

Government of Georgia

Ordinance No 810

30 December 2020

Tbilisi

On the Approval of the 2021-2030 Migration Strategy of Georgia

Article 1

In accordance with Article 5(p) of the Law of Georgia on the Structure, Powers and Rules of Procedure of the Government of Georgia and Article 3 of Ordinance No 629 of the Government of Georgia of 20 December 2019 on the Approval of the Procedures for the Preparation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents, the attached 2021-2030 Migration Strategy of Georgia shall be approved.

Article 2

This Ordinance shall enter into force upon its promulgation.

Prime Minister

Giorgi Gakharia

Unofficial translation

MIGRATION STRATEGY OF GEORGIA 2021-2030

State Commission on Migration Issues

2020

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

<u>AA</u>	Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part and Georgia, of the other part
AP	Action Plan
<u>Anti-Trafficking Council</u>	Interagency Coordinating Council on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
<u>BMP</u>	Brief Migration Profile
<u>COVID-19</u>	An infectious disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus
<u>EC</u>	European Commission
<u>EMN</u>	European Migration Network (EC)
<u>EU</u>	European Union
<u>EU MS(s)</u>	European Union Member State(s)
<u>EURAXESS</u>	A European initiative providing researchers with access to continued research career in Europe
<u>EUROJUST</u>	European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation
<u>EUROPOL</u>	European Union's Law Enforcement Agency
<u>Eurostat</u>	Statistical Office of the European Union
<u>FRONTEX</u>	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
<u>Geostat</u>	National Statistics Office of Georgia
<u>GIZ</u>	German Agency for International Cooperation
<u>GoG</u>	Government of Georgia
<u>ICMPD</u>	International Center for Migration Policy Development
<u>IOM</u>	International Organization for Migration
LEPL	Legal Entity of Public Law
<u>MoE</u>	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia
<u>MoESD</u>	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
<u>MFA</u>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
<u>MoH</u>	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
<u>MIA</u>	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
<u>MMP</u>	Medium Migration Profile
MS / Strategy	Migration Strategy
<u>PSDA</u>	Public Service Development Agency (LEPL under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia)
<u>SCMI / Commission</u>	State Commission on Migration Issues of Georgia
<u>SCMI MA</u>	SCMI Member Agency
<u>SCMI Secretariat</u>	Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration issues (a structural unit within the PSDA under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia)
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
<u>UMAS</u>	Unified Migration Data Analytical System
<u>UN</u>	United Nations
<u>UN DESA</u>	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<u>UNHCR</u>	Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<u>VLAP</u>	Visa Liberalization Action Plan [with EU]
WG	Working Group

Introduction

Development of migration management system in Georgia was given a strong impetus by an accelerated process of Georgia's approximation with the European Union (EU).¹ During this period, migration strategy documents for 2013-2015 and 2016-2020² were drafted to set up and improve the migration management system. Also a corporate management body – the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI/Commission) was established (2010) which gathered all important actors operational in the field and devised action based on the whole-of-government approach. The Commission became a common platform that made possible to unify the interlinked basic thematic directions within the various sectoral agencies involved in migration management, and with that - on the one hand conditioned the thematic and structural expansion and development of these agencies, while on the other hand clustered them within the Commission, in accordance with linkages based on principles of shared responsibilities.

The Migration Strategy (MS) 2016-2020 took into account the lessons learned from implementation of the previous Strategies and was adjusted to the new realities, which were introduced in 2015 by the Association Agreement (AA) and Visa-Liberalization Action Plan (VLAP). Thus, the Strategy offered a firm ground for carving strategic goals for the years to come and formulate corresponding objectives through the prism of 'migration and development' - something that, during the last decade, has been applied as a long-term profit oriented approach to the national policy and local strategies. In the course of implementation of the Strategy, new challenges emerged resulting from the major shifts and transformations that occurred in the sphere of migration at national, regional and global levels. Therefore, the 2021-2030 Strategy will be tasked to adjust to the new realities and continue addressing modern challenges.

The gained experience and a long-term nature of the Strategy dictates to formulate its objectives in rather general terms, whereas the concrete action at the level of activities will be defined in Action Plans (AP). This will prevent duplication of activities while implementing objectives, and in the meantime make it easier to relate activity to specific objective, thus ensuring a strong and logic nexus between the two. The above is also supported by the sectorial strategies and/or other policy documents of the thematic agencies related to the field of migration management, as well as their good performance and relations with sectorial strategy. This in turn expands the operational area and ensures higher flexibility and efficacy of the implementation process, by making a principal focus on the yearly AP as the main implementation mechanism of the Strategy. Consequently, this kind of strategy helps to establish the state's long-term vision on key areas of migration, and places a stronger demand to the implementation process, its mechanism and the agencies involved.

Such an approach is substantiated by a certain momentum in Georgia's approximation process to the EU, highlighting the need for establishing such a strong and flexible management mechanisms, which on the one hand will define the scope of activities for the long-term, and on the other hand, ensure autonomous action in real time by keeping a high quality and dynamics.

¹ European Neighborhood Policy (2003); Eastern Partnership Initiative and Mobility Partnership (2009); Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements (2010); Visa Dialogue (2012); Visa Liberalization Action Plan (2013-2015); EU-Georgia Association Agreement (2014); Visa-free travel and implementation of VLAP long-term tasks (2017 and onwards).

² http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=216&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

The Strategy's goals and sectoral priorities have been defined by several interlinked and mutually depended dimensions - local, regional and global. The local dimension is built upon the state's national, and proceeding from it the agencies' sectoral interests, which also proceed from the regional (e.g. Europe/EU with the AA and VLAP long-term tasks) and/or through it from the global (e.g. UN – 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³) framework. Hence, under the overarching approach of 'migration and development' the new Strategy encompasses all aspects peculiar to above-mentioned three dimensions, though with due consideration of the national needs, interests and specifics.

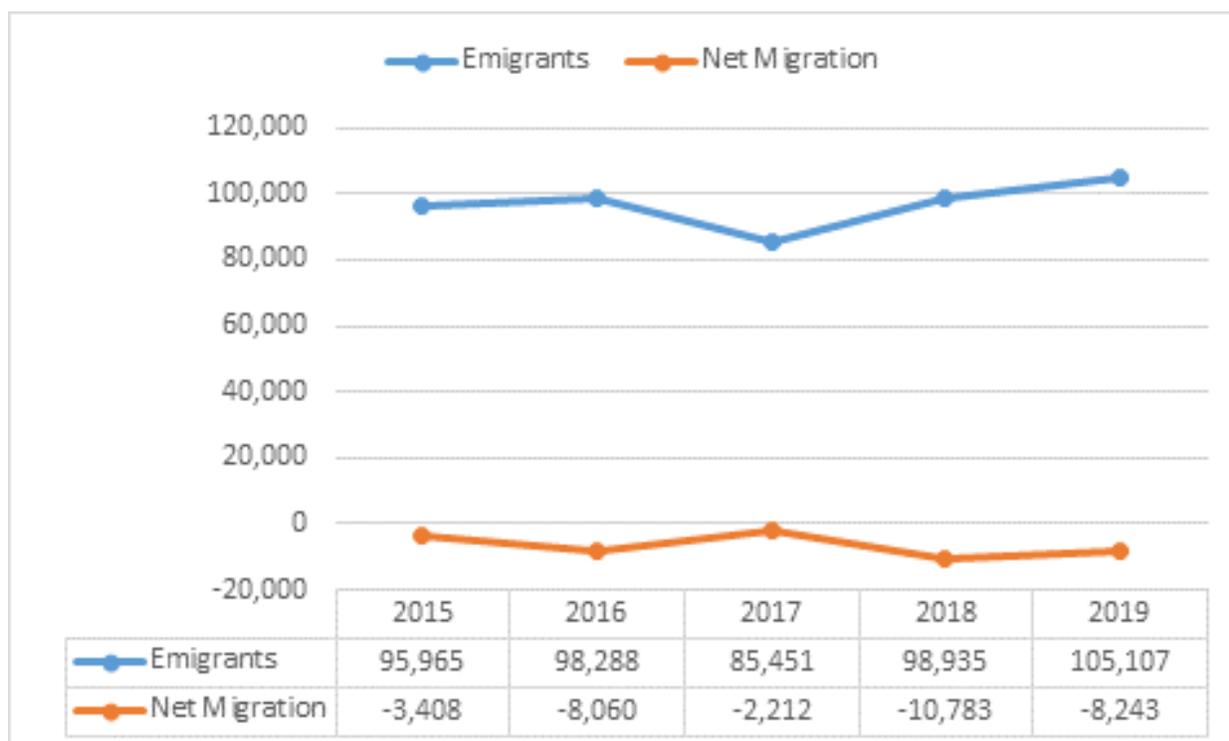
The main goal of the Strategy, developed and launched in accordance with the principles described above, is to - formulate the state's concrete interests in the field, adjust the 'migration and development' policy to them, and, by applying successful international practice, develop its own system aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the world community.

³ UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 10, Target 10.7: "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies".
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Background

In Georgia, as in other countries of the world, the root causes of emigration and immigration are complex and linked with both - economic, social and political changes, as well as individual decisions of people. There was a period in Georgia's recent history when emigration was caused primarily by unstable situation and security related issues in the country (e.g. civil war, armed conflicts). However, later emigration flows were mainly influenced by economic and social factors. Other factors contributing to emigration were the emigrant networks abroad and better opportunities of receiving education in developed countries.

According to the Geostat, 105,107 emigrants⁴ left the country in 2019 and net migration remained negative as in the previous years, amounting to -8,243.

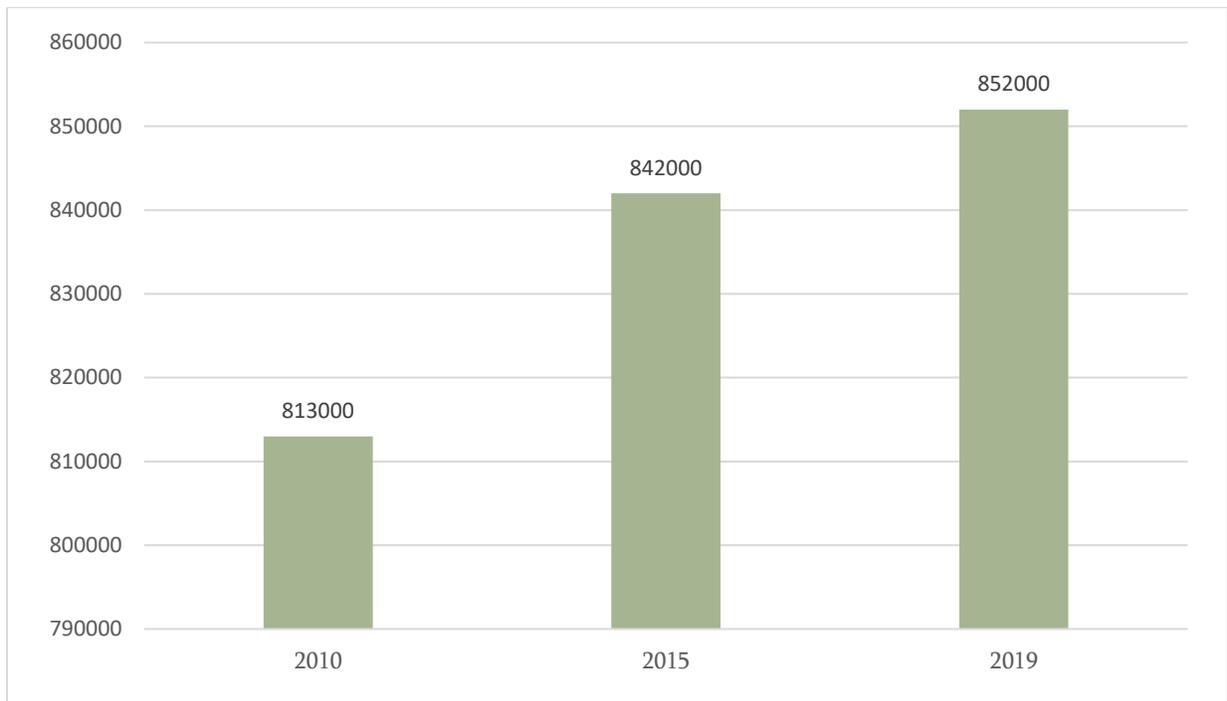


Source: Geostat

While emigrant counting mechanisms in the country are still in their developmental stage, a general albeit incomplete picture of overall number of Georgian emigrants (a so-called Migrant Stock) abroad can be gauged using the estimates provided by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) that are based on **the foreign born population category**. According to UN DESA, the number of migrants born in Georgia and residing outside the country surged to around 852,000 in 2019 (51% women, 49% men)⁵.

