in the recruitment system, systematic training of existing investigators and other quality improvement measures.

**The quality of the investigation monitoring system will be refined further** and the centralized quality control mechanism - the Department of Human Rights and the Quality Monitoring of the Investigation - will be supported towards this end.

Effective steps will be taken to **effectively investigate juvenile delinquency and crime**, to introduce special approaches to juvenile offenders and to create a juvenile-friendly environment. The introduction of juvenile-friendly infrastructure, the specialization of investigators and their training and the prevention of juvenile delinquency will continue throughout the country.

**Border police reform will be continued**, along with the development of advanced human resources, border infrastructure, border surveillance equipment and active cooperation with NATO. The establishment of a unified border management risk analysis system and its integration into the relevant analytical system will continue. Coast Guard cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance will be further enhanced. The development of a joint naval operations center will continue.

**Reform of the patrol police will continue**, which will further simplify administrative processes, increase access to police services and ensure the introduction of modern technologies. The concept of a **common service center** for patrol police will be introduced throughout the country.

Approaches to crime prevention will be introduced, along with the analysis-based policing model. To this end, a network of analysts will be set up in police stations across the country.

Active **fight against organized and drug crimes** will remain a priority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

Cooperation with international police structures will be deepened. Active cooperation with Europol will continue, the network of police attachés will be expanded, especially in the EU member states.

In response to problems associated with visa-free travel, effective management of migration flows and borders will be improved, along with the implementation of readmission agreements.

In order to attract young and qualified staff to the system, as well as to increase the motivation of existing staff, an **effective human resource management system** will be established, which includes effective mechanisms for recruitment, training, promotion and social protection of staff. Recruitment rules will be improved further. The MIA<sup>2</sup> Academy will focus on the professional training/retraining of police officers. Accordingly, education programs will be developed adequate to the challenges identified in policing. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be introduced. Social protection mechanisms will be improved for police officers and their remuneration will be gradually increased. In addition, an internship system will be developed, which will ensure the attraction of motivated and qualified staff in the Ministry.

Work will continue on the **traffic safety software design**. The use of new technologies in the field of traffic administration will increase significantly. To ensure this, a scoring system

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

will continue to be refined, along with the integration of practical components in the driving tests required in urban conditions and the improvement of the legal framework to ensure preventive measures.

In order to increase the efficiency of **emergency management**, operational capabilities/resources will be developed, the level of preparedness will be increased and the quality of response will be improved. Major upgrades of hardware/equipment and complete modernization of infrastructure are planned, as well as significant development of international cooperation. Advanced technologies in the field of emergency management will be introduced, for example, such as an electronic fire safety monitoring system.

**LEPL Public Safety Management Center - 112**, will continue to add/develop video surveillance and speed control systems across the country in order to increase the level of public and road safety. Time for response actions will be reduced on priority cases through the introduction of the Priority Dispatch Software (ProQA). An early warning system through short text messages will be introduced to notify subscribers in a dangerous area of an actual or potential threat; In order to combat and prevent domestic violence, an electronic monitoring system will be developed, which will make real-time control of the perpetrator even more effective.

**New digital police products** will continue to be designed, including an anonymous messaging platform, electronic border-crossing system, vehicle information platform, citizen feedback system, etc.

**Renovation/rehabilitation of police buildings and construction of new facilities** will continue, providing them with appropriate material-technical base. **The infrastructure of temporary detention and isolation units will be upgraded, new isolators will be built, obsolete video surveillance systems will be replaced, medical facilities will be opened and isolators will be equipped with new equipment.** The existing infrastructure will be rehabilitated, constructed and equipped with material-technical means in order to bring



the temporary placement spaces for migrants in line with international standards and to improve the living conditions of the persons placed in the center.

Significant projects will be implemented, which will make the services offered to the public by the **Service Agency** even more flexible, comfortable and diverse. **Remote service services will be introduced** such as remote registration/re-registration of vehicles. Citizens will register their vehicles online via a special portal. The Service Agency will offer citizens a simplified service to remotely change state license plates.

In order to obtain evidence with a high standard, forensic capabilities will be developed: laboratories will be equipped with modern technical means, the scope of accreditation will be expanded in separate areas of expertise and the possibilities of cynology will be improved.

Given the growing dynamics in cybercrime, special attention will be paid to cyber security issues. To this end, cybercrime police units will be set up in all major cities, similar to the one in Tbilisi. The number of suitably qualified police officers will increase. Effective steps will be taken to timely identify content materials that are harmful to minors. The units will be equipped with special software and technical means. The legal framework will be improved. Operational cooperation with leading cyber security services in Europe and the USA will be enhanced.

**The Witness and Victim Coordinator Service will continue to be strengthened** to support victims and witnesses of crime, as well as to protect them from re-victimization.

### ***Penitentiary System***

Developing a penitentiary system and ensuring compliance with international standards remains a priority. To this end, maximum approximation to international standards for penitentiary infrastructure will continue. **Construction of new, small-scale penitentiary**

**facilities** will continue and existing facilities will be upgraded to meet international standards in the areas of safety, human rights and rehabilitation.

**Family-type penitentiaries** will be set up, where several juveniles with the same educational interests and aspirations will be housed and living in a family environment until release.

**Resocialization and rehabilitation programs** will be strengthened in penitentiary and probation systems.

Employment, vocational training, education and unloading opportunities for convicts and ex-prisoners will be improved. To this end, appropriate systems and infrastructure will be set up, taking into account the needs of vulnerable groups.

LEPL Vocational Training and Retraining Center for Convicts was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020, which will develop targeted activities/projects to promote convicts' vocational training and employment of convicts.

Effective methods of individual assessment of convicts and ex-prisoners, including classification, sentence planning and case management, will be introduced.

To facilitate the transition from the penitentiary institution to the probation system, the return from the penitentiary institution/probation to the society, **a policy of preparation for release** will be introduced.

It is planned to arrange a completely new infrastructure for the psychiatric ward of Medical Institution N18, which will be provided with appropriate walking space.

In order to improve the quality of services rendered in the public sector, **further improvements will be made to the healthcare services** delivered to the accused and convicts in penitentiary institutions.

Relevant legislative amendments will be drafted to increase the efficiency of medical care for the accused and convicts with mental health problems in penitentiary institutions, taking into account the specifics of the penitentiary system.

Relevant legislative amendments will be made to further improve the mechanism of parole for convicts.

In order to prevent crime, work will be intensified with juveniles in conflict with the law and those under the age of criminal responsibility who have reached the age of criminal responsibility.

Work with children under the age of 14 will be enhanced in the field of crime prevention.

Security, protection of the outer perimeter and escort measures in penitentiary institutions will be improved to reduce the possibility of escaping from the institution, hiding or bringing illegal items into the institution.

Professional development and awareness-raising for crime prevention and probation specialists will be supported further, including those for probation officers, social workers and psychologists, to improve the interaction with the target group and provide tailored services.

Improvements to safety and working conditions for beneficiaries, staff and guests in penitentiary institutions and probation bureaus will be continued further. Decent and non-discriminatory working conditions will be created for employees. Trainings and professional development programs will be developed and carried out for staff.

Active work will continue on the development of restorative justice practices and programs, including the introduction of pilot programs for mediation in the criminal justice system.

### ***1.3.2 Protection of Human Right***

Integration of approaches oriented at the protection of human rights into state policy-making remains a government priority.

**A new national human rights strategy** will be approved and implemented, setting out the long-term priorities of the Government of Georgia for human rights.

Effective measures will be taken to realize **the right to equality**, to avoid and prevent discrimination against people on any grounds.

Measures will be taken to strengthen **gender equality** in all areas of public life. There will be a rapid and effective response to each case of gender-based violence.

Coordinated work will continue to **protect the rights of children**, including the prevention, detection and effective response of children to violence, and the effective implementation of the existing legal framework in practice.

