

THE MIGRATION STRATEGY OF GEORGIA

2013–2015

1. Introduction

Migration is a global phenomenon and today's challenge, which has a great impact on a country's social-economic development, its security and stability. Considering the above-mentioned and Georgia's geo-political location, managing migration processes is one of the country's top priorities.

In the context of migration, Georgia is a country of origin, transit and destination. In the course of recent years, a foundation has been laid for the legislative reforms (economics, education, police, fight with organized crime and corruption, care for touristic infrastructure etc.) that have formed relatively stable social-economic conditions in the state. Accordingly, after a negative index of the years 2006–2008, in the years 2009–2011 the index of net migration was positive. Apart from this, certain measures have been taken to protect immigrants' rights; in particular a format of the State Commission on Migration Issues will be applied for the elaboration of the labor migration policy.

Furthermore, the State made significant steps towards the prevention of irregular migration through introducing specially established institutions and mechanisms. After introducing the modern infrastructure, effective management of border protection has been improved, highly secure personal identification and travelling documents has also been introduced (second generation biometrical passport and protected electronic ID card), and a system for fighting against trafficking in human beings/smuggling have also been developed and implemented. Georgia has joined the list of 32 countries, which are the most successful in fighting trafficking¹. In addition, to expand opportunities for legal emigration, cooperation with EU and other countries are being reinforced. Special attention is paid to the public awareness raising campaign on threats and risks that accompany irregular migration.

¹Trafficking in Persons Report 2012, US Department of State

Taking into account the challenges of migration, the state is step by step shifting from a liberal visa regime to introduction of a balanced policy. This change has been necessitated by unarranged migration processes caused by extremely open visa policy. In addition, on the way to getting closer to the EU, appropriate and reasonable management of migration processes is gaining greater importance. Management of migration processes should be carried out with the help of suitable visa procedures. At the same time, it should be taken into account, that development of tourism and creating favorable environment for investments are priorities for Georgia's government. Besides, in the context of modern day challenges and in the framework of a dialogue currently underway with the EU on visa regime, effective management of migration is gaining significant weight.

The State has determined main priorities which would facilitate employment growth and prevent irregular migration. State dimensions that support regional development, development of tourism infrastructure, agricultural development, attract foreign investments and create favorable business climate are already reflected in various state strategy documents and action plans of concrete state units.

The Government of Georgia aims to manage all aspects of migration processes according to the interests of the Georgian citizens and the international community. The tasks envisioned in the Strategy will be implemented through close cooperation with respective parliamentary committees in full compliance with existing gender policy and will ensure involvement of civil society, representatives of academic field and other interested parties. The activities will follow the path for further integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Activities will be implemented to facilitate mobility through circular migration or other mechanisms. Considerable attention will be attached to the country development that is driven through positive effect of the migration process. Reintegration of Georgian citizens will be supported. Efficient activities will be implemented within the strategy to combat irregular migration and trafficking. Further activities will be planned to support the development of the system dealing with asylum and persons with humanitarian status and the integration of refugees.

For the effective management of migration processes, it is important to develop the institutional mechanisms, which imply the establishment of competence based effective institutions within of respective responsible state agencies, which through the coordination with the State Commission on Migration Issues, will be responsible for the implementation of state migration policy, managing and regulation of migration processes, application of international instruments defined by the “Migration Strategy of Georgia” and implementation of functions described in the Strategy.

2. The purpose and principles of the Strategy

2.1. The Purpose of the Migration Strategy

The purpose of the Migration Strategy is to improve the management of migration processes, which implies providing of national security, fighting irregular migration and human trafficking, ensuring the defense of migrants’ rights and their social protection and state development through positive impact of migration. Goal of the following Strategy is considering national interests and international best practices is to develop a state policy in the migration sphere. The above mentioned will contribute to fighting irregular migration and human trafficking, protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, managing migration processes according to the interests of the society and deepening international collaboration in the migration sphere.

Activities covered in this document will help to direct migration processes management for the development of the State, to protect migrants’ rights and ensure their social protection. The activities envisioned in the Strategy will be implemented through full consideration of migrants’ rights and fundamental freedoms.