⁴ According to the methodology it applies, Geostat considers emigrants and immigrants to be everyone despite their nationality. A detailed description of the methodology can be viewed at https://www.geostat.ge/media/30439/0901_200320_EN.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁵ <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp> (accessed: 08.12.2020).



Source: UN DESA

Increased emigration goes hand in hand with increased volume of remittances from foreign countries.⁶ According to the various studies, these remittances form an important part of livelihood for many migrant families⁷ while in parallel contributing to the development of human capital (the remittances are mostly used to cover healthcare and education costs).⁸

The upsurge in emigration has been coupled with a conspicuous rise in the number of emigrants returning to Georgia in the recent period,⁹ where along with forced returns the voluntary returns are not infrequent. With return the demand for reintegration-related services also grows in the recent years and the demand will likely be increasing in the coming years – a factor that will give rise to the need for expanding relevant programs and improving services so that the returning process is more sustainable and irreversible.

On account of increased opportunities for international mobility and migration driving factors, the emigration flows are not likely to dwindle during period covered by the MS. Thus, for the future it is important these flows to be brought into safe and legal boundaries, and return to the home country will need to be facilitated as part of the temporary/circular migration policy, which would allow channeling the capabilities of returning migrants toward the development of the country. Meanwhile connections with the sizable Georgian diaspora abroad will have to be strengthened and their engagement in country's socio-economic development ensured.

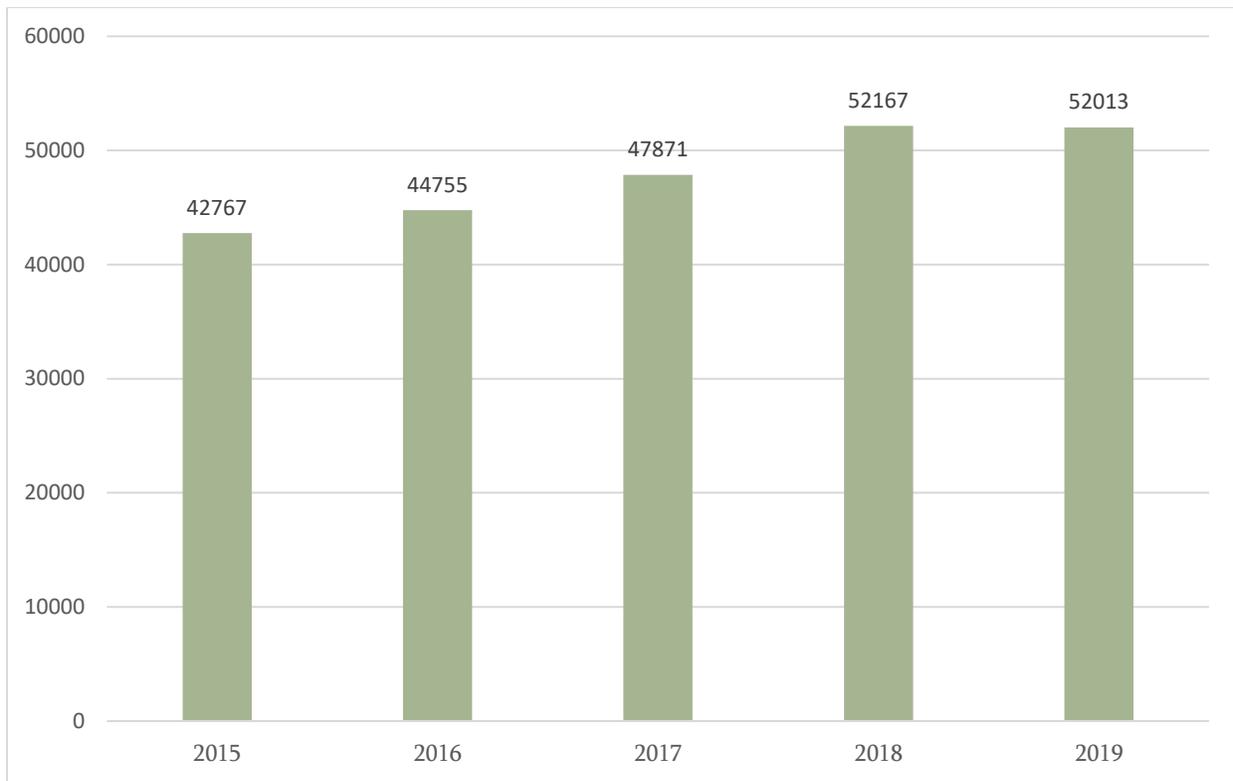
The recent past has seen an increase in immigration as well. By 31 December 2019, more than 52,000 foreign citizens held valid Georgian residence cards.

⁶ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ BMP 2016 on Remittances, SCMI. <http://migration.commission.ge/files/eng.pdf> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁹ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).



Source: PSDA

A combination of the current immigration policy, attractive educational opportunities for foreign students, simplicity of doing business and increased international mobility suggests that the immigration trend will be maintained in the long run, since study, temporary jobs and doing business are the most frequent reasons immigrants come to Georgia for. Increase in the number of immigrants entails increase in their contribution to the growth of Georgia's economy, development of education facilities or larger volume of business turnover.¹⁰ Thus, making use and sound management of this asset, while heeding the host country's interests and needs, requires a pragmatic policy for this segment in place and introduction of respective programs.

It is therefore assumed that, along with difficult challenges, migration offers a great range of opportunities that must be put to use and channeled toward the development, in accordance with the interests of the country. This is a very tenet that the vision of the 10-year MS rests upon.

¹⁰ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Long-term vision of the Strategy

Reduction of the negative results of migration, increasing the positive effect and its application for the country's development

The long-term vision of the Strategy is based on the notion of 'migration and development', which in progressive world is viewed as an advanced approach aiming at minimizing negative¹¹ aspects of migration against increasing its positive¹² effects, that in turn should maximally be applied for the country's development. Consequently, **the term 'migration and development' is not an axiomatic notion by itself, but is a rather broad concept meaning a coordinated, proper and pragmatic orchestration of all directions contributing to the country development.** Such a principle implies country development¹³ oriented interlinked action of all entities and their thematic spheres involved in migration policy elaboration and management. Thus, without connecting (at the first glance) differing thematic directions into the single chain of action, all attempts to manage entire migratory processes effectively will be vain. For example, the coordinated action of the state agencies responsible for integrated border management, consular affairs, combatting trafficking in human beings and facilitating social and economic development is a key to ensure safe and regular migration, prevention of irregular migration, reduction of brain drain, retention of intellectual resources and/or brain gain, temporary employment and knowledge transfer, as well as regulation of the demographic situation. **Hence, 'migration and development' implies presence of all thematic directions, unified vision and goal, as well as coordinated inter-agency cooperation to reach these goals.**

Target Groups of the Strategy

- Georgian citizens residing on the territory of Georgia;
- Georgian citizens residing abroad and diaspora representatives;
- Migrants returned to Georgia (with the special emphasis on migrant women);
- Persons enjoying international protection and those seeking asylum in Georgia;
- Persons having a stateless status in Georgia;
- Foreigners residing in Georgia with various legal grounds.

¹¹ Such as - emigration of high-skilled citizens and along with it the brain drain and/or failure in fully using own potential and skills; population reduction, especially of capable workforce and reproductive age; illegal migration, which *inter-alia* puts under a significant risk the possibilities for the protection of illegally staying migrants' rights, especially in cases of women and vulnerable groups; heavy psychosocial situation in migrants' families; etc.

¹² Such as - legal migration; reduction of poverty, business development and access to education and healthcare in the country of origin as a result of proper management of migrant remittances; application in their own country the knowledge and skills gained by returned migrants in developed countries; also, bringing along modern technologies, values, ideas and innovations; diaspora's engagement in the country development (investments, development of trade and entrepreneurship, promotion of the country to attract tourists); using immigrants' potential, etc.

¹³ Development here is understood in the broad sense, encompassing, along with economic dimension, the social, cultural, technological, institutional development as well as development of human capital.

Methodology used for developing the Strategy

An inception point in developing Georgia's 2021-2030 MS was the elaboration of its Concept that was subsequently endorsed by the SCMI with participation of partner international and non-governmental organizations.¹⁴ The Commission also made a decision to establish/renew an inter-agency Working Group (WG) within the Migration Lab to draft the Strategy. As soon as the Group was staffed,¹⁵ its members were provided with training course in public policy analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The training course was focused on familiarizing with the new regulations effective from 01.01.2020 concerning unified procedures, methodology and standards for drafting, monitoring and evaluation of the policy documents produced by the Government of Georgia (GoG).¹⁶ The entire cycle of MS drafting (policy planning) was conducted in consideration of the above-mentioned regulations and corresponding guidelines. In the drafting process, the WG also took guidance from the handbook composed (2016) after the previous (2016-2020) MS was produced with a view of easing the work on future strategy papers.

Once the 2021-2030 MS was reflected in the GoG's policy documents' annual (2020) plan, the actual drafting process of the Strategy has started. A detailed timeline for drafting the Strategy document was prepared and the SCMI Secretariat was designated as a body in charge of coordination of the process. Guiding principle in the course of Strategy drafting was that the produced **MS had to be a practical document, which first defines the future objectives based on the available resources and given realities, and can be created only through the cooperation of and distribution of responsibilities between all stakeholders involved in the WG.**

Each SCMI Member Agency (SCMI MA) of the WG went on to individually work on the situation (problem) analysis from their respective sectoral perspectives. With a view to moving the analytical and drafting process forward, the SCMI Secretariat set up a special e-platform in the beginning of 2020, which was joined by all SCMI MAs involved in the WG. A catalogue of documents was uploaded to the platform bringing together thematically-sorted analytical papers produced on migration issues in the recent years and valid policy documents existing in other migration-related sectors. The WG decided to ask the SCMI's partner international organizations working on migration issues and having expertise in this area to present situation (problem) analysis as well as own perspectives according to their respective mandates.¹⁷ Inputs made by these organizations were used during the subsequent work on situation analysis. The MS was drafted with due consideration of the national legal and institutional framework as well as the strategic documents and concepts, developed in the fields relevant to migration, coupled with the obligations undertaken by Georgia under various international treaties. Meanwhile, with an aim to introduce the best international practice, an important basis was created by the EU recommendations, which proceed from the experiences of its individual member states in preparing strategic documents that have been used already during the development of the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy.

¹⁴ 25th sitting of the SCMI (29.11.2019).

¹⁵ Initially, the WG consisted of 9 MAs of the SCMI; at the second and final stage it was joined by the SCMI partner organisations.

¹⁶ This is one of the key directions of Public Administration Reform and is derived from the EU public administration model.

¹⁷ The requested papers were provided by the following three organizations: IOM, ICMPD and UNHCR.

Initially the WG planned intensive workshops to discuss findings of the situation analysis and assemble all components of the Strategy logical framework (log-frame). However, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the respective restrictions imposed, which became even more stringent after emergency was declared throughout the country, the in-person workshops were cancelled. The working process was never halted, though. It continued in a distant mode based on the e-platform the SCMI Secretariat created in 2019 for Strategy development purposes. Using the sectoral priorities identified in the situation analysis, the SCMI Secretariat drafted log-frame forms and uploaded them to the SCMI's e-platform. Hence, the SCMI MAs were engaged individually, but in close coordination with the Secretariat, in the process of constructing the log-frame, using a 'problem tree analysis' method. The vision, goals, objectives and indicators of the MS were discussed and agreed at more than 30 distant meetings held via various e-platforms of audio-visual communication. In the meantime, the SCMI MAs were constantly engaged in editing of the document as well as sharing of information and ideas through the SCMI's e-portal. Using the portal, the log-frame was also discussed with the Policy Planning Unit of the Administration of GoG, and their recommendations were also reflected in the document.

Once the work on the log-frame was completed, the SCMI MAs involved in the Strategy drafting produced the text of the strategic part of the document and presented a draft version of the MS to the partner international and non-governmental organizations operational in the field, as well as Public Defender's Office, Human Rights Secretariat of the Administration of GoG (including the Prime Minister's Advisor on Human Rights and Gender Equality) and academia representatives. The received recommendations were discussed in detail among their authors and respective SCMI MAs within the framework of Migration Lab and, a certain portion of them in various forms have been reflected in the Strategy and the log-frame. Detailed information on reflecting the comments and recommendations received as a result of public consultations is given in the report attached to the present document as Annex 2.

Sectoral priorities

Migration is a multi-dimensional phenomenon embracing almost all areas of social life. As mentioned in the Introduction, sectoral priorities (the so-called umbrella topics) and respective objectives have been defined by several interlinked and mutually depended - local, regional and global - dimensions. Thus, under the overarching notion of 'migration and development', the present MS brings together all sectoral topics present with three above-said dimensions, though with due consideration of the country's needs, national interests and local specifics.