The Government of Georgia will actively pursue the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of **Persons with Disabilities** and promote their full integration into all spheres of public life by taking into account the individual needs of persons with disabilities. Coordinated and effective measures will be taken for the effective implementation of the Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Coordinated work will continue to **protect the rights of children**, including the prevention, detection and effective response to violence towards children with an aim of an effective implementation of the existing legal framework.

The Government of Georgia will continue to actively provide economic support to **the elderly** and their access to health services. Particular attention will be paid to their social inclusion in all areas of public life, the prevention of violence against the elderly and the effective response to cases of violence towards them.

Appropriate measures will be taken further for the full implementation of the **Law of Georgia on Social Work**, including the allocation of additional resources to increase the number of social workers, their lifelong qualification, specialization and appropriate remuneration.

Special attention will be paid to the effective **implementation of the State Policy on Civic Equality and Integration**. A new strategy for 2021-2026 will be adopted. The priority goal of the Government Policy will be for every citizen, regardless of ethnicity, to have the opportunity to be fully engaged in all spheres of public life, in the economic development of the country, in political and civil processes.

In order to promote social integration, special attention will be paid to **raising the level of knowledge of the state language**. Depending on the needs of different segments of the population, state language teaching programs will become even more diverse.

Particular attention will be paid to the inclusion of representatives of **ethnic minorities** in the common information space. Preservation and protection of cultural identity will be facilitated. Access to public services will be improved. Programs focused on empowerment and inclusion of ethnic minority youth will continue.

Unwavering protection of **property rights** will continue. Reliable and secure property registration procedures will be ensured, including through the introduction of the most advanced technologies.

In the field of **labor rights and safety**, work will continue to improve the legal framework and its full implementation in practice. Priority will be given to the effective implementation of the regulations adopted in terms of labor safety and the effective implementation of the labor inspection mandate.

To ensure an effective and independent investigation into crimes committed by law-enforcement officials, the Government of Georgia will strengthen the capacity of the **State Inspector's Office** and support reforms planned for its further development.

A new **Code of Enforcement** will be adopted, which will create legislative guarantees for enforcement proceedings in accordance with modern international standards. The Code will also include a number of novelties, mainly aimed at establishing a new, effective enforcement system, simplifying the enforcement process, strengthening the principle of equality of arms in the enforcement process and improving services beyond that, and offering new services to customers in the country. Creating the environment and inviolability of property rights, as well as bringing the enforcement legislation as close as possible to EU law.

After the adoption of the new Code of Enforcement, software and infrastructure projects will be implemented in stages. In addition, public executives will be trained in matters required for private business.

In response to modern human rights challenges and in line with international standards, the **Code of Administrative Offenses** will be improved.

In line with the commitments assumed under the EU-Georgia Association Agenda, work will continue on the one hand to recognize the International Hague Convention on Alimony Payment for the Benefit of Children and Other Forms of Family Support issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007 and on the Hague Protocol on Family Support Obligations issued on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007 and on the other, on the Hague Convention on the agreement to select a court dated 2005 as binding for Georgia. Accession of the country to these international agreements is aimed at ensuring the fulfillment of the obligations towards supporting children in cross-border cases by taking into account their best interests and to promote international trade and investment by adopting uniform rules for the enforcement of civil judgments in civil and commercial matters.

Active work will continue in international courts to protect the interests of Georgian citizens. So-called enforcement measures for deportation cases will be continued within the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

A new building of the Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Archive will be inaugurated in Akhaltsikhe in 2021 in order to develop state services focused on the needs of the citizens and to improve the protection of the state documentary memory.

In order to improve the cooperation of courts in civil and business cases, to simplify the rules and procedures of mutual legal assistance between countries and to settle civil and commercial disputes in a timely and efficient manner, the following international legal instruments were submitted to the Parliament of Georgia their recognition as legally binding for Georgia: The Hague Convention on the Overseas Submission of Court and Non-Court Documents for Civil and Commercial Cases dated 1965, The Hague Convention on Collecting Overseas Evidences on Civil and Commercial Cases dated 1970, along with legislative amendments arising from them.

## 2. Economic Development

The novel coronavirus pandemic has posed new challenges and problems to the Georgian economy, revealing its vulnerabilities. However, along with the challenges, the pandemic has created new opportunities and prospects for development. The economic policy of the country will be focused on the maximum use of these opportunities for the next 4 years. In parallel, active work will be devoted to the systemic and structural problems of the Georgian economy. In the post-pandemic period, the Georgian economy will have all the prerequisites for a rapid recovery and transformation into an "opportunity economy".

The economic policy of the country will again be based on the principles of the free market, where the private sector is the main driving force of the economy. At the same time, economic policy will focus on maintaining macroeconomic stability, especially in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, as well as the further development of the business and investment environment, which should facilitate the recovery and further expansion of pandemic-affected businesses.

Economic policy of the Government of Georgia will be aimed at the re-positioning the country in the post-Covid reality and make the most of new opportunities for the further development of the country, especially in terms of promoting the growth of domestic investment and attracting foreign investment.

To ensure long-term and high economic growth, the Government of Georgia will work on the structural transformation of the economy and the maximum involvement of economic factors as well as state-owned resources in economic activity.

At the same time, the qualitative improvement of the work of the relevant state institutions will be actively continued, which will contribute to the effective implementation of the economic policy in the country.

The main task of the Government of Georgia will be to ensure the readiness of the country's economy to make a formal application for EU membership by 2024. To accomplish this task, the economic policies pursued by the Government of Georgia will focus on the rapid

growth of the country's economy, poverty reduction and strengthening the country's position as a regional logistics and investment hub.

## **2.1 Economic Policy Framework for Exiting the Crisis and Rapid Economic Development**

The crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant damage to both the country's economy and virtually every aspect of public life.

According to preliminary estimates, gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2020 was negative and exceeded 6 percent. At the same time, against the background of the deepening crisis, as well as to encourage job retention, taking into account the tax benefits provided by the anti-crisis plan, the tax revenues of the 2020 Budget alone were reduced by 1.3 billion GEL. Additional needs in the expenditure part of the budget reached 1.6 billion GEL, while the tax refunds exceeded 1 billion GEL. In total, the 2020 Budget deficit increased to 9.4% of GDP.

The Government of Georgia has been rapidly mobilizing international aid in response to the crisis and raising over 2 billion USD (2020-2021). These resources are intended, on the one hand, to finance reduced budget revenues, and, on the other hand, to finance expenditures envisaged in the anti-crisis measures. As a result, government debt to GDP ratio will exceed 60% in 2020. The Government of Georgia will ensure that the debt ratio returns to a low level over the next 4 years.

Due to the global nature of the crisis, the situation in export markets has significantly deteriorated, resulting in reduced exports from Georgia. The crisis has also affected other sources of revenue, especially the tourism sector. As a result, the current account deficit relative to GDP will increase to 9.7% by 2020.

Against the background of the crisis, economic activity in the country has significantly decreased. The shock was twofold - both on demand and on supply. As a result, some businesses faced significant financial difficulties and the risk of job losses.



According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), by 2021 the Georgian economy will return to positive dynamics and growth will be 4.3%.

The next 4 years should be a period of quick exit and recovery from the economic crisis of Georgia, along with a rapid economic growth.

The short-term economic policy priorities of the Government of Georgia will be as follows:

- To reduce the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic/minimize economic losses;
- To restore positive trends existing prior to the pandemic and to ensure rapid economic growth.

This will be achieved through fiscal discipline, assistance to affected economic sectors by the State, support for the purchasing power of the population and gradual measures for the improvement of efficiency of the social protection system, while the top priority in the medium term will remain to be the following:

- Improved regional and international competitiveness of the country;
- Support of competitive domestic production and export;
- Support of domestic and foreign investments.

To achieve the above, a stable macroeconomic framework will be provided, within which the Government of Georgia will ensure the following: improved fiscal discipline, gradual reduction of public debt, price stability, monetary policy independence, gradual reduction of the budget deficit.