2.2 The Strategy is based on the following main principles:

- Priority Role of the State in managing migration processes;
- Rule of law;
- Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms with particular attention to non-refoulement obligation deriving from international refugee and human rights law;
- Zero tolerance for trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants across the state border;
- Deepen international and regional cooperation, including cooperation with the European Union and favorably consider accession to international instruments that may supplement standards governing the state migration system;
- Transparency;

- Abolition of all discrimination according to race, nationality, language, religion, gender, ethnical, political, social or any other signs;
- Due fulfillment of the international agreements;
- Cooperation with international regional and non-governmental organizations;
- Fighting against racism and xenophobia ;

Support the fulfillment of political and economic priorities of Georgia.

3 Institutional and Legislative Framework, International Instruments

3.1 Description of the main institutions, which participate in migration management at the time of the Strategy approval.

President of Georgia

In accordance with the Constitution of Georgia and other legal acts, the President of Georgia decides on issues related to granting Georgian citizenship through naturalization and terminating it, as well as granting asylum.

Government of Georgia

Government of Georgia approves the rules of issuance, extension and termination of Georgian visas, determines the cases of visa free entry for foreigners. The government of Georgia is also authorized to consider the following issues and decide on them: residence permits, refoulement of foreigners and approval of the procedures for determination a legal status of a stateless person.

The Legal Entity of Public Law (LEPL) - Agency of Public Service Development under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (hereinafter – the Agency)

The Agency together with the Ministry of Justice of Georgia is responsible for issuance of residence permits, determination of a status of stateless person, issuance of temporary identification cards to the persons determined by a Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, it is also responsible for providing official travel documents to stateless persons, refugees and persons with a humanitarian status. In addition, the Agency is authorized to issue passports and IDs to the citizens of Georgia, to run unified civil register and ensure access for corresponding agencies and organizations to relevant information according to the levels of

access and needs. At the same time, the Agency files the reports concerning the issues of obtaining and termination of Georgian citizenship.

Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia is responsible for forming state policy on the issues of internally displaced persons, refugees, persons with humanitarian status, asylum seekers, repatriated persons, victims of natural disaster and returned Georgian migrants. The Ministry has competences in processing asylum applications, registering asylum seekers, granting refugee and humanitarian statuses, providing temporary accommodation for asylum seekers and supporting the integration process of persons with refugee or humanitarian statuses, coordinating the integration of refugees and returning Georgian migrants into the society.

Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

Relevant subunits of the Ministry are involved in management of migration processes. It ensures control over and assistance of legal movement at the state border and fight against illegal migration. The Ministry also ensures that illegal aliens are found, detained and placed in temporary placement centers when the law so requires in defined cases. The Ministry decides on refoulement of aliens from Georgia, directs proper functioning of the placement centers and controls border check points through: a) checking passports and travel documents of both aliens and Georgian citizens; b) issuing visas at the border of Georgia in exceptional cases, and c) safeguarding Georgia's legal regime. In addition, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is an authorized body responsible for procedural and organizational issues concerning readmission agreement.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for enforcement legal requirements related to migration on land as well as marine borders of Georgia. Preventing and eliminating transborder crime, illegal migration and human trafficking, obstructing inflow of drugs, arms, explosive materials and equipment, smuggled goods, nuclear and radioactive substances fall under competence of the Ministry. The latter carries out other necessary measures envisaged by current legislation.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, through diplomatic missions and consulates abroad, keeps consular registration of Georgians residing outside Georgia, issues certificates for returning to Georgia and Georgian visas. The Ministry is actively involved in the implementation of

readmission and visa facilitation agreements through participating in joint committee meetings. Georgian diplomatic representatives and consulates abroad promote the information Georgian citizens residing abroad irrespective of state on programs for voluntary return and support victims of trafficking in human beings. Georgian diplomatic representatives and consulates abroad in the frames of delegated authority carry out different actions related to registration of civil acts and issuance of IDs and receive applications on citizenship related issues in order to forward them later to the PSDA.

The Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration

The Office of the State Minister coordinates implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan within Georgia-European Union Cooperation, including issues related to Freedom, Security and Justice; and managing multilateral cooperation and related migration issues within the European Union's "Eastern Partnership". It also coordinates the issues of Georgia's co-operation with the European Union member states in the framework of European Union "Mobility Partnership" Initiative.