By considering the realities on the ground and proceeding from the relevance of issues, the sectoral priorities (such as - improvement of migration management, facilitation of legal and fight against illegal migration, reintegration of returnees, diaspora involvement, asylum system and integration) in this new MS have not deviated much from those given in its predecessor (2016-2020), the thematic directions of which had also been taken from those three above-mentioned dimensions. Based on the observation of implementation of the 2016-2020 MS and based on evaluation findings, it was decided, with a view to improving logical connection among the thematic topics, not to frame "international cooperation" and "public awareness raising" as a separate chapters in the new Strategy. Instead, objectives previously concentrated under these headings are thematically distributed according to the above-said sectoral priorities. Also, unlike the previous MS, the 'migration and development' chapter is treated as "an umbrella topic" in this new Strategy: it is no longer presented as a single chapter but has been mainstreamed into all topics in the MS so that all directions are discussed through its prism.

The sectoral priorities were also reviewed in the context of human rights with special emphasis on gender. Based on that, in order to better meet the needs of migrant women / girls and vulnerable groups, the relevant emphasis were highlighted in the Strategy.

1. Enhancement of migration management

Situation analysis:

Georgia has made significant progress in developing migration management mechanisms based on the whole-of-government approach resulting in the production of a cohesive policy at the national level. Activities of the SCMI¹⁸ to determine a unified state policy on migration and improve migration management served as a bedrock for carving a unified and centralized strategic management system of this field in the country, which *inter alia* is another important contribution to Georgia's integration into the EU.¹⁹ Interested in the implementation of reforms in the field of migration, the EU has been supporting the development of the Commission from the very beginning. Cooperation with the EU resulted in the creation of a sound basis for a unified structure of the national system of migration management at the first (initial) stage (the Commission was established, a 2013-2015 MS was drafted, important links and entities of the management chain were set up); Building on these results, at the second (setup) stage, the GoG elaborated and activated complex multi-sectoral mechanisms according to the 2016-2020 MS that outlined the nature and implementation instruments of these mechanisms;²⁰ The third (development and continuous modernization) stage, which is due to be implemented within the framework of this MS, is of special importance. It is at this stage that the process of forming a sustainable migration management system which is harmonized with the European standards to the highest possible extent is due to be completed in order the strong state institutions to make it possible to properly and effectively respond to the challenges posed by increased international mobility and latest global state of affairs in the field of migration. Overcoming these challenges requires even more rigorous and better interconnected mechanisms of management and coordination.

The SCMI as a primary author and implementer of the MS is responsible for drafting and coordinating implementation of the annual Action Plans (AP), which are the main instruments of the Strategy realization. Monitoring and evaluation of the APs is also a part of the Commission's mandate, which shall be carried out in accordance with the new regulations on the "Elaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents" adopted by the GoG within the ambit of Public Administration Reform.²¹ One of the important elements of the above mentioned reform is strengthening the coordination mechanism responsible for the sectoral policy implementation, to effectively realize reform's components aiming at generating results-oriented policy documents based on the whole-of-government approach. Although the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating MS have been applied by the SCMI since 2016 (earlier than the reform started), the new regulations require more efforts and resources in terms of both elaboration of high-quality strategic documents and ensuring their proper monitoring and evaluation.

Implementation of a large part of Georgia's 2021-2030 MS and its APs has been defined as an indicator of successful implementation of the United Nations' (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

¹⁸ Ordinance of GoG #314, 13.10.2010, http://migration.commission.ge/files/scmi_ordinance_eng_as_of_10.08.2018_.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

¹⁹ 2020 Report on the Implementation of the AA. https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/1_en_document_travail_service_conjoint_part1_v4.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

²⁰ The Strategy was prepared with the help of ICMPD within the EU-funded ENIGMMA project.

²¹ Ordinance of GoG #629, 20.12.2019, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4747283?publication=0> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Goal 10, Target 10.7, at the national level.²² Hence, the Strategy implementation process must be conducted with maximum success in order to ensure the global goals for sustainable development are duly implemented.

Ensuring an evidence-based and result-oriented strategic management of migration requires continuous and updatable thematic researches and qualified personnel equipped with proper analytical skills able to rationally apply these data for both the policy planning cycle and for its implementation and evaluation processes. The need for updated thematic research arose repeatedly in the course of implementation of the 2016-2020 MS, not only for the purpose of evaluating the implementation of Strategy goals and objectives by quantitative indicators, but for gauging its qualitative outcomes. Findings of the thematic research carried out by the SCMI in the recent period were used as one of the primary sources for defining indicators for the objectives and outcomes of the given Strategy. Analysis of implementation of the 2016-2020 MS shows that quantitative and qualitative studies are important evidentiary resource for informed decision-making, and the SCMI MAs will have to strengthen their respective analytical units in order to be able to autonomously research the topics falling within their sectoral mandates. Hence, one of the key premises of successful implementation of the new Strategy is preparing by the MAs of such analytical materials and putting the relevant recommendations into practice.

For analyzing migration-related data, evaluating the identified risks and effectively addressing the upcoming processes, in 2015, the GoG launched activities to put in place a Unified Migration Risk Analysis System. A Concept Paper of the Migration Risk Analysis System was adopted by the SCMI and since 2016, an Interagency WG on Migration Risk Analysis has been functioning within the Commission on putting the Concept into practice. The WG is coordinated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and it aims to observe migration trends inside the country and abroad, look into the relevant processes, evaluate risks and produce comprehensive risk analysis documents, which will be based on a unified methodology and devise preventive measures and recommendations based on the whole-of-government approach principle. Once a strong risk analysis system is in place and operational, the recommendations generated by the system will have to be taken into consideration during policy planning and implementation.

Another aspect when it comes to risk analysis is the need for reinforcing institutional mechanisms. For a majority of agencies involved in the migration risk analysis system, the risk analysis is a novel topic and, once the topic is institutionalized, the relevant staff will have to be provided with continuous skill improvement opportunities. Thus, analysts employed at the agencies that are part of the risk analysis system need to regularly raise their qualification, including through the development of their analytical skills so that they are able to produce quality analytical reports. It should be pointed out that maintaining a Unified Migration Risk Analysis System along with the development of the Unified Migration Data Analytical System (UMAS) is one of the long-term tasks under the EU-Georgia Association Agenda (2017-2020) and the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP).²³

²² Ordinance of GoG #2328, 12.11.2019 “On Approving the National Document on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals”. <http://sdg.gov.ge/text-page/34> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

²³ MFA website: <https://bit.ly/3bV6UQY> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

In order to inform the public and stakeholders of migration trends and to facilitate data-based decision-making by state agencies, the country's Migration Profiles has to continue to be updated and published, including using data visualizations and modern infographic techniques.

In addition to the thematic research, a full-fledged analysis of migration policy requires availability of quality statistical data. Setting up effective, up-to-date and sustainable processes of statistics production and keeping demographic (including migration) statistics compatible with the European Union's (EU) standards is one of the key priorities under the 2020-2023 Strategy for the Development of Georgia's Official National Statistics System.²⁴

Since 2012, Geostat has been applying a new methodology for producing migration statistics. Based on its own algorithm, Geostat receives detailed and individual (anonymized) data on state border crossings from the MIA to calculate the length of person's stay in Georgia and abroad. The methodology has been composed according to UN recommendations and is based on a 'usually resident population' concept.²⁵

It needs to be noted that at this stage Geostat is not able to evaluate the reasons of migration; nor does it count migrants by regions and countries (countries of origin and destination). The migrants' related data cannot be disaggregated by socio-economic characteristics (such as education, economic activity and employment status) either. This is a clear indication of the need for improving the quality of migration statistics and for devising and updating required methodologies, in cooperation with various agencies and international partners.

Future calculations related to the number of population, its composition and other demographic data are needed not only for elaboration of the country's social and economic policy but also for planning and implementing evidence-based migration policy. Thus, population projections that are based on international standards and quality statistical data play a special role in the country development eventually. It is therefore necessary to work with international experts to design a relevant methodology and introduce the population projection in the country.

There is a plan to conduct the General Population Census in Georgia within the 2020 round of World Population and Household Census, after which updated population data will be available. However, the date of next census, method and methodology are yet under discussion.

Everywhere where migration management poses new challenges there is ongoing work to improve data collection and processing for the purpose of making the migration management system more effective. The role of information technologies and new gadgets in migration management has been a matter of interest lately. By creating UMAS, Georgia has to some extent responded to the latest world trends in migration data processing (such as Big Data methodology). The UMAS uses newest technologies and unique methodological solution for data processing, and is making its first steps toward analytical use of administrative data in Georgia, a resource that has already been well tested and studied in the world. Development of the UMAS was included as a priority in the 2016-2020 MS and was aimed at improving accessibility and quality of migration data. The kick-off of this process was given a strong impetus by the VLAP implementation that was taking place in the same period.

²⁴ Geostat, <https://www.geostat.ge/media/30076/NSDS-2020-2023-ENG.pdf> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

²⁵ Methodology for population and demography statistics.

<https://www.geostat.ge/media/23366/Population-and-Demography-%28eng%29.pdf> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

By 2020, the UMAS is existent and functioning in accordance with the concept elaborated when the system was being developed for the first time. However, the system operation has revealed the need for improvement of the data processing methodology, first-hand data quality and forms of delivering data to the target audiences. With that in mind, the work on sophisticating various elements of UMAS should actively continue in the coming years too. Application of UMAS has bestowed a unique experience and understanding in the Public Service Development Agency (PSDA) to start making better use of administrative data in Georgia. Through 2021-2030, this experience could be used to improve the quality of both migration data and other administrative sources.

Alongside traditional data, official statistics and other analytical projects have been frequently using non-traditional data to look into migration trends. The possibility of conducting a few trial researches emerged recently in Georgia too. It is necessary to put more effort in exploring the capabilities of non-traditional data sources and avenues for their integration into the UMAS.

Even though the SCMI had already been a well-established and well-functioning entity when it started developing UMAS, the latter gave the notion of coordination a whole new understanding and doubled its dynamics. Data generated through collation of the information received from source agencies working on migration and/or related issues will ease the job of and help sectoral analysts produce analytical reports. Hence, the system does not provide ready answers to the questions per se but it does simplify the process and reduce the time required for reaching those answers.

Improving migration management at the local level increasingly requires more coordination between central and local authorities.²⁶ The local self-governments (municipalities) are the ones to directly interact with various groups of migrants (including potential migrants) and thus are best informed on their individual needs. Involvement of municipalities is important not only in order to keep the population informed of the multidimensional aspects of migration (such as legal migration, return and reintegration) but also to raise interested groups' awareness of various programs supported by the state and donors. Projects that are tailored to the needs of target groups and are focused on local socio-economic development are likely to become even more exigent in the long run. This forecast is supported by the initiatives on the topic of migration²⁷ that were piloted at the local self-government level. Outcomes of these initiatives will allow to come forward for more intensive targeted activities on the municipal level within the framework of the Strategy. Simultaneously, at the initial stage, the capabilities and needs of the municipalities have to be explored as well as their individual approaches to and vision of how to work on migration issues will have to be identified. In parallel, personnel employed by local self-governments will have to be trained in the skills and competences related to dealing with migration issues. This approach is compatible with the Decentralization Strategy of Georgia 2020-2025,²⁸ which envisages giving local self-governments more say in deciding a wide range of public affairs and by forming self-governments that are reliable, accountable, transparent and results-oriented, including by way of setting up a system of local development planning and coordination.

²⁶ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/367041?download=true> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

²⁷ Ordinance of GoG #628, 20.12.2019 "On Measures to be Implemented in 2020-2022 for Development of the Pilot Regions of Georgia", <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4741784?publication=0> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

²⁸ <https://mrddi.gov.ge/pdf/5e468e292b317.pdf/Decentralization-strategy-ENG.pdf> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Increasing Georgia's contribution in global and regional processes and platforms is indispensable for the development of the national system of migration management. This includes, first of all, access to the best international practices in the field of migration management and building the capacity of the SCMI MAs by studying other countries' experience. The Commission is currently represented on various international platforms as one of the corporate management pioneers and a successful example considered as a good model for countries that are developing own migration management systems. The same is true for the products it produces. It is thus important to present the Georgian model of migration management system at international fora and promote it for the purposes of improving the country's good image and enhancing the current system of migration management.

Recent years have seen intensive cooperation with the European Migration Network (EMN).²⁹ Georgia needs to become actively involved in EMN's research and joint activities. This would benefit the SCMI MAs in terms of institutional development and establishing direct contacts with their European counterparts, and facilitate institutional approximation and sectoral integration into the EU. Cooperation with the EMN would greatly contribute to migration policy planning and analysis, and help develop the SCMI MAs' research and analytical capabilities. Lastly, this would offer a conducive opportunity for Georgia to noticeably present EU-supported successful projects at the regional level.