In order to create a macroeconomic environment conducive to economic development, it will be necessary to implement a coordinated fiscal and monetary policy, especially in the post-pandemic period. In this regard, it is necessary, in addition to fiscal stimulus, to put in place monetary policy stimulus instruments to encourage domestic investment and increase the scale of stimulus. In this process, along with the implementation of stimulating fiscal policies by the government, it will be important to promote the participation of foreign investors in the local market, which will reduce interest rates to some extent and create additional monetary incentives.

As a result, our ultimate goal is to ensure a low level of unemployment, which will result in the eradication of extreme poverty and a low level of poverty at large, as well as a reduced level of current account deficit and a high rate of economic growth and income growth.

To this end, the Government of Georgia has a specific plan, using all the tools at its disposal, to assist the Georgian economy and business.

The following measures will be taken on the fiscal policy side:

- **Fiscal consolidation and improvement of fiscal discipline will continue.** The process of cost optimization will continue, including only the financing of projects with high economic impact through the widespread introduction of the Public Investment Management (PIM) tool (100% of the investment projects will be covered by this tool from 2024). The budget deficit will consistently return to the 3% indicator.
- The existing system of tax reliefs will be revisited to create a more competitive environment, while the tax administration system will be improved.
- Outcomes and outputs of **state programs** will be analyzed and evaluated to determine their effectiveness.
- **Large-scale reform of state-owned enterprises** will be implemented.
- The most **optimal volume of capital investments** for the economy will be maintained. Georgia will maintain capital expenditures at 8% of GDP in the medium term.
- At the same time, capital projects will be strictly prioritized according to the economic needs of the country.
- **Low Current Account Deficit.** The Government of Georgia aims to reduce the deficit to less than 5% by 2024.
- **Rebounding the government debt to a stable level as a percentage of GDP.** By 2024 the debt ratio will be reduced to below 55%.

- **Ensure effective public funds management (PFM)** - continue to work actively on budget transparency, with a special focus on improving the involvement of the population and stakeholders in the budget process.

As for the promotion of entrepreneurial and investment activities, the State will deploy all the tools at its disposal in this process and namely the following will be done:

- Unwavering protection of property rights will be ensured.
- Intensive communication with business will continue.
- New regulations will be adopted in consultation with the business.
- The introduction of a regulatory impact assessment (RIA) tool will be expanded.
- Enabling tax environment will be maintained, tax burden will not increase and electronic services will be introduced.
- In order to overcome the crisis, financial resources available through various tools will be provided to overcome the liquidity problems as much as possible.
- The investment policy of the country will be planned anew. It will be based on an aggressive campaign aimed at attracting regional offices of international companies, as well as encouraging investment in the real sector of the economy (manufacturing). This process has already started and proactive communication with relevant companies and relevant offers are underway.
- **Further improvement of sovereign ratings.** The Government of Georgia aims to maintain the trend of improving the sovereign rating of the country by enabling it to achieve a credit rating investment level (BBB-/Baa3). **Implement of structural economic reforms to enhance economic stability** - strengthen Georgia's image as a leading reformer in the wider region.

## 2.2 Employment

Promoting business as the main generator of jobs is a key issue in terms of employment. In turn, the state promotes the effective functioning of the labor market, including the effective enforcement of the rights of employees and decent employment. The state also

ensures the implementation of effective vocational education policies to eliminate the supply-demand imbalance in the labor market. In addition, in the following will be done in coming years:

- In order to protect the rights of employees, the legislative and institutional framework of the Labor Inspectorate will be strengthened.
- Through access to relevant educational programs, the focus will be made on training staff and developing their competencies.
- Labor market services under existing state programs will be developed and refined, including professional skills development, training, internships, consulting and career planning, along with the continuous access to services across the country.
- Detailed labor market research, information assistance to job seekers and close coordination between job seekers and employers will continue.
- The regulation of international labor migration and the refinement of the relevant legal framework will continue.
- Work will continue to develop interstate cooperation in the field of labor migration, expand opportunities for temporary legal employment abroad (circular labor migration), protect the rights of labor migrants and conclude bilateral as well as multilateral agreements.

## **2.3 Entrepreneurial Environment**

Further improvement of the entrepreneurial and investment environment and appropriate measures will be continued:

- The principle of inviolability of property rights will be observed.
- An active dialogue with business will continue to identify and address problems in the private sector. The institution of business ombudsman will be further strengthened.

- Georgia will maintain a favorable tax system - low tax pressure will be maintained, innovative approaches will be introduced:
  - Automatic refund of VAT tax credits will be ensured;
  - Introduction of an automated tax filing system;
  - Reform of the tax dispute system in the Ministry of Finance. As part of the reform, a collegial tax and customs dispute resolution body will be established and staffed with professionals, the members of which will be selected, appointed and dismissed, ensuring the independence and impartiality of this body. As a result of the reform, both the institutional dispute resolution body and the position of taxpayers will be strengthened;
  - The practice of tax agreements will be revisited. It is important to start a broad dialogue on this issue, which will assess the appropriateness of the practice of tax agreements in terms of impact on a competitive environment and the economy.
  - The introduction of digital and modern technologies will continue, which will enable entrepreneurs to benefit from modern and efficient services, as well as ensure the reduction of tax evasion risks and fair tax administration.
- Tax and customs legislation of Georgia will be harmonized with EU legislation.
- The involvement of state-owned resources in economic activity, including the privatization of state-owned property, will continue to be actively pursued.
- Subsoil sector reform will be continued to create a competitive and investment-friendly environment. The second phase of the reform envisages the renewal of the legal framework regulating the subsoil sector, which includes the introduction of an integrated licensing system, the introduction of a modern geological data management system, the renewal of the fiscal regime, as well as the strengthening of a supervisory function and a system based on risk assessment.

- Based on successful international examples, the reform of state-owned enterprises will be implemented, based on 5 pillars recognized by international standards of state-owned enterprises:
  - Prioritization of commercial goals for the enterprise will increase;
  - The principles of corporate governance based on the principles of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) will be introduced in enterprises;
  - The policy and rationality of owning state-owned enterprises will be defined;
  - Management of enterprises with medium-term strategic target indicators;
  - Institutionalizing the principle of competitive neutrality.
- Partnership Fund reform will be implemented.
- A new system of business rehabilitation in crisis (as an alternative to bankruptcy) will be introduced in practice; Lenders' rights will be protected, which will increase the predictability of the insolvency environment and the attractiveness of the investment environment. Based on the newly adopted Law of Georgia on Rehabilitation and Collective Settlement of Creditors, which will come into force in April 2021, there will be more incentives for the rehabilitation of enterprises, more guarantees for the rights and legitimate interests of creditors. In addition, the issue of introducing the **institution of bankruptcy of a natural person**, which is an established tool in developed countries, is being considered.
- The structural reform of the capital market will continue, within the framework of which a new capital market strategy will be presented in 2021. As part of this reform, the legal framework for the development of the securities market will be improved. Entrepreneurs and investors will have access to existing non-liquid assets and attract investment through them. In order to promote long-term investment, long-term insurance products will be developed, including as part of the pension reform, the reform of private pension schemes will be completed, which will help to accumulate

long-term money in the national currency. An action plan will be developed, which will be aimed at classifying Georgia as a frontier market.

- Investment projects of innovative and high-tech start-ups will continue to be supported.
- With the involvement of regional techno parks and universities, programs will continue to support new innovative ideas.
- Further development of free market institutions will be continued. The institutional framework of competition policy will be strengthened, alternative mechanisms for resolving commercial disputes (mediation) will be developed, the practice of fast and effective justice will be introduced and the framework for public procurement dispute resolution will be changed.
- The ratification process of the UN Convention on Mediation will be completed, which will facilitate the development of mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism.
- Promotion of entrepreneurs' access to international markets will be continued along with tapping into the potential of existing free trade agreements (FTAs), within the scope of which entrepreneurs will be able to develop their production and deployed systems to meet international standards. In order to find new markets, the area of free trade agreements will be further expanded (Israel, India, USA, South Korea, Gulf Arab countries); Signing of an FTA with the United States will be a priority.
- The investment policy of the country will be formed anew. In the post-pandemic period, Georgia will move to an aggressive policy of attracting foreign investments. The country will be positioned anew. In addition, coordination mechanisms for investment activities with central government agencies and local authorities will be strengthened. As a result, the effectiveness of communication with international and local investors will increase.