The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues

The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues is responsible for deepening relations with Georgians residing abroad and supports them to maintain the national identity. In case of return, the Office creates favorable conditions to ensure integration of those persons into the society. Taking into consideration the above mentioned the Office of the State Minister is responsible for the following issues within its competence:

- It acquires and maintains a united database with contact details of Georgians and Diaspora Organizations abroad;
- It introduces and shares the unified educational program to Georgian educational centers abroad and ensures their compatibility with the Georgian Education System;
- It ensures the preservation of Georgian cultural identity among its compatriots abroad;
- It maintains contact with Georgian diasporas residing abroad by introducing a compatriot status based on the Georgian Law on Diaspora Organizations and Compatriots Living Abroad;
- It provides interested persons with information about current economic and investment trends in the country.

State Commission on Migration Issues

The State Commission on Migration Issues is a consultative body, which has competences in the formulation of the National Strategy on Migration, the improvement of migration management and designing proposals within the framework of European Neighborhood Policy. The Commission is entitled to prepare proposals for the Government regarding migration management and amendments to legislation as well as recommendations on international agreements. In applying its functions the Commission can request as from Georgian institutions as well as from international organizations, the other countries' structures and establish thematic working groups.

3.2. National Legislation

An overview of key legislation

The Georgian Constitution provides that “everyone legally residing within the territory of Georgia shall, throughout the territory of the country, have the right to freedom of movement and freedom to choose his/her residence” and “shall be free to leave Georgia”.²

It also provides that “foreign citizens and stateless persons residing in Georgia shall have the rights and obligations equal to the rights and obligations of citizens of Georgia with exceptions envisaged by the Constitution and law”.³

Also, “On the basis of international agreements governing labour relations, the state shall protect the labour rights of the citizens of Georgia abroad”.⁴ This provision aims to strengthen the prevention of human trafficking, slavery and exploitation.

Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship.

This law defines basic principles of Georgian citizenship, determines legal status of Georgian citizens and grounds for obtaining Georgian citizenship and termination thereof.

²Constitution of Georgia, Article 22, Chapter II (*adopted on August 24, 1995, last update effective from December 27, 2006*)

³ Ibid. article 47

⁴ Ibid. article 30

Law of Georgia on Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons.

This law defines legal grounds and mechanisms for the aliens' entry and stay in Georgia, transit through and departure from Georgia; it also determines rights and obligations of the aliens and stateless persons and the procedures of their refoulement from Georgia; the law clarifies scope of competence and responsibilities of those state agencies which are involved in the refoulement process.

Law of Georgia on “Refugees and Humanitarian Statuses”

The Law regulates the granting of refugee status and humanitarian status and establishes the competent authority for decision-making on issues related to refugee status and humanitarian status.

Law on Georgian State Border

The Law establishes Georgian border policy, defines the state border on land, in internal and territorial maritime belt, air space, the special territorial zones and on the territorial shelf. The law also regulates the border crossings.

Criminal Code of Georgia

The Criminal Code of Georgia criminalizes trafficking in human beings, smuggling of migrants and irregular crossing of state borders.

Law of Georgia on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

The Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons establishes the legal status of victims of trafficking and ensures legal and social guarantees of their protection.

3.3. International Cooperation

European Union-Georgia Relations

The basis and a legal foundation for European Union (EU)-Georgia relations is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA), which was concluded in 1996 and entered into force in 1999. The PCA regulates cooperation in the areas of political dialogue, trade, investment, economy, legislation and culture.

In 2003 the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was established to support process of political, economic and cultural convergence between European Union and its neighbouring countries.

The European Neighbourhood Policy has been applied to Georgia since 2004. In November 14, 2006 the ENP Action Plan between the EU and Georgia was signed, which reflects strategic targets and priorities of cooperation including justice, freedom and security related issues. Georgia is successfully following the reforms set down by the above mentioned Action Plan.

In November 2007, a Georgia-EU cooperation Sub Committee for Justice, Liberty and Security issues was established.