The observation of implementation process of the previous MS (2016-2020) showed that assistance received from international and donor organizations as well as from partner countries played a sizeable role in the implementation of the strategic objectives. Despite the fact that none of the sectoral directions is overly dependent on donor assistance, the latter remains nevertheless important since the donor expertise and financial resources are focused on the activities such as - sharing and implementing new experience (including new technologies), expert and research services, equipping entities with various technical equipment and providing capacity-building measures for personnel (such as training courses and study visits). This type of assistance is basically focused on development and aims to help Strategy-implementing agencies to deal with constantly-changing migration challenges that they would find difficult to address with their own resources only.

Thus the SCMI MAs will have to proactively identify their needs, and further intensify and diversify their interaction and cooperation with donors, which should eventually result in an increased number and wider coverage of new projects that are focused on development and tailored to the country needs. On the other hand, it is advisable to ensure a high-level coordination amongst donors themselves and them with the SCMI so that action taken corresponds to the need, and activities are distributed in a way that every key topic is covered and no duplication and/or thematic overlapping happens. In this regard, the UN Migration Network³⁰ can play a significant role that would contribute to effective coordination in-between the UN agencies on the ground, and through this, maintain regular communication with the SCMI.

Liberalization of the visa regime with the EU, along with the AA, is one of paramount parts of ongoing EU integration process of Georgia. The VLAP, contained four thematic blocks that had to be implemented in two phases (legislative and implementation). The VLAP implementation process saw

²⁹ The European Migration Network is a research and analytical support center of the EC's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network_en (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³⁰ The UN Migration Network in Georgia was established on 30.06.2020.

large-scale reforms covering about 15 different areas, including document security, border management and migration, fight against crime and human rights protection.

Upon successful implementation of the VLAP by Georgia, the visa free travel to EU/Schengen states for the citizens of Georgia entered into force (28.03.2017) along with the renewed visa suspension mechanism for the third countries. The Council Regulation (EU) # 539/2001 of 15 March 2001³¹ obliges the European Commission (EC) to regularly monitor compliance with visa liberalization requirements and observe the impact the visa-free travel has upon EU/Schengen states in terms of migration and security. Ensuring unimpeded functioning of the visa-free travel regime with EU countries is one of the foremost priorities of the GoG. Hence, since the visa liberalization Georgia has been continuously carrying out reforms and making efforts to uphold to the VLAP long-term benchmarks successfully. Once a year Georgia updates the EU on the progress it makes in the determined areas, on which basis the EC publishes reports³² on the implementation of the long-term benchmarks envisaged by the visa liberalization. Georgia needs to regularly monitor the application of its visa-free regime with EU, ensure sustainability of migration-related reforms and continue taking effective measures in response to the challenges related to Georgian citizens' visa-free travel, *inter-alia* addressing the recommendations of the reports under the Visa Suspension Mechanism.

Goal: Development of a migration management system built on strong institutions through improved policy planning and analysis tools, enhanced stakeholder involvement and strengthened international cooperation

Objectives:

- Improvement of strategic management of migration through strengthening the exiting coordination mechanism (i.e. the State Commission on Migration Issues and its Secretariat);
- Facilitation of evidence-based decision-making in the field of migration;
- Further improvement of migration data management;
- Facilitation of capacity-building of local self-government authorities and increasing the extent of their involvement in migration management;
- Enhancing international cooperation in order to introduce novelties in the field of migration management and improve the overall management system;
- Ensuring sustainability of migration-related reforms undertaken within the VLAP and effectively respond to related challenges.

³¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2001/539/oj> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³² http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=17&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

2. Facilitation of legal migration

Situation analysis:

Over the last decades, international migration has significantly increased across the globe.³³ Against the background of globalization and increased mobility, people get more opportunities for studying and working in various (especially, in developed) countries worldwide. Majority of international migrants are migrating for employment, education and family reunification purposes.³⁴ The labour market as much as the education segment have gone global and, while better conditions of employment and education are being offered, people are able to opt for migration, whether temporary or permanent. Georgia has not stayed outside this global process either. In the case of Georgia, too, legal migration (both emigration and immigration) has the same three above reasons, of which labour migration is the biggest one.³⁵

Moreover, labour migration turned out vulnerable before the challenges imposed by COVID-19, which significantly affected human mobility and fundamentally changed the reality as a result. Majority of employers have completely lost their incomes or the incomes have dramatically decreased, entailing reduction of job places as a consequence. However, it is notable that the situation with regard to migrants is different by states, sectors of economy and qualifications, since labour migrants in general fill both the high and low qualification job places in the most demanded sectors of labour market. Therefore, a global demand for labour migrants shall remain in the situation of pandemic as well as afterwards (e.g. in the fields of agriculture and seasonal labour migration, where there will always be a need for a certain labour force for a short period of time³⁶). Hence, according to the specific situation and relevant needs, the focus will be made on the temporary employment abroad, upon expiry of which migrants will have to return home and make the best use of the experience and income gained abroad. This is possible only through putting into force the well-organized and safe temporary labour migration schemes, oriented on return and development; and this is the rationale behind the inter-state cooperation in the field of temporary circular and seasonal labour migration.

Due to the lack of a comprehensive system of registering emigration, statistical data on labour migrants from Georgia is incomplete (e.g. it is not possible to collect and analyze data on labor emigrants in the socio-economic context [gender, age, level of education, etc.]). However, taking into consideration the scale of emigration³⁷ and the major reasons why people leave for foreign country, allows concluding that emigration from Georgia relates primarily to employment reasons. It is noteworthy that according to the results of the 2014 census, the majority (55%) of working-age emigrants are women³⁸.

Labour immigration is making its way up on the agenda for Georgia. According to the PSDA data, 40.7% of residence permits issued to foreigners in 2015–2018 were work residence permits. Among the holders of this type of residence permit, 19% are women and 81% are men³⁹. According to the “Survey

³³ https://migrationdataportal.org/data?i=stock_abs&t=2019 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³⁴ World Migration Report 2020, Chapter 2 - Migration and Migrants: A Global Overview, IOM. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020_en_ch_2.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³⁵ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/docs/pages/00_eu_inform3_labour_migration_2020_en.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³⁷ UNFPA/Ralph Hackert, Population dynamics in Georgia, a review based on the 2014 general census. <https://www.geostat.ge/en/single-archive/3315> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³⁸ <http://census.ge/en/results/census1/migrationout> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

³⁹ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

of Business Demand on Skills, 41,359 foreign citizens had jobs in Georgia in 2019, of whom 39.4% were employed in transport sector, 34.3% in processing industry, 7.2% in construction and 6.5% in tourism.”⁴⁰

Until 2015, Georgia did not have the legislation governing labour migration. The Law of Georgia on Labour Migration and a number of secondary legislation have then formed a legal basis for regulating the field. However, there remains a set of issues that require further improvement to effectively manage both emigration and immigration for employment reasons. An example of such challenges is the lack of effective regulation of natural persons and legal entities offering intermediary services to labour emigrants. This gap accounts for the fact that there is a sizeable number of individuals and companies providing illegal intermediary services. More specifically, in exchange for a fairly high remuneration, these individuals and companies provide people wanting to get jobs abroad with bad quality services, furnishing them inaccurate information, concluding false agreements and abetting illegal employment in foreign countries – something that *inter-alia* ultimately, complicates the process of migrant’s return to home country. Taking the scale of the problem into account, it seems to be indispensable to introduce an effective system of regulating and monitoring the activity of such intermediaries to ensure that the rights of labour emigrants are protected on the one hand and that honest, capable and credible agencies acting in this industry are encouraged.

Another challenge is the local employers underreporting to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoH) the hiring of foreign labour migrants for work in Georgia.⁴¹ Hence, regularization of registration of foreign employees, putting in force effective monitoring system and enhancing accountability of local employers require introduction and further refinement of proper labour immigration regulatory mechanisms that are tailored to the needs and economy of the country.

As mentioned above, positive effects of labour migration can be increased by developing temporary (circular) labour migration schemes. Such schemes help bring migratory flows into legal frames; are adjustable to the interests of the countries of origin and destination, and of labour migrants themselves, and, **most importantly, they simplify/facilitate return to the home country**. Circular migration improves Georgian citizens’ economic opportunities, professional skills and migration experience. A well-managed (temporary) circular migration:

- ❖ Reduces illegal migration and related risks (including cases of trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation);
- ❖ Increases avenues for protection of labour migrants’ rights;
- ❖ Mitigates unemployment within the country;
- ❖ Increases incomes of labour emigrants and the volume of remittances which in turn help reduce poverty and raise the quality of living in the country;
- ❖ Increases the investment potential of remittances (“more income - more savings”);

⁴⁰ Survey of Business Demand on Skills, 2020, MoESD.

<http://www.lmis.gov.ge/Lmis/Lmis.Portal.Web/Handlers/GetFile.ashx?Type=Content&ID=cfaa802f-c54e-4607-9875-69abaa284777>
(accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁴¹ Although the duty to report is prescribed by the applicable legislation, it is virtually not being abided by, because the law does not provide any sanction for breaching this duty.

- ❖ Helps bring the knowledge and experience, new labour and organizational skills gained abroad upon returning to home country;
- ❖ Loosens demographic and socio-psychological problems related to long-lasting labour emigration;
- ❖ Facilitates economic links between countries of origin and destination.

This is why development of inter-state cooperation in the area of temporary (circular) labour migration constitutes one of the long-term priorities of the GoG. With a view of developing temporary (circular) labour migration schemes, a necessary institutional system was formed in the country: in particular, a new Division for Labour Migration Issues was set up within the MoH, while the State Employment Support Agency (a LEPL under the MoH) was additionally tasked with implementing labour migration schemes on the basis of existing inter-state agreements. In its work, the Agency will especially focus on encouraging women, youth and vulnerable groups.

As its priority, Georgia aims to develop concrete avenues of cooperation in the field of circular migration through continuing active cooperation with the EU as well as other developed countries. Such agreements concluded in the field of labour migration provide real and effective collaboration opportunities based on mutual benefit principle. Making use of these opportunities requires, on its turn, having a well-developed system to recruit personnel according to foreign employer-needed skills and building the capacity of relevant state agencies.

A developed labour market and availability of in-demand human resources make necessary preconditions for the environment that is open for business and capable of attracting investments. As Georgia's economy grows, demand for both high-skill and low-skill labour will increase at the domestic level. Thus the Georgian labour market will have to be analyzed regularly, labour market trends will have to be studied and existing challenges will have to be identified. Annual research papers and reports produced by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD)⁴² would come in handy in this respect since they provide an analysis of employment and unemployment trends in the country including by breaking them down by sector, age, gender and regions. The analysis covers supply and demand components of the labour market and identifies key sectors in which increased economic activity is likely to occur in the coming years. The analysis can thus provide valuable information on areas in which employment rate will rise and will therefore require more focus on to effectively managing labour migration.

In spite of thorough information campaigns, raising awareness of a large part of Georgian population on opportunities offered by legal migration and threats posed by illegal migration remains a challenge. Since the visa-free travel to EU/Schengen states became effective (28.03.2017), the number of Georgian citizens travelling to these countries increased drastically.⁴³ This trend was also abetted by the increased number of direct flights from Georgia to EU/Schengen states operated by low-cost airlines. According to the data held by the Georgian MIA, nearly 534,000 Georgian citizens used the visa-free travel regime since its introduction until February 2020. How many of them used this opportunity for the purpose of future employment abroad is unknown but there are reasons to believe that the share of those who left for employment is large enough in this overall number of visa-free travel users. It has to be pointed out that this process has stopped almost completely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic but it is very

⁴² <http://www.lmis.gov.ge/Lmis/Lmis.Portal.Web/Pages/User/UserReports.aspx> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁴³ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

likely that human mobility will reach the same levels once the current travel restrictions for the Georgian citizens are lifted and inter-state transport communication is fully restored. After visa-free travel to EU/Schengen states became possible, there was a sharp upsurge in the number of asylum applications from the Georgian citizens in those countries.⁴⁴ The absolute majority of Georgian citizens' requests for asylum were considered non-founded by the EU/Schengen states and were rejected. Reasons and root causes for abusing the visa-free regime, are complex and relate to not only the socio-economic situation, but people's individual behavioral decisions. The latter are strongly affected by the lack of information, misinformation, false opinions and established stereotypes about the EU MSs asylum procedures, and the likely "gain" asylum seekers are expecting to make there.