- The Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) tool will be expanded to allow the impact of each decision on the economy to be pre-analyzed to avoid possible negative consequences.
- A new Law on Entrepreneurs will be adopted, which will reflect the requirements of the relevant EU regulations provided for in the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and its Annexes, thus bringing the corporate law of Georgia closer to EU legislation.
- In order to promote a competitive business environment, the state will gradually exit those sectors of the economy that have the potential to function and develop independently.

## **2.4 Promotion of Entrepreneurial and Investment Activities**

Supporting businesses, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), will be crucial in mitigating the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid post-pandemic recovery of the economy.

In order to further promote the development of SMEs and to continue the introduction of international best practices, SME Development Strategy will be developed for 2021-2025, which will be based on the main principle of the European Small Business Act.

In terms of business support, the development of access to finance tools will continue to be a priority, both to meet existing liabilities and address liquidity issues, as well as to facilitate the further development of the businesses. Promotion of technical support and internationalization of entrepreneurship will also be important.

For the above purposes, the Government of Georgia will further develop a credit guarantee scheme. The credit guarantee scheme will significantly facilitate access to finance for SMEs, promote additional lending to the economy and improve liquidity in SMEs.

Produce in Georgia as a government agency will continue to work in the areas of development of local production and hotel industry, export promotion and attraction of investments.



In order to improve access to finance for SMEs, state financial support programs will be continued and expanded. Support for companies with export potential will also be actively pursued through the use of various tools for export development.

The platform for attracting and promoting foreign investments will be strengthened, within the framework of which the state program of investment grants has been approved. The program involves the reimbursement of eligible costs for investor companies after the fulfillment of their investment obligation. The facility will cover high-tech manufacturing, service exports, logistic and aircraft service areas. In addition, the process of working and communicating with investors has changed and will continue in a new way. The agency started working with the so-called location scouts. Lead consultants have been identified and, despite the pandemic, have already begun bringing them to Georgia. Profiling of potential investors with high-level political involvement has been carried out and will continue through a direct communication with a high-level political engagement.

In addition and in order to facilitate the provision of relevant government services, information and education to entrepreneurs operates at the local/regional level within the scope of an initiative branded as the State Is Your Partner through front desks and incorporation of the so-called counseling centers is planned to serve as business hubs. The purpose of these initiatives is to help local people, start-ups and established enterprises in using the previously hard-to-access services, educational and consulting opportunities.

The online platform - [tradewithgeorgia.com](http://tradewithgeorgia.com) - will be developed, which envisages the provision of various services to exporting companies on a one-stop-shop basis. In particular, companies will be given the opportunity to create a company profile in one place, pass the export readiness test, register for an international event, sign an electronic contract, etc.

## **2.5 Realization of Georgia's Potential as a Regional Hub**

For the realization of Georgia's potential as a regional hub, it is important to develop the country's infrastructure, transport, logistics, communication, energy, technology,

education and financial hub systems. Among other advantages, it is a practical means of bringing the country closer to the EU market and the opportunity to tap into the potential of an EU-Georgia Association Agreement.

Therefore, it is important to work for the rapid development of the country's main infrastructure, as well as the further development of transport corridors. In this regard, the development of the country's port infrastructure is of particular importance, including the implementation of the Poti port infrastructure expansion and Anaklia deep-sea port infrastructure projects.

Work will continue on the integration of the country's transport systems into the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) through the implementation of the Eastern Partnership TEN-T investment plan. Work will also continue on the development of modern logistics centers in Tbilisi and Kutaisi and a freight terminal at Kutaisi International Airport.

Completion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project will significantly reduce the time required to transport cargo between Asia and Europe, which is a prerequisite for attracting additional cargo flows through the country. Integration in international transport systems and deepening regional cooperation will continue to enhance the competitiveness of the transit corridor. Together with partner countries, it is planned to work on the digitization of the transit corridor to Georgia by establishing a digital logistics platform in the transit corridor, which will increase the efficiency of freight transport in the country and ensure its sustainability.

In the field of civil aviation, the Open Sky Policy will continue, which in the post-pandemic period will ensure the return of the existing air traffic to the pandemic in a short time, the entry of new airlines into the Georgian market and the development of new direct flights. At the same time, the facilitated entry policy of low-budget airlines into the Georgian market will continue.

According to the feasibility study, which was conducted for the development of ferry and container traffic between Georgia and the Black Sea countries, measures will be

implemented to promote and develop ferry/feeder traffic on the Black Sea with European countries.

In addition to the above-mentioned, it is important to develop energy and communication corridors through Georgia, which will also contribute to a practical economic approximation with the EU.

## 2.6 Development of Infrastructure

The development of roads and key infrastructure of international and state importance is critical for the promotion of Georgia's potential as a regional hub. More specifically, the following will be done until 2024:

- An additional 200 kilometers will be built within the highway, along with up to 200 bridges and up to 70 tunnels. As a result, the journey from Tbilisi to Batumi will take about 3.5 hours, and the travel time from the Red Bridge to the Sarpi border will be 4-4.5 hours instead of 8 hours.
- The construction of Rikoti, Samtredia-Grigoleti, Grigoleti-Choloki, Batumi bypass road sections will be completed on the East-West highway.
- Construction of international highways in the direction of all border checkpoints will be continued, including the completion of the 23 km section of Kvesheti-Kobi, including the 9 km tunnel, and the 27 km Natakhtari-Zhinvali express motorways by 2024. Construction of highways in the directions of Batumi-Sarpi, Tbilisi-Sadakhlo and Tbilisi-Red Bridge will start.
- Construction of highways in the direction of Kakheti will continue, including the construction of a 15 km section of the Gurjaani bypass road and a 35 km long Tbilisi-Sagarejo highway.
- Construction of Baghdati-Abastumani, Sachkhere-Oni, Tbilisi-Shatili, Batumi-Akhalsikhe and other important domestic sections of the road will be completed.

- Up to 1500 km of international and domestic roads will be rehabilitated and almost 200 bridges will be constructed and rehabilitated.

Providing the population with a continuous, 24-hour supply of quality drinking water is one of the priorities of the Government of Georgia. For this purpose, in the coming years, based on the completion of current and planned projects until 2024, uninterrupted water supply will be provided to dozens of additional cities, towns and villages, including: Khashuri, Telavi, Stepantsminda, Vani, Baghdati, Samtredia, Pasanauri, Matani, Dedoplistskaro and its Villages, Sighnaghi, Tetrtskaro, Zugdidi, Lanchkhuti and Chokhatauri villages, Gardabani and its villages - Martkopi, Norio, Akhalsopeli, Vaziani, Akhali Samgori and others.

**As a result, by 2024, about 2 850 000 customers, i.e. 77% of the population of Georgia, will have adequate water supply.**

Waste management in the country will be carried out in accordance with European standards, municipal waste collection services will be improved throughout the country. Integrated waste management projects are underway and will be implemented by 2024 in Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi, Kakheti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti.

Spatial planning concepts, schemes and plans for the country and municipalities, land use regulation and development plans for cities, towns and villages will continue.

**Over the next 4 years, almost 20 billion GEL will be invested in the development of the country's infrastructure.**

## 2.7 Energy

The energy policy designed and developed by the Government of Georgia aims to increase energy independence and energy security, as well as to maximize the use of internal resources, which, in turn, is based on the principles of sustainable development of the sector.

In order to maximize Georgia's energy potential and strengthen energy security, large-scale energy sector reform will continue, inter alia including the following:

- In order to strengthen free market relations in the sector, energy transmission and distribution activities will be separated from energy generation, trade and supply activities.
- The Georgian Energy Exchange will be launched at full capacity, which will ensure the introduction of competitive and open market principles in the energy market.
- From 2021 to 2026, large consumers will gradually gain exposure to the market, depending on the size and voltage of their consumption. At the same time, the respective regulated stations will be gradually deregulated according to their capacities.