On May 7, 2009 at the Prague Summit a European Union Eastern Partnership was initiated and a respective joint declaration was signed. The Eastern Partnership is a joint effort of the European Union and its European neighbouring partner countries which aims to deepen political dialogue between the European Union and its neighbouring countries and intensify economic integration, energy security and to develop contacts among people.

The EU Eastern Partnership includes cooperation in bilateral and multilateral formats. Multilateral cooperation format creates further possibilities for deepening of cooperation on migration issues. Georgia implements bilateral and multilateral road-maps of “Eastern Partnership”, where among of other issues the reforms in the migration related fields are represented.

In November, 2009 a Joint Declaration on a Mobility Partnership between the 16 European Union member states and Georgia was signed. The Mobility Partnership Initiative aims to combat irregular migration and to support legal migration. Accordingly it implies cooperation on migration related issues such as labour migration, readmission, reintegration, diaspora, secured documentation, labour market and recognition of professional skills. The development of cooperation within the Mobility Partnership initiative will support legal employment of Georgian citizens in the EU, also through so called “Circular Migration”.

It is among Georgian Government’s priorities to develop bilateral cooperation in order to benefit from circular migration possibilities with EU member states. Circular migration will ensure both, the prevention of intellectual resources’ drain and their inefficient use in Georgia. It is important to deepen cooperation within the EU 2011 initiative on “Global Approach to Migration and Mobility” in the following directions: improvement of legal migration management and mobility facilitation, prevention and decreasing of irregular migration, improvement of the interrelation between migration and development.

The EU-Georgia Readmission Agreement

The EU-Georgia Readmission Agreement sets out clear procedures on principles that should be used for the readmission of people who are irregularly residing on the territory of certain country. The Agreement is based on the principles set out in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The EU-Georgia Agreements on Visa Facilitation and Readmission

On March 1, 2011, the Visa Facilitation Agreement and Readmission Agreement between Georgia and the European Union entered into force. The Visa Facilitation Agreement sets out conditions which simplifies for certain categories of Georgian citizens obtaining visas for European Union Member States reduces or abolishes visa fees and introduces visa free movement for diplomats. It is among Georgian Government's priorities to support further liberalization of visa policy between Georgia and the EU.

In June 2012 the EU and Georgia launched a co-operation in the framework of "Visa Dialogue", with final goal of liberalisation of visa related procedures and visa-free movement with EU. Within the "Visa Dialogue" Georgia will implement two phases based action plan, which mainly would include secured mobility and human rights related issues.

4. Main directions of the Migration Strategy

4.1. Legal Migration

Promoting legal migration is one of the main directions of the Migration Strategy of Georgia. The Government of Georgia will support the further development of opportunities for developing legal emigration and immigration through raising public awareness on legal migration opportunities and threats and risks of irregular migration. The above mentioned will support the prevention of irregular migration.

4.1.1. Assist citizens of Georgia through the legal emigration

Development of legal emigration mechanisms is important, not only for creating of opportunities for legal movement, but also for the prevention of irregular migration. In the past several years, Georgia took significant steps for the support of legal emigration. Joint border management has been elaborated. From 2010, Georgia started to issue secured and protected biometric passports.

This increased the level of credibility of Georgian documentation abroad. In order to promote legal emigration, the Government of Georgia will focus on three main directions for action: development of opportunities for the temporary legal employment abroad, promoting educational exchange programs and raising public awareness on legal possibilities of emigration.

4.1.1.1 Temporary legal employment abroad

The Government of Georgia is devoted to creating a legal framework/mechanism to ensure positive effect of temporary legal labour emigration. Although the State does not intend to directly interfere in the selection process of the persons for temporary labour migration, it will set rules and conditions to ensure transparent, fair and smooth flow of the processes.

By promoting legal employment, the Government creates a basis for providing social security and protecting human rights of labour migrants.

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, it is essential to conclude agreements on circular migration with concrete countries, and administration of respective legislative and organizational measures for their fulfilment for the development of temporary legal employment possibilities.

Also the conclusion of such agreements and research into possibilities will ensure the development of professional skills of the labour force and their social security.