One of the guiding principles applied by EU/Schengen states in examining asylum applications is whether a third country is considered individually by the EU MSs as a "safe country of origin". 16 EU/Schengen states out of 20 having such mechanism (concept) in place, have recognized Georgia as "a safe country of origin",⁴⁵ which means that they view Georgia as a country where there is "no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and no threat by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict".⁴⁶ The above-described circumstances ring a bell for the need for a meaningful and effective communication with the Georgian population with a view to raising citizens' awareness of the rules of travelling to EU/Schengen states, travelers' rights and obligations, legal employment opportunities, abuses of the right to claim international protection and Georgia's liability once the visa-free travel rules have been breached. The information campaigns should be carried out on the basis of effective interagency coordination using unified clear messages and public opinion polls. Awareness raising campaigns should be built around the issues that the population is less aware of; Target groups should be identified and their needs assessment has to be carried out; diverse communication channels will have to be identified and updated, and evaluation mechanisms will have to be improved.

The GoG considers as a priority to expand visa-free travel opportunities for Georgian citizens not only to EU/Schengen states, but to the other countries worldwide. Expansion of the visa-free travel area contributes to enhance people-to-people contacts, facilitates access to the world's leading markets, newest technologies and achievements in science, and reduces travel costs in general. Moreover, amplification of the opportunities for travelling without visa curtails the motivation for illegal travel. Georgia's state interest is to establish bilateral visa-free regimes with as many countries as possible.⁴⁷ To this end, the efforts to conclude relevant international agreements are ongoing to allow Georgian citizens travel and enjoy the right of short-term stay without a visa in the territory of contracting states.

Georgia's legislation on legal migration⁴⁸ has been considerably improved and updated during and after the implementation of the VLAP. In spite of fundamental changes carried out to approximate Georgia's legal framework with the EU legislation, practical application of the Georgian legal norms demonstrated a number of gaps that require to be further addressed. From this viewpoint, the visa and residence policy regulatory framework will have to be improved in order to better manage migration

⁴⁴ 12,135 applications in 2017; 21,030 applications in 2018; 23,040 applications in 2019. Source: Eurostat (accessed 08.12.2020).

⁴⁵ As of June 2020.

⁴⁶ Asylum and Migration Glossary, 6.0, EMN. http://migration.commission.ge/files/interactive_glossary_6.0_final_version.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁴⁷ By January 2020, Georgian citizens possessing ordinary passports may travel without needing visas to 65 countries, while the holders of Georgia's diplomatic and service passports may travel to 79 countries visa free.

⁴⁸ http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=54&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

flows so that, on the one hand, the state adequately responds to national, social, and economic security challenges and, on the other hand, positive effects of migration are maximized to benefit the country's stable development. Visa and residence policy governing framework will also have to be further approximated with the EU legislation and best international practice will have to be taken into account.

Practical application of the existing regulations brought to surface a number of challenges in migration management process at both the field and more specific, sectoral levels. Correct estimation of migration flows, sound functioning of migrant flow management mechanisms as well as the regular assessment and analysis of the impact of migration flows on various sectors are important factors to determine the migration management efficiency. Hence, for the sake of further improving the visa and residence policy-governing legal framework, state agencies involved in migration management identify challenges by sectors and fields of activity, and based on the gained experience, draft legal amendments in a concerted and coordinated manner as may be necessary to respond to these challenges.

In addition to spotting the hurdles faced by the state on the way to fine-tuning visa and residence policy, particular attention will be paid to the global context and to getting to know the experience of the EU and other countries that have dealt with similar challenges. Hence, the new regulations aimed at improving the visa and residence policy will dwell on the priority issues identified by migration management-related state agencies and a detail analysis of the existing situation, and will also heed the results of studying the best international practice. Moreover, the new regulations will take into consideration a migration risk analysis and a preliminary assessment of the potential impact the regulations will have upon social, economic, security and other adjacent areas.

In view of the process of ongoing globalization and for the future development of the country, it is important to contribute to international mobility in the field of higher education and science as well as to internationalization of both of these fields. This will lead to an increase in the number of Georgian students and researchers in foreign education institutions on the one hand to a similar upsurge of foreign-language education programs and foreign students in Georgia on the other hand. Scholarships and undergraduate and graduate programmes implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoE) in association with its international partners are greatly conducive to achieving these results.⁴⁹ Worth mentioning is also the cooperation within the EU programs⁵⁰ and the scholarship programs offered by the International Education Center (a LEPL under the MoE).

The number of foreign-language education programs in Georgia's universities is growing and bilateral cooperation between Georgian and foreign universities is expanding. Studies on the socio-economic and living conditions of foreign students in Georgia play an important role in designing foreign-language education programs offered by Georgia's higher education institutions. Such studies cover issues as - foreign students' transition to higher education institutions and access, accommodation, expenses, income, employment, international mobility, also sources of information on study at Georgia's higher education institutions, motivation to study in Georgia, satisfaction, etc. The studies show an increasing interest of foreign students in enrolling in Georgian universities. Foreign students

⁴⁹ Examples are: the Stipendium Hungaricum in Hungary, academic programs in Italy, the Fulbright program in the United States, master's programs in France, academic programs in San-Diego University, etc.

⁵⁰ Such as Erasmus+; Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree.

are making an important contribution to the state's economy,⁵¹ and to the development of Georgian universities. Tuition fees they pay allow Georgian universities to make important investments in infrastructure and technologies, and develop new education programs.⁵²

When it comes to internationalization of higher education and research, Kutaisi International University presents itself as a good example. The University aims at becoming an international center of education, science and technology in the region, pushing Georgia forward to occupy a noticeable place in the international field of education and science.⁵³ Availability of high-ranking research infrastructure will pave the way for attracting distinguished foreign researchers to Georgia.

With a view to facilitating doing research or science internship in foreign countries, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (another LEPL under the MoE) conducts grant competitions jointly with various foreign research institutes. Joining EURAXESS network is an important step forward on the way to internationalizing Georgia's science potential. The EURAXESS portal is a favorable online tool to attract foreign scientists and researchers to Georgia. In order to increase the size and amount of research performed in Georgia the administrative bars in research and innovation will have to be removed and the related procedures will have to be simplified. Science, research and innovation grants are not registered and accounted for in a centralized manner for the moment. Neither is there a registry of scientists arriving in or departing from Georgia for research activity. It is therefore needed to create an information system (database) with built-in indicators of internationalization. For young scientists and researchers, international business scholarship schemes should be developed that would allow bringing foreign prospective scientists to Georgian companies and seconding Georgian young scientists to foreign industrial companies for scientific and research purposes.

In terms of internationalization of education, recognition of foreign formal and informal education is utmost important. In this regard, the legislative basis was improved and the mechanisms of recognition of formal and informal education were introduced; electronic system of informal education recognition was created and a guidebook on obtaining the right for recognition of informal education was produced. Proper and effective functioning of the mechanisms of recognition of foreign education will play important role for expanding and further improving the means of development-oriented legal migration.

To facilitate international mobility and legal migration, it is important to ensure that the consular services are being constantly improved and are increasingly accessible. Active efforts are underway to expand the coverage area of consular posts of Georgia, along with developing the institution of the honorary consuls. Opening of new consular posts contributes to more effective protection of the interests of Georgian citizens, improved access to consular services and, in some countries, reducing the inconveniences related to long distance travels to remotely located embassies and consular posts. In those countries where Georgia does not have a diplomatic mission or a consular post, honorary consuls take active part in protecting the rights of Georgian citizens and disseminating information on legal migration.

⁵¹ According to the survey conducted by ISET, foreign students spend the most amount of money (USD 28 million) on tuition fees and USD 16.7 million on living space rent. A total expenditure of foreign students in Georgia reaches GEL 195 million. BMP on Foreign Students in Georgia, 2017, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/files/migraciis_profil_i_a5_eng.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ <https://www.kiu.edu.ge/eng/about-us> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Embedding and furthering the use of advanced technologies in consular activities is a priority. In order to raise effectiveness of consular activities and improve the quality of offered services, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has launched Consular Case Management Electronic System entitled “Geoconsul”,⁵⁴ which allows receipt of a full spectrum of consular services. Through this platform, some of the services can be provided electronically, without a citizen having to appear physically in a consular office. The system is unique as it is a carrier of complete information on consular services. The software has proven to be successful and being capable of performing its tasks; however, the work should continue to update and further fine-tune the system. Each software update should aim at simplifying relevant procedures and increasing accessibility of available services.

The Georgian Electronic Visa Portal (E-Visa Portal)⁵⁵ allows individuals to obtain short-term Georgian visas electronically, without paying a visit to the Georgian consular post. In order to further improve the visa issuing procedures, the MFA works with outsource service centers⁵⁶. The MFA will continue assessing needs for additional centers and will strive to improve the services offered by the currently operating centers.

Georgia’s diplomatic missions and consular posts abroad must be prepared to act in crisis situations emerging from conflicts, natural disasters or global pandemics. For better coordination of state agencies’ measures taken for the protection of Georgian citizens abroad and for effective management of resources and risks, “Rule of Action in Crisis Situations Abroad” and a corresponding manual were drafted and approved⁵⁷. Based on this Rule, a Crisis Management Council was established at the MFA to coordinate and help Georgian embassies and consular posts deal with crisis situations emerged outside Georgia. A training module on management of consular crises was developed on the basis of the manual, which became an integral part of consular training curricula. The manual will have to be put to use by all diplomatic missions abroad as proper management of consular crisis and a predetermined strategy of action can largely reduce the effect of unexpectedness and chaotic movement of citizens during a turmoil. Besides, management of contemporary consular crisis situations require active collaboration of states and international actors. Without global or regional cooperation and coordinated action, the challenges associated with consular crisis will be impossible to address effectively. Similarly, stronger resilience to the crises will contribute to legal, safe and orderly migration.

Expansion of legal migration opportunities should take place in parallel with improving the competences and skills of the personnel working in the relevant sectors. The staff should be provided with professional training, best practice-sharing opportunities and updates on ongoing changes in the law, technological novelties and modern approaches.

⁵⁴ <https://www.geoconsul.gov.ge/en> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁵⁵ <https://www.evisa.gov.ge> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁵⁶ An example of such an outsource service agency is VFS Global that operates 18 centres for Georgian visa applications in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri-Lanka. <https://www.vfsglobal.com/en/individuals/index.html> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁵⁷ Ordinance of the Minister of Foreign Affairs #01-170, 12.07.2018.

Goal: *Expansion and improvement of development-oriented legal migration opportunities*

Objectives:

- Improvement of labour migration management;
- Facilitation and development of temporary legal employment abroad (circular labour migration);
- Raising public (including women, youth, ethnic minorities and vulnerable groups) awareness on legal migration opportunities;
- Improvement of Georgia's visa and residence policy in accordance with Georgia's state interests and international best practices;
- Facilitation of international mobility in the field of higher education and science;
- Expansion of visa-free travel opportunities for Georgian citizens;
- Improvement of accessibility and quality of consular services;
- Raising preparedness to act in potential crisis situations abroad;
- Raising professional capabilities and skills of personnel working on legal migration issues.

3. Fight against illegal migration

Situation analysis:

Fight against illegal migratory flows and related crime makes an important element in ensuring state security and a sustainability of existing migration management system. Measures preventing illegal migration work to enhance legal migration opportunities, while expanded and accessible opportunities for legal migration help reduce migration-related illegal activities and different forms of crime.

Strengthening cooperation with partner countries and international organizations, and developing cooperation formats are another important aspects to fight against illegal migration and transnational organized crime. International criminal justice and police cooperation make an important mode of such interaction with partner countries. The GoG has concluded bilateral agreements on cooperation and exchange of information, international treaties and cooperation memoranda with more than 30 states. In addition, Georgia has designated its police attachés in 16 partner countries covering additional 7 countries. The attaché network will have to increase and their coverage should continue to expand. Since 2017, an Agreement on Operational and Strategic Cooperation between the EUROPOL and Georgia has been in force. Within the framework of the Agreement, Georgia seconded a liaison officer to EUROPOL in 2018 and, since 2019, a communication channel for prompt and safe exchange of information has been operational between EUROPOL and Georgia. Also, in 2019, Georgia joined EUROPOL's several analytical projects.⁵⁸ Furthermore, an Agreement on Cooperation between EUROJUST and Georgia was concluded in 2019 and Georgia has seconded its liaison prosecutor to EUROJUST in 2020. The given cooperation formats with EUROPOL and EUROJUST will further promote and enhance fight against serious crime related to illegal migration, especially transnational organized crime, including Trafficking in Human Beings (THB).