As for the development of renewable energy resources in the country, currently 130 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed, 106 of which include the development of small and medium-capacity hydropower plants (HPPs), 4 - the development of large-capacity HPPs, 16 - wind and 4 solar power plants. According to the signed MOUs, the estimated total installed capacity of the power plants is 3 486 MW, while the estimated output is 13 764 billion kW/hr.

In addition, the following steps will be taken in the coming years in order to maximize Georgia's energy potential and strengthen energy security:

- Construction of an underground gas storage facility is planned in Gardabani municipality. The project will be implemented in 2 phases: Phase One will be dedicated to research works, and Phase Two - directly to the design and construction of an underground gas reservoir. The project is scheduled for completion in 2024.
- Will contribute to enhancing energy efficiency. Based on the legal framework adopted in 2020, the introduction of energy efficiency standards will begin, taking into account existing international best practices.

- In the conditions of increasing demand for electricity, the construction of HPPS will continue.
- Continue to promote the development of renewable energy sources and the introduction of new technologies.
- In order to develop the transit direction, in Georgia, by 2024, additional 1140 km of power transmission lines will be built, including strengthening and strengthening the lines connecting with neighboring countries.

## 2.8 Transport and Logistics

In order to realize the transit potential of the country, in parallel with the creation of key infrastructure, the relevant transport policy will be pursued.

Georgia will continue to pursue an Open Sky Policy. This approach allows airlines to determine their own flight frequencies and rates, which helps to increase competition. Facilitate the recovery and development of the aviation business in the post-pandemic period. Work will also continue on the short-term recovery of pre-pandemic volumes in the Georgian aviation market, attracting new airlines and developing new destinations.

A number of projects are planned to strengthen the country's transit function, including the completion of railway modernization and the development of port infrastructure. At the same time, the Batumi Airport Terminal and Kutaisi International Airport will be expanded, as a result of which the terminal area will increase 5 times, while the passenger capacity will increase 4 times (approximately 2 million passengers per year). In order to increase the level of air traffic safety, in accordance with the requirements of European standards, modernization and development of navigation infrastructure with modern technologies will continue.

Ensuring road safety is one of the main priorities of the Government of Georgia. In this regard, it is planned to develop and approve the National Road Safety Strategy for 2021 - 2025 and the Action Plan for 2021-2022, within the framework of which significant

activities and measures will be implemented to reduce the number of dead and injured on the roads of Georgia. At the same time, the use of international aid instruments will be intensified on traffic safety, including in relation to the EU and the Eastern Partnership cooperation format.

In addition to the above, the following measures are planned to improve the transport and logistics function of the country:

- In the field of land transport, a unified electronic/digital platform will be created for services, which will benefit the sector involved in the field of international transport (freight, passenger).
- The implementation of the standards and recommended practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), as well as the European regulations provided for in the Agreement on Common Aviation with the European Union will continue.
- The one-stop-shop principle will be introduced in Georgian ports and effective steps will be taken to fully digitize maritime services, including the possibility of introducing the Port Community System concept.
- Employment of Georgian seafarers will be promoted and the International Maritime Labor Convention (Maritime Labor Convention 2006) will be ratified, the maritime transport strategy approved and the relevant action plan implemented, as well as the development of maritime higher education, including vocational education and research in the maritime and related sectors.
- Investments in maritime transport and maritime infrastructure will be promoted.
- To increase the safety and efficiency of rail transport, the rail transport sector will continue to be reformed and brought closer to EU legislation and practice, including through the use of EU technical assistance tools.
- In order to increase the share of rail transport, as well as to reduce the wear and tear of road infrastructure, work will continue on the development of container transport. In

the long run, this service can be expanded in Georgia and Azerbaijan, which will have a positive impact on the total volume of rail transport in Georgia.

## **2.9 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**

One of the main priorities of the Government of Georgia in the century of digital technologies is the development of digital economy and information society in the country through information and communication technologies.

However, in the wake of the pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus, broadband Internet networks and their sound operation have taken on even greater importance to provide critical services in the country, including healthcare, education, access to information and other areas.

In order to maintain and increase the pace of development of the digital economy and information society in the country, the Government of Georgia will pursue an active policy and the following measures will be implemented in particular:

- In accordance with the National Strategy for Development of Broadband Networks of Georgia 2020-2025, the state program for the development of broadband infrastructure will be continued within the framework of a project branded as Log in Georgia. Consequently, households will have access to at least 100 Mb/sec, while the administrative bodies and enterprises will have access to the Internet at a speed of at least 1 Gb/sec, which will allow half a million people living in almost a thousand settlements to enjoy high quality Internet.
- Project branded as Log in Georgia will improve the policy framework to support the development of broadband networks and services, support investments in the sector, nationwide training and capacity building programs, as well as support for ethnic and social minorities and people with disabilities. etc.
- In order to provide internet access to the mountainous regions of the country, community internet promotion activities will be continued.



- Measures will be taken to maximize the transit potential using the broadband telecommunication infrastructure and to establish a digital transit hub connecting Europe and Asia via Georgia.
- Measures will continue to integrate Georgia's digital market with the EU digital market, including harmonization of the legal framework of electronic communications and postal services with EU directives in accordance with the obligations under the Association Agreement.
- The Long-Term National Strategy for the Development of Digital Economy and Information Society and its Implementation Plan will be developed and approved, according to which the future directions of digital economy will be developed by engaging all relevant organizations in a coordinated manner. It will also increase digital literacy, accelerate the process of forming an information society, increase high-tech exports, develop research and innovation, and enhance Georgia's competitiveness in the global digital economy.

## 2.10 Regional Development

In order to eliminate inequality in the development of the regions and create decent living conditions, different types of municipal, culture, tourism, sports, education and health infrastructure will be developed further. In particular 6 billion GEL will be spent in 2021 - 2024 on the development of municipal infrastructure in the regions for the rehabilitation of rural roads, water supply and sewerage systems, schools, kindergartens, cultural facilities, minor rehabilitation of sports infrastructure.

In order to create new opportunities for economic activity in the regions, new tourist attraction centers will be created, such as: Abastumani, Mestia, Velistsikhe, Tskaltubo and others.

In order to further strengthen the system of self-governance and increase the degree of independence, the main goal of the reform will be to increase the powers of the local

authorities based on the principles of subsidiarity, introduce effective and innovative systems for providing quality services at the local level to increase the role of local authorities in the development of the local economy and to provide them with appropriate material and financial resources.

Particular attention will be paid to the development of highlands. The benefits provided by the Mountain Law will continue to be implemented.

## **2.11 Rural Development and Support of Agriculture**

The main goal of the Agriculture Policy designed and developed by the Government of Georgia is to increase the export of agri-food products and to reduce the dependence on imports. However, the global pandemic of COVID-19 has created new challenges in this direction and identified new needs for further development of the sector and food security.

In addition, increased competitiveness in the agri-food sector, stable growth in the production of high-quality products, food safety and rural development are among the priorities of state policy in this field.

Within the scope of the Unified Rural Development Policy, in order to increase the standard of living and economic activity in 2021 - 2024 the following will be implemented:

- In order to increase access to financial instruments, as well as to facilitate the production processes of primary agricultural production, processing, storage and sale of agriculture, the provision of cheap and accessible funds to individuals and legal entities will continue.
- Following will continue and become larger scale: promotion of the primary production of annual and perennial crops; co-financing program for processing and storage enterprises; greenhouse co-financing measures; co-financing program for harvesting agricultural machinery; livestock development programs; promotion of the sustainable development of aquaculture in marine and inland waters; Access to infrastructure and services.