In order to benefit from the enhanced know-how and skills of Georgian labour migrants upon their return to Georgia, the state will develop mechanisms to promote their integration into the local labour market, in accordance with the priorities as formulated in the State Strategy on Employment.

4.1.1.2 Supporting educational exchange programs

For the purpose of the State's development, it is important to share experience, knowledge and cultural values of different countries. To this end, fostering study and gaining knowledge by Georgian citizens abroad is State's priority.

In order to achieve this goal, it is crucial to promote the development of educational exchange programs, implying deepening relations between educational institutions and fostering creation of

joint programs. Also developing and enhancing/broadening scholarship programs, which would enable Georgian citizens to receive education and deepen experience abroad.

The educational programmes will be identified with the view of filling existing gaps of skills and qualification at the national labor market and ensuring efficient employment of graduates of these programmes after their return to the country

4.1.1.3 Diaspora's involvement in the country's development process

Promoting emigration is important because it supports freedom of movement and it is considered as one of the tools for self-realization and human development. Therefore, the diaspora's involvement in the State's development process is very important. In order to support their involvement, the following activities will be carried out: using Diaspora's intelligence resources to exchange knowledge and experience, encouraging their investments by raising awareness on business environment and business start-up, and providing information on the efficient use of remittances.

4.1.1.4 Raising public awareness

Raising public awareness is an effective tool for promoting legal migration as well as for preventing irregular emigration. For the purpose of attaining the mentioned objectives, the Government will inform citizens both on existing opportunities, general rules, procedures and on legal emigration, as well as possible risks related to the irregular emigration. This will be ensured by different projects, and also by the coordination of different information campaigns implied by international projects.

Promoting Legal Immigration

In order to effectively manage migration flows in Georgia authorities were forced to revise liberal visa regime and the legal grounds for entry and stay in Georgia for aliens. Georgian government has already carried out significant measures and is currently planning further actions to support legal migration and meet international obligations.

4.1.2.1 Creating a unified migration data system

For the effective management of immigration processes and decision making it is important to collect the data on the status of migrants. Therefore, a unified migration system will be established, which will ensure the collection of data, dispersed within different state institutions.

The system will have the capacity to assume migration trends based on statistical analysis, thus supporting the elaboration and implementation of the respective policy.

4.1.2.2. Revision of Legislation and Legislative Amendments

On 5 March, 2014, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a new Law on Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons which was developed by the State Commission on Migration Issues. Enactment of a new law was dictated by some circumstances, that is, visa policy had to be revised and migration processes required better and effective management. On 30 April, 2014 the Parliament of Georgia adopted another organic law on Citizenship of Georgia developed by the same State Commission on Migration Issues. This law too was a response to existing challenges and practical needs and besides, issues concerning citizenship of Georgia needed new regulations. Finally, as a signatory to the UN Convention on Reduction of Statelessness (1961), Georgia had to meet its requirements.

4.1.2.3 Improving the service and infrastructure for immigrants

Improving services for foreigners as well as informational or other type of infrastructure is very important for Georgia's further economic development. Therefore, additional efforts will be focused on creation favorable conditions for legal immigration, by means of improving public services and relevant infrastructure.

Text: 4.2 Irregular migration

Fight against irregular migration is an important priority of the migration policy of Georgian government. In this respect, basic legislative and normative acts are being revised and effective refoulement mechanisms conforming with international standards are being introduced. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has been selected as a main agency responsible for fighting against irregular migration which includes setting up and managing temporary placement centers for illegal migrants, discovering those migrants who stay in the country without legal grounds and treating them appropriately.

The state will continue carrying out relevant measures to prevent irregular migration and fight against it.

4.2.1 Irregular Emigration

In order to combat, eradicate and prevent irregular emigration, the Government will take the following measures:

4.2.1.1 Strengthening the fight against trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants

The Government of Georgia will continue efforts towards further improving anti-trafficking measures and integrated border management. The activities will be carried through the Inter-agency Cooperation Council on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings; respective mechanisms for the detection of irregular emigration will be elaborated and developed.