Georgia has been successfully cooperating with FRONTEX to combat illegal migration and organized crime. Within this format, Georgian police officers have been regularly seconded to the EU MSs, and relevant units and divisions of the MIA have been active to take part in joint operations with FRONTEX. The land, sea and air operations with FRONTEX include border checks and border supervision. Since 2019, the Georgia's MIA and FRONTEX have been carrying out joint operations to reduce illegal migration flows from Georgia, such as placing additional experts in the airports of Georgia and seconding MIA patrol inspectors (border controllers) to the airports of the EU/Schengen states. This endeavor also envisages training border officers in EU legislation on border control, facilitating the introduction of European standards at border checkpoints, deepening cooperation in the area of criminal intelligence and sharing information and experience. It is also important to continue working with FRONTEX on joint operations to bring Georgian citizens illegally staying in EU MSs back to Georgia. With a view to reducing the cases of violations of the rules of visa-free travel in EU/Schengen area by Georgian citizens and thus precluding of possible triggering visa suspension mechanism, the Georgian Parliament enacted legal changes in 2020⁵⁹ to prevent the outflow of Georgian citizens who are likely to abuse the visa-free regime when travelling to EU/Schengen states. Moreover, according to amendment made in 2019 to the Criminal Code "Creation of appropriate conditions for/organisation of

⁵⁸ Analytical Group to Disrupt Eastern European Organised Crime Networks (EEOC) and Analytical Group to Combat Organised Property Crime Committed by Mobile Organised Crime Groups (AP Furtum).

⁵⁹ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4978736?publication=0> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

illegal stay of a Georgian citizen in a foreign country knowingly by a person for gaining financial or another material benefit, and/or facilitation/organisation knowingly by a person, with the same purpose, of submission of false information by a Georgian citizen on violation of his/her rights or freedoms for obtaining international protection in a foreign country”.⁶⁰

One of the effective mechanisms for combatting illegal migration are agreements between the countries on readmission of persons residing without authorization in their territory. Georgia concluded readmission agreements with the EU, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. In order to facilitate effective implementation of Georgia-EU readmission agreement, a process of concluding implementing protocols with EU MSs is in progress. Georgia concluded such implementing protocols with 12 EU MSs. Meanwhile, negotiations on the conclusion of readmission agreements with up to 10 additional countries are in progress, and another set of negotiations with more than 20 countries have already been initiated.

It should be pointed out that forced return of Georgian citizens from EU/Schengen states is mostly carried out within the framework of the readmission agreement. The number of readmission requests from EU/Schengen states Georgia has been receiving in recent years is increasing,⁶¹ while the approval rate of such requests by Georgia is one of the highest compared to other third countries hitting more than 95% a year.

To facilitate effective implementation of the “EU/Georgia Agreement on Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorization” the GoG has introduced a „Readmission Case Management Electronic System“ (RCMES),⁶² which received a positive feedback from the EC, and the EU MSs were given the recommendation to join the System. By 2020, 19 EU/Schengen states joined the System.⁶³ Application of the RCMES allows both Georgia and EU/Schengen states to save significant human, administrative and financial resources. New features and options are regularly being added to the System, while intensive efforts are being made to promote the RCMES and engage more countries in its use. It is important to continue work on improvement of the System and have it replicated and adopted by other contracting states in order to facilitate effective implementation of the existing readmission agreements.

Against the increasing number of foreigners intending to enter Georgia, the country needs to have workable mechanisms for identifying and expelling individuals staying without legal basis in order to avoid illegal migration-related threats.

The MIA undertook important measures aimed at developing effective detection and expulsion mechanisms of illegally staying individuals compliant with international standards. The legal framework improved, intra-agency and inter-agency coordination bettered, rules for detection and referral of illegally staying migrants were elaborated and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were approved.

⁶⁰ <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/16426?publication=209> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁶¹ http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁶² The System was created with the help of IOM under the EU-funded project.

⁶³ Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, France, Belgium, Romania, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Spain, Lithuania, Latvia, Italy, Ireland, Czechia, Finland, Slovenia and Denmark.

These measures resulted in an increased number of individuals identified as having been staying in the country without a legal basis, while in 2019, an overwhelming majority (app. 84%) of expulsion decisions were executed. However, from the perspective of managing illegal migration, working with countries of origin of illegal migrants has been difficult. There is a lack of prompt and effective procedures for identifying and returning, in a safe and organized manner, individuals who are not meeting the requirements of entry, stay or residing in Georgia. In this context, it is important to continue active cooperation with International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to support voluntary return of illegally staying individuals to their countries of origin.

The MIA, which is running a migrants' Temporary Accommodation Center within the Migration Department, regards it as priority to ensure effective management of the Center on the one hand and the safety and human rights of the individuals placed in there on the other hand. Thus, measures are being constantly taken to improve the operation of the Center and the conditions of individuals staying there with a view to preventing ill-treatment and ensuring access to needed services (healthcare, education, etc.). SOPs were drafted for foreigners placed in the Center on the protection of universally recognized human rights and freedoms, as well as prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination. Also, a mechanism to report on ill-treatment and improper conditions was bettered and a healthcare guideline is currently being drafted to ensure provision of universally recognized healthcare services to the individuals placed in the Center.

Despite the series of measures implemented, the Center's capabilities will have to continue to expand and safety standards need to be constantly bettered so that the rights of individuals accommodated at the Center are protected in the period between admission to the Center and execution of the expulsion decision.

The personnel involved in the fight against illegal migration constantly undertake training/retraining courses. Through teaching courses, trainings and working meetings, they are being actively trained in detaining individuals staying without legal basis, expulsion procedures, management of the Temporary Accommodation Center and protection of human rights during expulsion proceedings. Personnel training and further education must be a continuous process and the training courses and programs must echo the existing and forthcoming challenges.

Trafficking in human beings, which is a form of transnational organized crime, is one of the threats posed by illegal migration. Worldwide, women and children are more often exposed to this threat.⁶⁴ For the purposes of preventing THB, protecting victims, conducting proactive investigation and effective criminal prosecution as well as enhancing cooperation, the Anti-Trafficking Council⁶⁵ carried out important measures at both legislative and institutional levels, within and beyond the Anti-Trafficking APs. Effectiveness of Georgia's anti-trafficking policy has been confirmed by the United States State Department's reports of 2016-2020,⁶⁶ according to which, Georgia, along with several EU

⁶⁴ Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2018, p.10 - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/2018/GLOTIP_2018_BOOK_web_small.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁶⁵ Ordinance of GoG #281, 10.04.2014, "On Approving the Composition and the Statute of the Interagency Coordinating Council on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings". <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/2316707?publication=3> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁶⁶ <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

MSs, remains in the list of Tier 1 countries, meaning that the state fully meets the standards on combating THB and continues carrying out consistent and coordinated action in this direction.

With a view to effectively fighting the crime of THB, Georgia is and will continue paying a great deal of attention to proactive investigation into trafficking cases and punishment of perpetrators through effective criminal prosecution. According to the data for the period of 2015-2019, 66 victims / statutory victims were identified in Georgia. The most frequently committed form of trafficking in Georgia is trafficking for sexual exploitation; however, number of labour exploitation cases were also identified in recent years. Georgian citizens abroad are most commonly perpetrated against in the form of labour exploitation. Analysis of the profiles of identified trafficking victims / statutory victims broken down by gender and age shows that 48% of the victims / statutory victims are underage girls, 39% are women, 8% are men and 5% are underage boys. Average age of victims / statutory victims is 31 in case of women, 33 in case of men and 11 in case of children (true for both girls and boys). According to the analysis of these cases, trafficking victims / statutory victims and their perpetrators are usually the citizens of the same country.

In order to identify trafficking cases and bring perpetrators to justice, mobile groups and Task Force consisted of trained investigators and prosecutors with a special knowledge and skills regularly inspect places with a higher risk of trafficking, looking for trafficking clues. In addition, citizens deported from foreign countries are interviewed at Georgian airports to find out whether they have been subjected to human trafficking while abroad. When it comes to identification of forced labour and labour exploitation cases, the Labour Inspection Department under the MoH conducts scheduled and impromptu visits to organizations and entities.

Initial and advance trainings on identification of trafficking cases are conducted for relevant personnel every year. Despite this, of the 101 investigations launched into human trafficking allegations in 2015-2019, criminal prosecution commenced only in 16 cases in relation to 44 individuals. These figures demonstrate the need for improved detection mechanisms and effective criminal prosecution of THB cases. Preventative measures also play a great role in combating trafficking. Even though awareness raising events are held every year as part of the Unified Information Strategy, public knowledge on trafficking risks and self-protection remedies is not properly high yet.⁶⁷ A dwindling trend is observed also in the number of victims revealed annually by the Permanent Group operating under the Anti-Trafficking Council; differing from proactive approaches of law enforcers, identification of victims by the Permanent Group depends on the self-identification by and/or referral of alleged victim to the Permanent Group by other governmental or non-governmental sector.⁶⁸

Border security is one of the essential elements of the Georgia's state security architecture. Georgia's geographical location, important infrastructural projects in transport and communications carried out in recent years, the development of transport corridors, Georgia's approximation with the EU and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East are the complex factors affecting Georgia and causing the growing interest towards the country in terms of international commercial carriages and migration flows.

⁶⁷ According to the survey conducted by the SCMI in 2019, 5 out of 10 respondents do not know what human trafficking is; in the context of ethnic minorities, the same answer was given by 6 out of 10 respondents.

⁶⁸ 8 victims in 2015, 1 in 2016, 4 in 2017, 2 in 2018 and 0 victim in 2019.

Logically, these opportunities come with increased threat of transnational crime presenting itself as a challenge to Georgia's border security.

The challenges posed by Georgia in terms of fighting with illegal migration and the need to address these challenges effectively adds to the importance of constant improvement of its border security and border control systems.

Effectiveness of the border security architecture depends on the prior awareness level of border policy implementing authorities. Readiness and action of those authorities will bring desired results particularly in case they are fully aware of any anticipated deed related to the Georgian state border in advance. This situational awareness in the context of border security can be ensured by using effective information-gathering tools in the area of border protection such as electronic surveillance systems that allow to control a much greater area with less human resources on the one hand and help timely prevent and retention of violations on the other hand. Practical examples of putting such systems to use include electronic surveillance equipment installed at certain border sectors with Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It is essential to equip all sectors of Georgia's state border with electronic surveillance systems.

In addition to the above measures, there is an ongoing process of equipping all border checkpoints with modern equipment for first-line and secondary inspections, which makes an important element in the whole of state border protection architecture. Thus, it is important, that during the period of present MS, the process of equipping all the checkpoints with modern technologies is completed.

Trans-border threat prevention and response activities require processing diverse yet inter-connected sizeable information, data and reports, and designing and implementing targeted action. The LEPL Operative-Technical Agency together with MIA's relevant divisions has elaborated a concept outline of developing a special software, which will serve as a basis for creating a border security information management automated system, which once launched will allow sorting, systematization, accessibility, sharing and statistical processing.

How well Georgia's state border is protected depends on how well the border area⁶⁹ is controlled. Border control is about detection of objects falling under the area of competences of border units, identification of their status related to the border and border regime (legal/illegal), and deterrence of any threats posed. Application of electronic surveillance equipment and systems improves the possibilities of detecting trans-border crimes and the effectiveness of border operations. Hence, the GoG regards development of electronic observation means at the state border as its priority.

Turning the above-mentioned tasks into reality has to do with managing a large volume of information and data, which requires appropriate communication infrastructure. The communication network must ensure uninterrupted sharing of information and data at various organization levels (tactical, operational and strategic) and through the organization hierarchy (interagency communication). Hence, a high-speed communication network will have to be secured to ensure immaculate operation of border security information management and electronic surveillance systems.

⁶⁹ The term "border area" includes a border zone, a border line and a border checkpoint.

State border delimitation and demarcation play an important role in the development of border infrastructure and ensuring of border security. In order to delimitate and demarcate the state border and conduct negotiations for determining and establishing the state border with neighboring countries and coordinate relevant measures, a State Commission on State Border Delimitation and Demarcation was established in 2017. In recent years, the Commission has been conducting active work and consultations with Azerbaijan and Armenia on the issues of border delimitation and demarcation. It is important that the work within the respective inter-state commissions continues with a view to delimitating and demarcating Georgia's state border together with the Armenian and Azerbaijani parties.

It should be pointed out that, for the purpose of effectively responding to border incidents and threats at the border with neighboring countries, a concept of border representatives ("border commissioners") is considered to be introduced, to be designated at Georgia's state border sectors with Armenia and Azerbaijan.⁷⁰ The border commissioners will be responsible for carrying out prevention measures, sharing of information on illegal border crossings and developing a joint AP.

Another aspect having a role in the context of fighting illegal migration is document security. At the time of implementation of the VLAP, Georgia was given the highest evaluation by the EU in this respect. The country needs to continue the reforms and maintain a high standard of document security. This requires constant improvement of the system, sharing of up-to-date knowledge and experience of world countries and application of modern technologies bettering the mechanisms to counter document fraud.

In this respect, the PSDA as a primary body responsible for the issuance of person identification and travel documents is planning to introduce a fingerprint comparison system to further improve and secure data protection. A new mechanism will be added to the existing systems of document/data anti-fraud protection, which will be immune from human factor and thus ensure exclusion of misuse of personal data. The PSDA will also continue and complete the process of digitalizing civil status acts according to the 10-year plan⁷¹ on making electronic copies (scanning) of paper documents and uploading them into the relevant PSDA databases.