- The quality and availability of agricultural products will be ensured.
- In order to increase the competitiveness of agricultural employees, programs for the development and promotion of agricultural cooperatives will be continued.
- The agricultural insurance program will be extended and improved to reduce the risks for those engaged in agricultural activities. Also, in order to protect against unfavorable hydro meteorological events, in particular, from hail will be provided with hail protection systems in Shida Kartli similar to Kakheti.
- In order to improve the quality and productivity of Georgian agri-food products, effective systems of measures will be continued to control agricultural pests and fight against natural disasters.
- In accordance with the situation in the local and international markets, programs will be planned to promote the sale of agricultural crops.
- We will continue to work actively to explore new markets and improve our position in existing ones.
- Ensuring the raising of knowledge/awareness of farmers and entrepreneurs in accordance with modern requirements.
- Systematic registration of 1.2 million hectares of land will be carried out over the next three years. In this regard, notarial mediation will be actively involved in the alternative settlement of possible disputes between stakeholders, which will help to effectively manage the process.
- Privatization of state-owned agricultural lands will be implemented. Leased land parcels up to 10 ha will be transferred through direct sale.
- Georgian land balance sheet will be compiled, agricultural land resources will be registered and a unified database on land fund will be created.
- Work will continue towards approximation with the relevant EU legislation under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement plan in the fields of food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary.

- Lab tests will be intensified in order to prevent counterfeit and sub-standard wine products at the local and export market.
- In order to irrigate the land, over 220 million GEL will be invested in the coming years, which will provide irrigation of an additional 40 000 hectares and drainage of up to 1000 hectares.

**Over one billion GEL will be spent in 2021-2024 by the state for the development of agriculture sector.**

## 2.12 Protection of Environment

Along with the rapid economic development of the country, protection of environment, its sustainability and rational use of natural resources are perceived to be significant challenges for the country.

To improve the state of the environment in the country, the Government of Georgia continues to pursue the following reforms:

- Environmental standards will essentially approximate with European requirements.
- Up to 150 automatic monitoring stations and state-of-the-art early warning systems will be installed in the disaster-prone valleys across the country.
- Expansion of ambient air and water quality monitoring and evaluation systems will continue.
- Given the socio-economic situation of the country, the demand for timber resources will continue to be met; Multi-purpose forest benefits will be developed, which will create additional ecological, economic and social benefits.
- It is planned to establish new protected areas and expand some of the existing ones (approximately 185 000 ha in total), creating new ecotourism infrastructure.

- Measures to promote environmental education and to raise environmental awareness will continue. Environmental education issues will be integrated into the school and higher education system.
- A separate waste collection system will be gradually introduced nationwide and waste recycling will be facilitated.

## 2.13 Tourism

Tourism is one of the most affected industries as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the Government of Georgia will focus its efforts on restoring the pre-pandemic results and on a further development of the tourism sector in the coming years.

A new vision will be formed in the field of tourism and its development. Tourism and related industries are most affected by the pandemic. The new Tourism Development Strategy will be based on the requirements of diversification and qualitative improvement. Business support will be provided to offer high-quality services that will help attract more high-spending tourists to the country.

In particular, the following measures are planned in order to develop Georgia's tourism potential:

- In order to restore tourism and manage crises, it is planned to prepare a strategic plan with the engagement of the private and public sectors. The main purpose of the document is to assist Georgia in adapting to the Tourism Strategy 2025, which includes the pandemic and beyond, to ensure effective and timely tourism recovery.
- Over the next 4 years, the target countries will be diversified, which means increasing the market share of the EU and new markets (China, USA, etc.). In line with the global trend of COVID-19, target countries will be identified and international marketing activities will be implemented consequently.
- In 2023, Georgia, as a host country, will be presented at the world's largest and most influential tourism exhibition - ITB Berlin 2023.

- Targeted marketing activities will be carried out to support the tourism industry in the post-pandemic environment and to increase domestic tourism flows to support the sector.
- The service level will be improved as a result of the expansion of training programs for employees and job seekers in tourism across the country.
- In order to increase the level of sustainable development of the tourism industry and the level of services, formation of a legal framework for tourism will be implemented in accordance with European best practices in line with the directive of the European Parliament. This legal framework will introduce a high standard of travel safety and consumer protection. At the same time, formation of the legislative framework will strengthen the coordination of national and regional policies.
- New tourism products will be developed to meet the demand in the international market and existing projects will be expanded.
- Program branded as The Wine Road will be expanded with a new quality standard. The project includes family wine cellars and enterprises across the country that host wine tourism.

Particular attention will be paid to the development of mountain resorts. To this end, the following measures will be carried out in the coming years:

- In order to develop the ski resorts (Gudauri, Bakuriani, Goderdzi, Tetnuldi and Hatsvali), ski infrastructure will be developed and Four Season (year-round) tourist products will be created.
- Georgia will host the World Championships in freestyle skiing and snowboarding in 2021 and 12 international competitions will be held before the championship. Thousands of visitors will visit Georgia during the championship.

## 3. Social Policy and Human Capital Development

The main value of the Government Policy is a human being. Accordingly, the policy is aimed at realizing the potential of each citizen, ensuring a decent health and social care system, dignified old age for the elderly and fully realized development of personal, individual skills and capabilities along with a competitive workforce for the next generation to unfold their potential and create a better future through the creation of an education system oriented at the formation of a competitive labor force.

### 3.1. Healthcare

Maintenance and further development of a superior quality and universally accessible social justice system based on the principle of social justice is one of the top priorities of the country.

The universal health care program will continue to provide **universal coverage** for all citizens of Georgia with medical services. The target groups (socially vulnerable, people of retirement age, veterans, etc.) will continue to be provided with medicines for chronic diseases. List of medicines and beneficiaries will be expanded.

**Management and effective treatment of oncological diseases** will continue to be one of the leading priorities for the state and will lay the foundation to the effective and modern methods of treatment of oncological diseases.

The **provision of medical services to the population in priority areas** will be ensured and the budget funding for the programs will be increased. The process will continue to deinstitutionalize mental health services, expand family housing and shelter services, along with the staff training services.

**Construction, rehabilitation and equipping of state-owned priority in-patient healthcare facilities** will continue. Introduction of digital technologies and telemedicine in the primary healthcare system will be strengthened, prevention of diseases with the heaviest burden of morbidity and mortality will be strengthened and early diagnosis of diseases will be a priority to prevent their complication.

In order to increase efficiency and quality, a **unified tariff policy** will be pursued within the framework of the universal healthcare program. The introduction of a system branded as the Diagnosis Related Groups (DRG) will continue for medical services and selective contracting of providers based on quality standards, availability, utilization rate and new funding methods.

In order to improve the quality, the process of developing voluntary international accreditation mechanisms will begin. The **pharmaceutical regulatory framework** will be harmonized with EU legislation and modern approaches to the development, standardization, quality, safety and efficacy of medicines will be introduced.

In order to improve **post-diploma and lifelong professional education, a systemic reform of medical education will be implemented**. Measures will be taken to gradually introduce a mandatory system of continuing medical education and an effective mechanism for the recognition of sectoral associations/professional organizations.

**With an aim of improving the public healthcare system**, epidemic surveillance services will be strengthened to prevent and eliminate HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis C and other infectious diseases. By the end of 2021, the vaccination plan targets for Covid-19 control will be fully met, which is an important condition for effective control of the epidemic.

## 3.2. Social Security

Maintenance and further improvement of the sustainable social protection system is one of the priorities of the country. Accordingly, the Government of Georgia will continue to



support vulnerable groups and to implement targeted social programs to alleviate the situation of vulnerable groups.

Provision of pensions to people of retirement age will continue in accordance with the rules established by law, which provides for the indexation of **state pensions** based on economic parameters and ensures the creation of social guarantees for the population of retirement age in the context of low taxes. Already in 2021, there will be an increase in the pensions paid to individuals under the age of 70 in the volume of 20 GEL per month, while pensioners over the age of 70 will get pensions increased by 25 GEL.

The methodology for assessing the socio-economic situation of **socially vulnerable families** and the rules for issuing subsistence allowances will be improved. Effective mechanisms will be developed and implemented to encourage and facilitate the employment of capacitated members of the society.