4.2.1.2 Raising public awareness

One of the factors supporting irregular emigration is the lack of awareness about the challenges that follow this process. Accordingly, for effective combating with irregular emigration, it is important to carry out an information campaign about the risks of irregular emigration and to introduce possibilities of legal emigration. This process will help individuals to make an information based decision, to realize existing legal alternatives, which is, in the same time carries a prevention character.

4.2.2 Improving possibilities in the sphere of combating irregular immigration of aliens

Managing migration and combating irregular immigration is a priority issue for the Government of Georgia. Irregular migration often threatens the human rights and becomes the cause of various crimes, such as trafficking in human beings and human smuggling, also irregular state border crossing of migrants. Taking into consideration international legal instruments applied in this field and the country's strive for integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures where managing migration and combating irregular immigration is among the issues of high importance, the Government of Georgia considers the initiation of the following issues:

4.2.2.1. Institutional Development

Developing institutional mechanisms is of utmost importance in fight against irregular migration. It means increasing productive cooperation among authorized state agencies and international organizations. Georgian state agencies will increase their capacities to detect illegal migrants in the territory of Georgia and return them to the country of origin (with emphasis on voluntary return). Modern informational technologies and computer programs will be used to achieve these goals.

Unified system of migration data will play a significant role which will enable authorized agencies to monitor both legal and irregular migration.

4.2.2.2 Improving inter-agency and international cooperation

For the purposes of preventing and combating irregular immigration, inter-agency and international cooperation will be strengthened by improving existing cooperation procedures or creating new procedures, developing cooperation with respective authorities from other countries and concluding and implementing readmission agreements and their implementation.

4.2.2.3 Undertaking preventive measures

As a part of general prevention, public awareness campaigns are one of the most important tools in combating irregular migration. In this regard, the necessary information on legal entry, stay and work in Georgia, will be disseminated abroad by the diplomatic and consular representations of Georgia. In terms of planning and implementation of prevention activities, it is also necessary to identify the countries of the risk, as the sources of irregular immigration flows.

4.3 Improvement of the asylum system, integration process of refugees' and individuals with humanitarian status' according to the international standards

The Government of Georgia expresses its readiness to implement all necessary measures necessary for protecting the rights of refugees, persons with humanitarian status and asylum seekers and in accordance with 1951 UN Convention related to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol related to the Status of Refugees.

4.3.1 Developing the legislative and institutional framework for the asylum system

The State plans to improve the legislative framework for the asylum system, as well as creation of effective institutional mechanism for dealing with new challenges. According to the Georgian law on Refugee and Humanitarian Status the procedures and standards will be revised in order to support the development of national asylum system. In the mentioned field, the Government will cooperate with international and non-governmental organizations to guarantee an interagency cooperation.

4.3.2 Developing a system for effective acquiring information about countries of origin

In order to make an adequate decision on asylum-seekers, it is important to analyze the countries of origin. To ensure this, in the frames of corresponding agencies a structural unit will be established, which will be responsible for gaining, processing, analyzing and constant updating of information on country of origin.

4.3.3 Further development of the mechanism for the integration of persons with the refugee and humanitarian statuses

The Government of Georgia will continue to carry out necessary steps for the integration of individuals with refugee and humanitarian statuses into the Georgian society. In this respect actions will be carried out to support employment, education and healthcare after leaving receiving centres.

4.3.3.1 Employment, education and healthcare

One of the key elements for achieving the integration of persons with refugee and humanitarian statuses is their involvement in the process of labor market and education as well as facilitating their access to healthcare in accordance with Georgian legislation. This process is supported by awareness raising on existing possibilities and practical assistance provided. The Government will facilitate for this category access to the labor market by ensuring vocational training, facilitating the study of the Georgian language and culture, and raising their knowledge on Georgian legislation. The mechanisms for the recognition of the education gained abroad will also be implemented.

4.3.3.2 Assistance after leaving the reception center

The integration process of refugees and individuals holding humanitarian status after leaving the reception centres will continue under the supported of the competent body. Support offered by the Georgian Government implies offering them accommodation facilities, granting social aids provided by the Georgian Legislation for this target group and facilitating inclusion in income generating programs of UNHCR.

The state will also gradually develop mechanisms to promote return to countries of origin, with the emphasis on voluntary return, for those foreigners whose asylum claim has been rejected, as well as other migrants who wish to return to their country of origin.