Since the PSDA is part of the critical information system owing to its functions,⁷² its information security must be managed with utmost care. Regard should be given to recurring cyberattacks in both Georgia and globally in the world. The PSDA needs to adopt the ISO 27001:2013 standard (information security management system) to raise its standards of management in all areas of information security and protect the critical information it holds. It's notable that ISO 27001:2013 standard envisages constant improvement that will allow the PSDA to timely and effectively react to challenges (including new cyber threats) and reduce risks to an acceptable level.

⁷⁰ Bilateral agreements on border representatives were concluded with Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2016 and 2018 respectively.

⁷¹ The AP was drafted in the first phase of VLAP implementation envisaging full digitalization of civil status acts until 2024.

⁷² "A state agency or an entity with an information system that is essential to function in an uninterrupted manner for the purposes of the country's defense and/or economic security or for maintaining Government authorities and/or public life". See Law of Georgia on Information Security, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/1679424?publication=3> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Goal: *Effective fight against illegal migration and transnational organized crime and improvement of border security*

Objectives:

- Enhancing international cooperation in fighting illegal migration and THB;
- Effective implementation of agreements on the readmission of persons residing without authorization;
- Further development of expulsion mechanisms of the persons illegally staying in Georgia;
- Improvement of mechanisms for detection of THB crime and conducting effective criminal prosecution;
- Prevention of THB crime;
- Improvement of technical equipment at the State Border;
- Digitalization of border security information management system and development of an information technology platform;
- Enhancing electronic surveillance capabilities at the Georgian land and maritime border sectors;
- Development of a high-speed communication network for border security units mandated to fight against illegal migration;
- Continue the works on Georgian state border's delimitation and demarcation;
- Maintaining and improvement of high standards for document security;
- Raising the qualifications of the personnel responsible for fight against illegal migration.

4. Reintegration of returned migrants

Situation analysis:

Against the backdrop of Georgia's demographic situation, socio-economic conditions and migration forecasts for the coming years, it is the country's priority to encourage the return of Georgian citizens from abroad and facilitate their reintegration upon return.

There are a number of sources providing data on migrants returning to Georgia but it is fragmentary and not helpful for reconstructing the full picture of return migration insofar, as these sources contain information only on the return of emigrants staying in foreign countries without a legal basis. According to Eurostat data, there is an upsurge in the number of Georgian citizens who were ordered to leave the EU MSs. 16,535 such decisions were issued in 2019, which is almost twice as many as the value for the previous year.⁷³ Eurostat also reports that the number of Georgian citizens returning to their home country increases year by year,⁷⁴ and reached 8,630 in 2019. A growing trend is observed also when it comes to Georgian citizens returning to Georgia via IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) program. A majority of these individuals are returnees from EU states.⁷⁵

It is likely that the trend will be maintained in the years to come giving rise to the need for broader reintegration programs aimed at this specific segment of returning migrants. Even though a number of reintegration programs for returned migrants have been running in the country for years already (some of which are being implemented by international organizations), there are remaining concerns that have to be taken care of by the state as a matter of priority. Funded from the state budget, a Program to Support Reintegration of Returned Migrants has been running since 2015, which currently is fully administered by the MoH.⁷⁶ Structural changes carried out within the MoH by the end of 2019 resulted in the creation of a new LEPL - Internally Displaced Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency. In addition, a Reintegration and Integration Division was set up within the Agency, responsible for running the above-mentioned Program. Migrants who returned to Georgia are able to receive a number of services within the Program: healthcare services, funding for social projects, facilitation of vocational education and assistance in temporary housing. With current format and available resources, the program is capable of providing reintegration services to up to 150 beneficiaries a year but with growing number of returnees the Program's capabilities will have to expand in terms of both funding and range of services offered by considering needs of returnees (especially migrant women).

One aspect that plays a role in effective implementation of reintegration policies is the holding of information campaigns and awareness raising events both within and outside the country. According to the various surveys, a large number of returned migrants are not aware of reintegration programs available in Georgia. Hence there is a need for planning and implementing measures to raise awareness of the broad public one the one hand (since a large part of the population have various connections with emigrants) and informing potential beneficiaries of the reintegration opportunities available in the country on the other hand.

⁷³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁷⁶ State Reintegration Program targets Georgian citizens or stateless persons (holders of permanent residence permits in Georgia) who have been outside Georgia for more than 1 year without a legal basis or who have applied for asylum or had enjoyed asylum in a foreign country.

Reintegration opportunities for returned highly-skilled emigrants who have been legally staying in foreign countries are scarce. This category of returning migrants also require a certain extent of social and psychological support to be able to reintegrate into Georgia's socio-cultural environment. Accordingly, the state should take the lead and adopt unified approaches on the policy level for meeting the reintegration needs of all migrants, including those who are high-skilled and have legally stayed abroad.

However, coming up with pragmatic approaches towards reintegration of returning migrants with legal status requires possession of appropriate data. Currently available information on the returnees is a statistical data on only those migrants who stayed abroad without a legal basis. And yet these statistics is fragmentary and is scattered in various internal and external sources. Hence, a methodology of systemic registration of returned migrants should be elaborated, agencies responsible for collecting the relevant data will have to be identified and the consolidated processing of the data should be carried out (including in terms of gender and socio-economic indicators).

According to the surveys, migrants who return to Georgia (especially those who stayed illegally abroad) find themselves vulnerable as they encounter difficult socio-economic conditions. Finding a job is what they need the most. Among other problematic issues are named the need for recognition of education certificate and the need of retraining for matching the local labour market demands. Consequently, a set of effective measures should be implemented in order to support reintegration of returned migrants into the local labour market. These measures *inter-alia* should include facilitation of recognition of formal and informal education, raising awareness of relevant state-offered services and assisting migrants in making use of professional qualification programs as well as programs available for vocational training/retraining.

As it is mentioned in the situation analysis referring legal migration, the emigration from Georgia does mainly target highly developed countries and is mostly prompted by employment and study purposes. The knowledge, skills and experience gained by Georgian nationals in developed countries is a valuable asset for both emigrants and the country of their origin. Consequently, economic and social reintegration of this category of migrants returned to Georgia is beneficial for the country and particularly, for development of the sectors experiencing shortage of human resources having those skills and knowledge.

Goal: *Facilitation of sustainable reintegration of returned migrants*

Objectives:

- Expansion of the Reintegration Program capabilities by considering individual needs for returned migrants' groups;
- Designing unified approaches to reintegration of returned migrants;
- Raising public awareness on reintegration opportunities available in Georgia;
- Improvement of the data on the migrants returned to Georgia;
- Supporting the reintegration of returned migrants into the local labour market.

5. Engagement of diaspora in the country's development

Situation analysis:

Diaspora has an important role in the country's development. This role relates to attracting direct foreign investments, spreading new knowledge and skills, facilitating import and export, and developing tourism. Hence, diaspora is one of the key elements of the 'migration and development' principle. The socio-economic conditions and legal status of representatives of the Georgian diaspora vary by host countries. The extent of their involvement in Georgia's socio-economic and cultural life also differs.⁷⁷ By remittances,⁷⁸ diaspora initiatives,⁷⁹ charity and encouraging trade relations between countries of origin and destination, the Georgian diaspora abroad make a valuable contribution to Georgia's socio-economic development.⁸⁰ Consequently, it is vital to the country's advancement that diaspora capabilities are channeled in a purposeful and effective manner.

Engaging the consolidated, strong and closely connected with own homeland diaspora in state's development is one of the key priorities set forth in the Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia.⁸¹ Turning this aspiration into reality requires establishing a sustained connection with the Georgian diaspora to allow the latter access the state-offered opportunities on the one hand while benefitting the state in pursuing the national interests successfully, on the other hand. The GoG facilitates the implementation of the shared interests of compatriots and diaspora organizations, maintaining ethnic and cultural identity of Georgians abroad, effective performance of diaspora organizations activities, as well as close cooperation with state, non-governmental and international organizations, and the diaspora host countries.

Through its activity, the Georgian diaspora makes a significant contribution in the host countries' development that promotes Georgia's positive image abroad. This in turn, considerably affects Georgia's attractiveness for tourists and increases chances of more visitors coming to the country. Georgia benefits from the good relations between the Georgian diaspora representatives with those of the host countries, by gaining more friends and supporters; thus, the Georgian diaspora plays an enormous role in the public diplomacy. Hereby, expanding contacts of relevant sectoral state agencies with Georgian students and youth abroad and strengthening cooperation for engaging them in various project activities is important, since successful young Georgians residing abroad create networks/groups of Georgia's young foreign friends and therefore can greatly contribute to raising awareness on Georgia through various cultural and educational activities.

Brain drain is an exigent problem for Georgia in the same way as it is for many other developing countries. The issue used to be a major matter of concern in early 1990s. Using the intellectual resource,

⁷⁷ MMP 2017, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/files/migration_profile_2017_eng_final.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁷⁸ In 2019, remittances wired from abroad to Georgia amounted to more than USD 1,733,317,000 making up to 10.5% of country GDP. In 2019 the remittances, originated mostly from Italy, Israel, Greece and USA, played an important role in raising the volume of remittances. See National Bank of Georgia, 2019 Annual Report. https://www.nbg.gov.ge/uploads/publications/annualreport/2020/erovnuli_banki_211020.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁷⁹ MFA's Program to Encourage Diaspora Initiatives. <https://mfa.gov.ge/News/programa-diasporuli-iniciativebis-khelshecyobis-sa.aspx?CatID=5> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁸⁰ "Diaspora initiatives and the Georgian Diaspora", Study report, EPRC/GIZ, 2013. http://eprc.ge/uploads_script/publication/GIZ_Georgian_Diaspora_Study_A4_Book_Print.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁸¹ Georgia's Foreign Policy Strategy for 2019-2022. <https://mfa.gov.ge/getattachment/News/%E2%80%8Bsaqartvelos-mtavrobam-2019-2022-clebis-sagareo-po/2019-2022-clebis-saqartvelos-sagareo-politikis-strategia.pdf.aspx> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

knowledge and experience of Georgian compatriots employed by leading international universities and research centers is much needed for making progress in science and adopting innovations, and for the country's development eventually. Many countries, including Georgia, have been making use of this diaspora resource in the medical field, where doctors well-established in foreign developed countries share their expertise and technologies, which do not exist yet in Georgia, with their compatriots in the home country. Having in mind the importance of the issue and modern technological progress, a unified information database of Georgian diaspora has to be developed and, using the information technology-based methods, collection of diaspora statistics has to improve so that the data is analyzed for better understanding the Georgian diaspora structure. This would allow stakeholder agencies / organizations to better communicate directly with the diaspora representatives and engage them in various thematic projects and programs. In addition, permanent contact should be maintained with the compatriots who are successfully established in various fields of activities in foreign countries; their contribution to the home country has to be recognized, their achievements appreciated and in order to increase the motivation, the distinguished diaspora representatives should be given symbolic prizes and awards so that they are encouraged to continue performing activities for the benefit of Georgia.

Special regard should be given to engaging the Georgian diaspora in Georgia's social and economic development and to facilitating a dignified return of compatriots living abroad to their homeland.

Effective communication with the diaspora also requires constant development and update of information resources such as a diaspora web portal <http://gda.ge/>. The portal's target audience is the Georgian diaspora living in foreign countries as well as Georgia's state agencies, local non-governmental and international organizations, business community and academia. The portal provides access to various information according to the particular fields of interest (state-offered services, doing business, investments, education, science, culture, tourism, etc.) and the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Goal: *Enhancing connections with the Georgian diaspora and creating wider opportunities for the compatriots living abroad to better engage in Georgia's development*

Objectives:

- Supporting compatriots abroad to maintain their national and cultural identity;
- Facilitation of the engagement of high-skill Georgian emigrants abroad in Georgia's development;
- Enhancing the links between the Georgian State and the diaspora representatives abroad and ensuring effective communication between them.

6. Development of the asylum system

Situation analysis:

In the recent years, Georgia implemented important legal and institutional changes aimed at improving the system of international protection. For the purpose of further approximation of Georgia's legal framework with the international norms, a new Law of Georgia on International Protection was elaborated, effective since February 1, 2017. As a result of structural changes carried out in the GoG in July 2018, the MIA was designated as a state agency in charge of international protection related issues.

Number of people seeking asylum in Georgia differs from year to year,⁸² and increasing or decreasing trends do relate to various reasons. Compared to the period of 2016-2018, there was a 25% increase in the number of asylum seekers in Georgia in 2019 hitting a total of 1,237 persons (29% women, 71% men). The range of countries of origin of the asylum seekers also expanded: from 32 countries in 2014 to 51 countries in 2019.