Social protection mechanisms will be improved and expanded to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children (including those with disabilities and street children). The process of deinstitutionalization of large boarding houses will continue to ensure the placement of adults and children with disabilities in family settings.

Efforts will be increased to protect children from all forms of violence, to implement the provisions laid out in the Law of Georgia on Social Work and Code of the Rights of the Child.

An effective policy will continue for the provision of IDPs with housing. It is planned to improve the living conditions of 13 000 IDP families and 1200 eco-migrant households in the next 4 years.

### **3.3 Education**

Developed human capital is an important component of rapid economic growth. Existence of a quality education system is crucial for the development of human capital, which ensures the competitiveness of Georgian citizens both locally and internationally.

Increased universal access and quality of education is one of the top priorities of the Government of Georgia. Education reform requires a systematic and coherent approach, which encompasses a unified efforts from early childhood and pre-school education to higher education and science to make the outcome of the reform effective and tangible.

Accordingly, education reform of Georgia is comprehensive and covers all stages of the education system.

In addition, separation of culture and sports as a individual institutional unit is being considered.

### **Early and Pre-School Education**

In the area of pre-school education, significant gains will be maintained and early, while a pre-school education in public institutions will continue to be free to ensure universal access. Measures will be taken to provide education services tailored to children with special needs.

Appropriate measures will be taken to improve the remuneration of employees in pre-school institutions and develop their qualifications. It will also facilitate the recruitment of young qualified staff in pre-school institutions.

The state language will be taught in a bilingual model in all areas densely populated with non-Georgian speakers, which will help improve school preparedness, quality education at the general education level and successful integration of the non-Georgian community in the society of the country in a long run.

An integrated electronic system for statistical data on children aged between 1-6 years will be created.

Infrastructure improvement measures will continue. Construction of more than 50 kindergartens will be completed in different municipalities across the country and new kindergartens will continue to be established in accordance with international standards.

## General Schooling

The priority of the Government of Georgia will be to significantly improve the quality of general education, to develop the system in accordance with international standards, to attract young, qualified staff to the system. To this end, following will be done in the coming years:

- Budget **funding** for general education will increase significantly. Remuneration of teachers and school staff will increase.
- Updated standards and procedures for **quality assurance** in general education will be approved and introduced, while supporting measures will be taken to meet the standards.
- Differentiated models of **school management** and funding will be developed and implemented.
- The creation and development of new, high standard-oriented **national curricula** and relevant training resources will be continued in accordance with modern requirements. The national middle school curriculum will be revised. A large-scale school evaluation system will be introduced. Development of electronic resources will begin.
- In order to raise the level of education and knowledge in the field of **cyber security**, teachers will be trained in relevant issues.
- The process of creating new **textbooks** with updated approval procedures will continue.
- **Inclusive education** components will be actively introduced and developed throughout Georgia to increase access to education for children with special education needs and/or disabilities and to guide a process tailored to their requirements.
- A different model of bilingual teaching will be introduced on a large scale among pupils of **schools delivering knowledge in other than the Georgian language**.

- The policy for integration of the **persons left out of education** into the education process will be defined and they will be provided with an alternative curriculum.
- Distance learning Georgian language course will be available for **Diaspora representatives**. In order to promote inclusive education, public awareness raising activities will be implemented.
- In order to maintain **safety and public order at schools**, flexible and result-oriented mechanisms will be established for planning and implementation of preventive measures, as well as for receiving psycho-social services. The number of public schools using the bailiff service will increase, training programs for bailiffs, psychologists and social workers, as well as security officials will be implemented.
- A new rule of regulation of the teaching profession will be developed, **lifelong professional development measures for teachers** will be implemented, in accordance with their professional needs.
- The **distance and hybrid teaching methodology** will be gradually refined.
- The development of school infrastructure will continue. In 2021, the construction of 57 fully adapted new school buildings and the reinforcement/complete rehabilitation of 91 public school buildings with emergency needs will continue, taking into account the requirements of creating the necessary environment for children with special education needs. Rehabilitation and construction of public schools with the funding of the Government of Georgia and donor organizations is planned for 2021 - 2024, including the construction of 47 schools and the reinforcement/complete rehabilitation of 80 schools in 2021-2022.

## Higher Education

Following measures are planned in the next 4 years in order to develop the higher education system:

- Budget **funding** will increase for higher education.

- A **new model of funding** will be developed for the higher education system, which will contribute to the sustainable development of the education institution and focus on the learning outcomes of the educational process.
- Measures will be implemented in support of **quality development**.
- A unified concept will be developed for the **evaluation** of scientific research and doctoral programs.
- The state will promote the **international accreditation of higher education programs**.
- The program branded as Learn in Georgia will continue.
- **To increase access:** Funding for those enrolled in one-year teacher training programs will continue; special teacher training programs will be launched; post-school education programs will continue for people living in the occupied territories of Georgia; undergraduate and graduate education will continue.
- Georgia will be transformed into an **Erasmus+ Program Country**, which will give access to all components of the program, except for the higher education and youth components.
- Funding for higher education institutions will continue to improve **infrastructure and learning environment**.

### Vocational Training

The development of vocational education will remain a priority for the Government of Georgia as an important tool to eliminate the imbalance between labor market demand and supply. To this end, the following activities are planned for the next 4 years:

- Budget **funding** for vocational education will increase. A model based on the results of vocational education funding will be launched.
- A **long-term strategy** and relevant action plans will be formulated for the development of the vocational education system in 2021 and beyond.

- A new model for managing the vocational education system will be introduced through public-private partnerships. The role of **sectoral associations and the private sector** will be crucial in the preparation and implementation of vocational education programs.
- **Access** to vocational education and training/re-training programs will be increased and mechanisms will be developed for identifying vulnerable groups beyond vocational education and for involving them in vocational education.
- The professional standard of a **vocational education teacher** will be approved along with a new model of training, entry into the profession and lifelong professional development.
- A new **remuneration** model will be introduced for a vocational education teachers and based on performance results.
- In order **to ensure the quality** of vocational education, the process will continue for the introduction of a new framework of qualifications and new standards for the authorization of vocational education institutions. A new European credit system and a model for the development of professional qualifications by/with the participation of the private sector will be introduced.
- The number of dual and market-based vocational training and retraining **programs** will rise, which will increase the employment rate of vocational education graduates. The regulatory framework for short-cycle programs will be defined. Their introduction and admission of students to the programs will begin. The scale of integrated applications will increase.
- **Recognition of non-formal education** will begin and the scope of recognition will expand.
- In order to **internationalize** the vocational education system, international certification opportunities will be created to implement international exchange programs and enhance English language teaching.

- **Electronic management system** will be introduced for vocational education. A new portal will be created for vocational education.
- In order to develop the **infrastructure**, 6 vocational education institutions will be built in different municipalities of the country, 2 student dormitories will be refurbished and 3 vocational education institutions will be fully rehabilitated. New vocational schools will be established as needed. Measures will be taken to expand the existing geographical network in public-private format. The delivery of vocational education will be strengthened at schools and universities.

### 3.4 Science

A **strategic plan** will be drafted and approved for the development of science and technology in Georgia, the main purpose of which will be to promote the development of institutions focused on the requirements of the strategic development of the country's economy and the needs of the society.

It is envisaged **to increase funding** for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as humanitarian and Georgian studies through **science grant contests** to expand the scale of fundamental research.

Cooperation of overseas Georgian and foreign academia with Georgian scientific researchers will become a matter of priority concern.

It is envisaged to strengthen the process of commercialization of applied scientific research.

State **funding** for science will increase in the coming years. Staff salaries will be increased and a result-based funding model will be introduced.

Project branded as **School of Science Management** will be implemented in order **to re-train all generations of Georgian researchers**, to provide them with new knowledge, to develop new competencies, to better organize them in the modern global scientific space.

The science **management system** will be improved. The state will set mandatory minimum standards for scientific-research institutions and will take care of improving the quality of activities at scientific-research institutions operating in Georgia.