4.4 Supporting dignified return and reintegration of Georgian citizens

4.4.1 Ensuring the implementation of international agreements' provisions and national legislation related to the return of Georgian citizens

The Constitution of Georgia and other legal acts lay out the State's obligations for the protection of its citizens' interests regardless of their place of residence. The existing, various international agreements oblige Georgia to take responsibility for ensuring the return of its citizens illegally residing in other countries.

In this regard, emphasis should be given to close cooperation with the relevant entities in the countries of destination. One of the aims of Georgian Government is to conclude readmission agreements and readmission implementing protocols with other countries as well as concluding readmission protocols with EU member states. Respective agencies will further develop procedures based on the readmission agreements by improving the identification process and by establishing an information database on citizens of Georgia being returned under the readmission terms.

4.4.2 Reintegration of Georgian citizens

The Government of Georgia expresses its readiness to support dignified reintegration of returning Georgian migrants. In order to achieve successful implementation of the set objectives, the Government of Georgia will guarantee the strengthening capacities, and enhancing inter-cooperation among institutions involved, and developing legislative framework where necessary. The measures will be taken both within the state and outside its borders to increase the level of information of Georgian citizens regarding reintegration programs.

4.4.2.1 Enhancing coordination and strengthening capacities among the state institutions involved in the reintegration process and the development of a legislative framework

Based on the results of the joint evaluation and in response to the new challenges the relevant legislative framework will be elaborated if necessary.

The Government will support increasing institutional abilities of the agencies, which participate in the working group on reintegration. Activities will be carried out in order to involve local self-government authorities in the reintegration process.

Cooperation between international and non-government organizations, which work on the issues of reintegration of returnees, will be strengthened through coordination of the working group on

reintegration. The above mentioned eliminates duplication of the projects and at the same time, helps to gain maximum profit from the allocated financial resources for the beneficiaries.

4.4.2.2 Increasing awareness on reintegration

In order to increase awareness on reintegration possibilities, the Government of Georgia disseminates information on existing opportunities among Georgian citizens with the involvement of the Georgian diplomatic missions, Diaspora organisations and the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues.

Georgian competent authorities cooperate fruitfully with the respective authorities of destination countries and international organizations which are involved in the implementation of readmission, refoulement and voluntary return procedures.

Georgian competent authorities will cooperate with destination countries' authorities involved in the implementation of readmission, refoulement and voluntary return procedures. This will ensure that the Georgian citizens are provided with information on reintegration programs in Georgia.

4.4.2.3 Ensuring the recognition of professional skills and education gained abroad

A key element in achieving sustainable reintegration of Georgian returning migrants is insuring their access to the labour market. In this respect a key role is played by evaluation and recognition of professional skills and education gained abroad. To this end the Government of Georgia will establish specific mechanisms. Through the Georgian diplomatic representations and consular services abroad, also Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues, the Georgian citizens will be permanently provided with information on projects dealing with voluntarily return to Georgia and further reintegration. The Government of Georgia supports the establishment of respective conditions for the return of Georgian citizens to Georgia.

5. The Mechanisms of Implementation

The Strategy on Migration adopted by the State Commission on Migration Issues will be submitted to the Government of Georgia for the approval.

The Government of Georgia expresses its readiness to elaborate and support specific programs and to ensure their successful implementation with the participation of state institutions, partner countries, international and non-government sector representatives. The implementation of aims defined by the Migration Strategy, will be carried out by:

- Ensuring co-funding through allocation of the respective funds from the State Budget;
- Actively engaging with partner countries, international donor organizations and non-governmental sector in order to obtain financial and technical support.

The State Commission on Migration Issues has been designated to coordinate the implementation process of the Strategy. The Commission will be responsible to review and approve the Action Plan, submitted to it by the Migration Strategy Working Group. The Commission is also authorized to review and approve the annual report of the Strategy implementation.

The Migration Strategy Action Plan will be elaborated by the Strategy Working Group. The Secretariat of the Commission will be responsible for preparing periodical reports on implementation of Migration Strategy and respective Action Plan based on the coordination between competent bodies.