The increase in the number of asylum seekers in 2014-2015 was warranted primarily by the conflicts worldwide and especially in the region. As the current situation analysis shows, one reason that contributed to increased number of asylum seekers is application of effective mechanisms for the detection of foreigners staying illegally in the country.

Rise in the number of asylum applications as well as migration-related global and regional challenges call for further improvement of the asylum procedure and legislation. Initial reception of asylum seekers, access to legal safeguards and services during asylum procedures are the areas in which there is a room for improvement. Some of these issues are basic medical check-ups of asylum seekers and the need for elaborating early identification mechanisms of persons with special needs.

Although a series of important reforms were undertaken as part of the VLAP to better the asylum system and several standards under the EU asylum legislation were incorporated in the Georgian laws, Georgia's national legislation requires further approximation with the EU *acquis* governing asylum, and the related EU directives will have to be transposed into the Georgian legislation in consideration of their reasonability and Georgia's state interests.

Observation of organizational processes shows that Georgia's national asylum system is capable of effectively dealing with up to 1,000 asylum applications per year. If more than this number of applications are received, the system becomes overloaded and is unable to effectively handle the procedures resulting in a backlog of pending applications, impossibility to conduct an accelerated procedure or priority review, etc. In order to cope with this challenge, the institutional framework of the asylum system should be strengthened by the following: 1) Conducting a regular training of asylum dealing personnel; 2) Creating a staff reserve of trained asylum specialists, instituting regular internships and systematizing data on available human resources; 3) Further refining the mechanism of referral of asylum seekers to the appropriate service providers. Hereby, it would be necessary to draft rules on referral procedures and information exchange with a view to improving the referral process and giving asylum seekers better access to available services.

⁸² 1,792 asylum seekers were registered in 2014; 1,449 in 2015; 947 in 2016; 951 in 2017 and 959 in 2018. See the MMPs 2017 and 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Goal: *Developing the international protection system through further improvement of asylum procedures and institutional framework*

Objectives:

- Further improvement of asylum procedures;
- Enhancing the institutional framework of the asylum system and ensuring its sustainability.

7. Integration of foreigners

Situation analysis:

Many countries regard legal (especially temporary) migration as an opportunity for developing its economy. Foreigners residing in such countries are considered a valuable human capital and additional source for attracting finances to the host country's economy.⁸³ However, issues with integration also arise insofar as integration is a required premise for meaningful use of immigrant potential. Therefore, the integration has become an unalienable element of migration policies in many countries and is considered in the context of the migration and development nexus. Rational and coordinated action in the field of integration is important for implementing a meaningful migration policy. At the same time, a pragmatic approach to integration of foreigners residing in the host country and existence of relevant effective mechanisms are closely related to the issues of safeguarding public order and national security of the country.

The measures implemented to facilitate economic development, security and political stability gave an impetus to increased immigration flows in the recent period, turning Georgia into a destination country for migrants to some extent. According to Geostat, there were 42,386 foreign national immigrants in Georgia in 2019 and pursuant to PSDA data, 52,013 (40% women, 60% men) foreign nationals possessed valid residence cards in Georgia by the end of 2019. These data show that immigration to Georgia is increasing and Georgia is attracting a growing number of foreigners. Immigrants in Georgia are mainly concentrated in large and economically active urban locations.⁸⁴ Although the COVID-19 pandemic nearly stopped this process in 2020, it is very likely that immigration processes will re-activate after limitations on the travel of foreign citizens are lifted and transport connections among countries are restored.

The growing immigration flow prompts the state to further improve state programs in the field of integration in the sense of both the number of components covered and the capabilities of the programs, especially considering the specific needs of women, youth, people with disabilities and vulnerable groups. Capacity building and institutional development of the state agencies responsible for the implementation of these integration programs will also have to be carried out. A targeted integration program for persons granted international protection has been operational in Georgia since 2017. By the end of 2019, a new state entity – the LEPL Internally Displaced Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency was established within the MoH. Later, within the Agency, a Reintegration and Integration Division was set up. Currently, the Division is responsible for running both the State Integration Program and the Integration Center. The Program run by the Integration Center comprises 4 components: Georgian language courses, socio-cultural awareness raising, civic education and consultancy services.

In addition to the State Program for Integration of International Protection Holders, the Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking⁸⁵ is noteworthy, which offers victims of trafficking as well as statutory and alleged victims 2 shelters, 5 crisis centers, legal,

⁸³ Data on impact of immigration on Georgia's economy, see the MMP 2019, pp. 65-67, SCMI.

http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁸⁴ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁸⁵ A LEPL under the MoH. <http://atipfund.gov.ge/eng> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

psychological and medical assistance, a one-off state monetary compensation and rehabilitation-reintegration services. In spite of availability of these services, the practice shows that victims/statutory victims of trafficking are reluctant to involve in state-offered rehabilitation and reintegration services.

Even though the Georgian law ensures to foreigners residing in Georgia all the basic rights for integration (such as the rights to education, work, entrepreneurship, healthcare, social protection, residence, acquisition of citizenship, family reunification, etc.),⁸⁶ a comprehensive and consolidated program targeted at this group is still lacking and certain integration-related activities are carried out in a fragmented manner by various sectoral agencies.⁸⁷ Provided that, it is necessary to formulate and agree on a unified approach towards the integration of foreigners who reside in Georgia with various legal statuses on the state policy level, with subsequent articulation of relevant responsibilities of different state agencies and local self-governments. Until the time the said unified approach is developed, thematic researches should be carried out along with identifying the needs of foreigners' groups (including women, youth, persons with disabilities, etc.) living in Georgia with different statuses. Meanwhile the needs and capabilities of the state should be assessed to identify (financial, human and institutional) resources required for integration of foreigners.

According to the latest research findings, the public is not fully aware of advantages immigration and immigrants might have for the country. On the other hand, immigrants (despite the rights afforded to and enjoyed by them) are also insufficiently informed of the need for integration and existing opportunities or do not take interest in these. In either case, ignorance on the part of both the receiving society and the immigrants gives rise to certain difficulties. It also generates unfavorable conditions for immigrants' integration in view of the fact that integration is a two-way process that can only be successful if both the foreigners and the receiving society work together.

The observations show that foreigners as contributors to the growth of country's economy are welcomed by the local society, which is a positive sign and indicative of the fact that efforts should be made to further raise public understanding of the good brought by immigration. This would help the receiving society view the state of affairs adequately, rather than come to judgments based on stereotypes.

Moreover, the studies indicate that the major obstacle to foreigners' integration is lack of knowledge of Georgian language. The issue might have to do with the lack of immigrants' interest in learning the local language but also with the lack of enough opportunities for mastering Georgian.

Asylum seekers and persons granted international protection are able to learn Georgian via various state-funded programs;⁸⁸ however, other (regular) immigrants do not have access to such an opportunity. The only free-of-charge online resource to learn Georgian is the web portal entitled "Georgian as a Foreign Language",⁸⁹ which can only be used by English-speaking users and cannot meet the needs of all groups of foreigners residing in Georgia.

⁸⁶ Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, Chapter VI, <https://matsne.gov.ge/document/view/2278806?publication=12> (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁸⁷ MMP 2019, SCMI. http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=117&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁸⁸ Georgian language courses are run by public schools for persons aged between 6 and 18, and by the LEPL under the MoE Zurab Zhvania Public Administration School for adult asylum seekers and international protection holders.

⁸⁹ http://geofl.ge/#/page_home (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Goal: *Improvement of approaches to the integration of foreigners residing in Georgia and elaboration of integration programs to facilitate the use of their potential for the country's development*

Objectives:

- Development of the State Program for Integration of International Protection Holders and Asylum Seekers;
- Facilitation of the reintegration of victims/statutory victims of THB to the society;
- Designing unified approaches towards immigrants' integration;
- Raise public awareness on immigrants' potential;
- Provide immigrants with wider opportunities for learning state language.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy

Implementation

Implementation of the 2021-2030 Migration Strategy of Georgia will be coordinated by the SCMI,⁹⁰ a body that has successfully implemented two previous MSs (2013-2015 and 2016-2020). The SCMI generally, meets twice a year at the initiative of the Chairperson or one third of its members. The Commission takes decisions by a simple majority of votes of the members present. In case of equal distribution of votes, the Chairperson's vote shall be the casting vote.

The SCMI endorses the draft of the Strategy, formalizing this decision in the form of protocol record, and submits it to the GoG for approval. A log-frame accompanying the MS document in the form of its Annex 1 constitutes indivisible part of the Strategy.

The MS will be implemented in compliance with the basic principles introduced by the Ordinance # 629 of the GoG dated 20 December 2019 “On Approving the Rule on the Elaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents”, and its annexes.

The implementation of the MS will be funded from the state budget and will also be financially supported by donor organizations and partner countries. In regard to sufficiency of available resources to achieve the MS goals and objectives, this correlation is secured on account of the fact that the goals and objectives prescribed by the MS are general enough by their nature to enable the involved parties to implement them to the extent allowed by the existing state-allocated resources and donor support.

Annual APs that are approved by the SCMI are a primary instrument of the Strategy implementation. The APs are drafted by the SCMI's Migration Lab⁹¹ in participation with a representative of the Policy Planning Unit of the Administration of GoG. In addition to the SCMI MAs, partner international and non-governmental organizations⁹² and other public bodies also take part in the elaboration and implementation of APs. The involvement of these organizations in the implementation of the Strategy is reflected in the annual APs, where, along with the agency responsible for carrying out the activity, the relevant partner organization is to be indicated on the basis of prior consultations.

The MS can be amended according to the rules established by Georgian legislation. Based on the MA initiative, the SCMI is authorized to discuss and endorse proposed amendments to the MS AP.

If an agency (body) involved in the implementation of the MS is dismissed, reorganized and/or merged with another agency (body), its legal successor agency (body) will continue implementing the relevant tasks prescribed by the Strategy.

For the purpose of informing the stakeholders and broad public, the MS APs, upon approval, are published on the SCMI website: www.migration.commission.ge

⁹⁰ Ordinance of GoG #314, 13.10.2010 “On Establishing a State Commission on Migration Issues and Approving its Statute”, http://migration.commission.ge/files/scmi_ordinance_eng_as_of_10.08.2018_.pdf (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁹¹ An expert-level WG that within the framework of the SCMI is responsible for coordinating the elaboration and implementation of migration strategies and corresponding APs. Activities of the Migration Laboratory is coordinated by the SCMI Secretariat: http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=56&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

⁹² A list of MAs and the partner organizations of the SCMI is accessible at the Commission's website: http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=59&clang=1 (accessed: 08.12.2020).

Monitoring

The AP will be regularly monitored to ensure that the outcomes envisaged by the MS objectives achieved and the activities prescribed by the AP are performed as scheduled. The SCMI Secretariat will monitor the implementation of the MS and AP. In order to effectively monitor the AP, the SCMI's online monitoring and reporting platform will be used, which was introduced during the implementation of the previous 2016-2020 MS, having transformed the entire monitoring and reporting process into an electronic realm. It should be noted also that once the Administration of GoG activates a unified electronic system of policy planning and coordination, the entire process of the MS monitoring will be transferred to this e-system, which will incorporate all components of the monitoring process.

The SCMI Secretariat requests agencies responsible for the implementation of the AP to provide information on the progress of implementation of activities every 3 months, and based on this information, prepares quarterly progress reports. The level of progress achieved in the course of implementation of activities will be assessed and relevant statuses will be assigned according to the Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook, Chapter 7 (monitoring guidelines). In addition, every implementing agency must designate focal points who will have full knowledge of their agencies' activities and the responsibility to timely furnish the SCMI Secretariat with information on the activities implemented.

The SCMI Secretariat will use the quarterly reports to prepare an annual monitoring report presenting information on the outputs of AP activities and the progress on the implementation of MS objectives. Annual monitoring reports with respective recommendations will be submitted to the SCMI, and, if necessary, to the GoG. The annual AP monitoring report is prepared within 60 calendar days counted from the end of each following year after the start of AP implementation.

Evaluation

A systemic evaluation of the MS will be undertaken to learn whether the Strategy goals are achieved and to study the long-term outcomes of its objectives. The evaluation will also focus on understanding the MS's impact on the development of sectoral directions and the gaps occurred during the implementation process.

The evaluation of the MS will be conducted in two stages. An interim evaluation will be carried out in the first half of 2026 when the target values envisaged by the MS log-frame and related data have been fully available. A final evaluation will take place at the final stage of completion of the policy cycle, but not later than first half of 2031. Extent of evaluation will depend on the availability of human and financial resources at the relevant period of time. The evaluation of MS may also be conducted using internal resources by the SCMI Secretariat or by means of a mixed methodology in which case the Secretariat will be assisted by independent experts or organizations specializing in required areas.

Reports produced as a result of interim and final evaluations will be discussed and agreed with the agencies responsible for MS implementation, approved by the SCMI and submitted to the GoG.