Active involvement of scientific institutions and research groups will be facilitated in **international framework programs and scientific projects**, along with the implementation of bilateral and multilateral scientific research and technological projects. Appropriate legislative guarantees will be created. The involvement of Georgian researchers in the grant contests of the European Commission's research and innovation program branded as the **Horizon Europe** will be promoted.

The **scientific infrastructure** will be improved and brought closer to international standards.

### 3.5 Youth Policy

The state recognizes the important role of young people in the development of the country and creates a supportive ecosystem for and with the youth, thereby ensuring the full realization of their potential, economic empowerment and active participation in public life and democratic processes.

Concept Paper on the Youth Policy of Georgia for 2020-2030 approved by the Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia serves to achieve this goal. In order to ensure the implementation of the strategic priorities set out in the Concept Paper, the Government of Georgia will approve the State Youth Strategy - 2025 in the near future.

Following the implementation of the state youth strategy, significant attention will be paid to the active involvement of young people in the decision-making process on issues important to them, including the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of youth policies and programs.

In order to promote youth employment, access to career counseling will increase, while an online information center will be developed as an online platform for youth opportunities ([www.youthplatform.gov.ge](http://www.youthplatform.gov.ge)).



**International cooperation** will be expanded in the field of youth policy and youth activities.

### 3.6 Arts and Culture

State programs and initiatives promoting the development of arts and culture will be continued and expanded in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Culture Strategy through 2025.

**Legislation** regulating the arts and culture will be improved, including the legislation in the field of cultural heritage (tangible, intangible, natural heritage).

A flexible arts and culture **management** model will be established, which will be approximated to European standards and an effective funding mechanism.

In order to modernize and improve the management of the cultural sphere, **new staff will be recruited and resources will be mobilized** for the implementation of priority areas. New initiatives will be introduced. Material and technical base will be gradually adjusted. **Modern technologies** will be introduced towards research and rehabilitation of cultural heritage.

The **cultural resources** will be actively used for the development of tourism and creative entrepreneurship. In order to apply the best international experience in local practice, targeted programs will be implemented relevant to the new challenges.

Promoting activities for the arrangement of modern cultural infrastructure, the use of new technologies and the **integration of the cultural sector into the digital world** will be actively pursued, which will create additional opportunities for employment and creative self-realization for cultural sector organizations and artists.

Particular attention will be paid to the development of programs aimed at strengthening academic and scientific human resources in **arts education** institutions, supporting the use of innovative methods and technologies in the field of contemporary art, along with the promotion of initiatives for young artists.

The process of **integration with Europe** will continue; Measures to raise the awareness of the international community about Georgia and its culture will be implemented. The rate of participation in international programs and events will increase. It will contribute to the deepening of international cultural relations in bilateral and multilateral formats, engagement of regional art institutions and teams in the common cultural space of the country and their presentation in the international arena.

**Access to culture** will increase among the general public, especially among the rural population, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. Cultural identity of ethnic minorities will be promoted and creative skills of persons with disabilities will be developed.

### 3.7 Sports

**Funding** for mass and high-achieving sports will increase from the state.

In order to develop **professional sports**, the national teams will continue to train and participate in international sports tournaments. Training camps will be organised. Georgian championships and contests will be held. Sports will be promoted and national sports types will be developed.

Active support for hosting **international championships/tournaments** in various sports will continue in Georgia: country will **host** such important **international sporting events** as the 2023 World Freestyle and Snowboard Championships and the Under-21 Football Championship of Europe.

Measures will continue under the **social support** programs in support of celebrated sportsmen and veteran athletes, coaches working in highlands, as well as Olympic champions, promising and high-achieving athletes in international contests.

An effective system will be established for reviewing sports disputes. A model will be introduced **for protecting the rights of athletes** and involving them in decision-making.

In line with the Sports **Infrastructure** Development Strategy and Action Plan, an effective sports infrastructure management model will be developed based on effective public-private partnerships. International standard Sports infrastructure will be built in compliance with international standards.

## 4. Public Administration

Basis for the effective implementation of government policy will be a qualified, conscientious, well-functioning system of public administration, further development of which will be important steps in the coming years along with the strengthening of public institutions.

Continuing public administration reform and strengthening of cooperation with international partners remains a priority of the Government of Georgia in this process. The main goal of the reform is to make public administration even more effective, the results of which will be tangible for every citizen.

Public administration reform plays a fundamental role on the path of Georgia to EU integration, which is an important priority in shaping the government vision. Accordingly, we will continue to work with the EU and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries to further strengthen Georgia's institutions that have the resources to meet the challenges of modern democratic governance and to be leaders in the region.

The Government of Georgia will develop a new strategy for public administration reform, with a greater engagement of experts, local and international organizations. It will define the priority areas and directions for 2021-2024.

Open governance and successful membership of Georgia in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) will remain a precondition for the establishment of a high standard in governance. In an updated format of cooperation with civil society, the Government of Georgia will develop an Action Plan for Open Governance, which will define specific goals and objectives to improve accountability, transparency and openness.

Efforts of the Government of Georgia will be directed at several directions to ensure fundamental public administration reform and good governance, including the following:

- A strong legal framework will be established at both central and local levels to ensure proper and uniform policy planning at all levels. To this end, quality control of policy documents will be strengthened and the capacity of civil servants will be increased;
- In order to improve the successful civil service reform to perfection, human capital development will continue in all public institutions. The Civil Service Bureau will be institutionally strengthened, while the effective, modern and innovative systems of professional development will be ensured in public institutions;
- Through the consistent de-concentration and de-centralization of the public administration system, priority of the Government of Georgia will be the successful implementation of the approved decentralization policy. The aim of the government is to establish a local authority with European standards throughout the country by 2024 and to successfully complete the process of transforming sectoral and centralized governance into effective local and territorial governance.
- In order to improve state and municipal services, a common standard will be developed for the creation, delivery, quality assurance and evaluation of services, which will enable customer engagement and even easier access to services. In addition to physical services, it will also ensure the refinement of online services and the digitization of new, additional public services. For the first time in the country, a fair and transparent standard of pricing of public services will be introduced through a unified policy.
- Strengthening critical infrastructure security and developing e-government remains a priority for the Government of Georgia, which also includes the increased access to e-services. To this end, the second digital governance strategy and action plan of the country will be developed. The aim of the Government of Georgia is, on the one hand, to digitize internal processes in public agencies for greater efficiency and to further refine and expand remote services to increase accessibility and efficiency, and, on the other hand, to provide simplified, customer-oriented and superior quality e-

government services for citizens and businesses in accordance with international data protection standards. The importance of these areas has become clear in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, work will continue on the introduction of qualified electronic signature and additional stamping tools, which will significantly speed up service delivery and allow citizens and organizations to access public services remotely and securely.

- Electronic program and new catalogues will be designed and developed for researchers at the National Archive in order to develop remote services in the country.
- Work will continue on electronic archiving, which should ensure the secure storage of electronic documents.
- Relevant legal framework will be revised and refined in order to improve the quality of access to public information.
- The legislation will regulate issues related to the establishment and performance of legal entities under public law and their functional analysis will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the legislation to categorize them. The specific requirements promulgated in the law for the establishment of legal entities under private law by public administration bodies (incl. local authorities) will be defined as well.
- In order to strengthen accountability and responsibility, the system of public funds management and allocation will be improved. Standards will be defined for reporting on the programs and projects implemented during the year, as well as their publication and presentation to the public at both central and local levels.
- In order to ensure effective governance, the fight against corruption will be intensified: the active implementation of anti-corruption policy (strategy and action plan) will continue, along with the introduction of international mechanisms for the prevention of corruption. Public awareness will be raised on corruption crimes and on methods designed to combat them.

- Asset declarations of government officials will be monitored further. The existing electronic system will be improved to ensure not only the detection of incomplete and incorrect information, but also the prevention of possible conflicts of interest, which is particularly important for comprehensive monitoring.