

*STATE COMMISSION ON MIGRATION ISSUES*

**Migration Strategy of Georgia  
2016-2020**

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State Commission  
on Migration Issues

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# I. Introduction

In recent years Georgia's involvement in the global migration processes has grown significantly. Migration is becoming an increasingly important aspect in shaping country's socio-economic, cultural, political and demographic outlook. Efficient management of migration is one of the preconditions to the security and long-term stability of the country; it also represents an essential instrument for EU approximation and facilitates the application of migration's potential in social and economic development. Hence, ensuring well-planned policy development and steady improvement of migration management's efficiency is one of the priorities for the Government of Georgia.

The Migration Strategy 2016-2020 is the third strategic document for Georgia defining migration policy. The first document - the Concept of the Migration Policy of Georgia - was developed in 1997 and approved by the President of Georgia; the document summarized the vision of the state regarding the regulation of immigration processes, international protection, and internal migration. The concept mainly had a declaratory character and lacked implementation mechanism in the form of an action plan. The Migration Strategy 2013-2015 (approved by the government) and its Action Plan laid down the basis for the institution building in the area of migration management; important steps were made for improving the legislative framework and its approximation to EU Acquis. Currently, there is an increasing drive, in cooperation with the EU member and other states, to increase the basis for legal migration, and prevent illegal migration, and transnational and trans-boundary organised crime. A special emphasis is given to the development of mechanisms facilitating return and reintegration of Georgian citizens, protection of the rights and integration of persons with refugee or humanitarian status, and asylum seekers in Georgia. In order to effectively address contemporary challenges and fulfil international obligations, effective measures are being taken to improve the existing system of fighting illegal migration. A Unified Migration Analytical System is being developed in order to facilitate informed decision-making in migration management and the policy planning process. The present Strategy builds on the progress made in the recent years, takes into account the existing challenges, and develops mechanisms for addressing them.

The preliminary results of the 2014 General Population Census confirm that the population of Georgia has decreased by approximately 600,000 persons compared to the 2002 General Population Census results, and amounted to 3,729,500 persons as of January 1, 2015.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the declining Georgian population is one of the most important challenges that must be included into the priorities of the Migration Strategy, with special emphasis needing to be placed on the return of Georgian citizens residing abroad and supporting their reintegration.

In the migration management process, it is important to carry out policies that harness the potential of the diaspora and migrants for the socio-economic development of the country. In order to contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic development, it is also essential to support the

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<sup>1</sup> National Statistics Office of Georgia, key demographic indicators.  
[http://geostat.ge/?action=page&p\\_id=151&lang=geo](http://geostat.ge/?action=page&p_id=151&lang=geo)

integration of immigrants in Georgian society and also the sustainable reintegration of returned migrants.

One of the cornerstones of efficient planning, coordination and implementation of migration policy is a well-developed labour market infrastructure. It is crucial to carry out regular labour market supply and demand studies and incorporate study results in the development of vocational training and higher education planning.

In the light of approximation to EU standards and efficient management of the migration processes it is important to further increase the awareness of specific target groups of society on the visa liberalisation process between Georgia and the EU, on the opportunities of legal migration as well as the threats and risks of illegal migration.

The present Strategy was designed by the Migration Strategy Working Group operating under the State Commission on Migration Issues.<sup>2</sup> During the process of the Strategy development, the working group evaluated the state of the progress of 2013-2015 Migration Strategy; defined main thematic directions of the new Strategy; and undertaken thematic situation analyses. Based on the results of these analyses, up to 20 Working Group meetings in different formats were held to discuss and agree upon the strategic goals. As a final stage, the draft of the Strategy document was shared with relevant international and local non-governmental organisations and the academic community to solicit their feedback. The comments received from the civil society organisations were discussed by the Working Group and, to a large extent, incorporated in the present document. The designing and drafting process of the Migration Strategy document was coordinated by the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues.

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<sup>2</sup> The Working Group was comprised of the representatives of the 13 state agencies sitting on the Commission, the Public Defender's Office, and the State Security and Crisis Management Council.

## **II. The vision, principles and target groups of the Strategy**

### **(a) The long-term vision of the Migration Strategy of Georgia**

The goal of the migration policy of Georgia is to create, by 2020, a legislative and institutional environment that: ensures the state's enhanced approximation to EU; facilitates peaceful cohabitation of various religious, cultural and ethnic groups, protects migrants' rights and their successful integration into society; promotes reintegration of returned migrants and the usage of the positive economic and demographic aspects of migration for the development of the country; and increases legal migration opportunities for the citizens of Georgia.

### **(b) The fundamental principles of the Strategy**

*All Strategy objectives should be accomplished in full compliance with the following fundamental principles:*

- protection of migrants' rights in compliance with the principles of the international law;
- protection of the rights of asylum seekers, stateless persons, and persons with a humanitarian or refugee status in compliance with the principles of the international law;
- prevention of trafficking in persons, people smuggling, and other forms of illegal migration;
- prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination;
- facilitation of the involvement of immigrants and persons with the humanitarian or refugee status in social and economic development of the country;
- reinforcement of the nexus between migration and development at national and local levels;
- support to the sustainable reintegration of the returned migrants to Georgia.

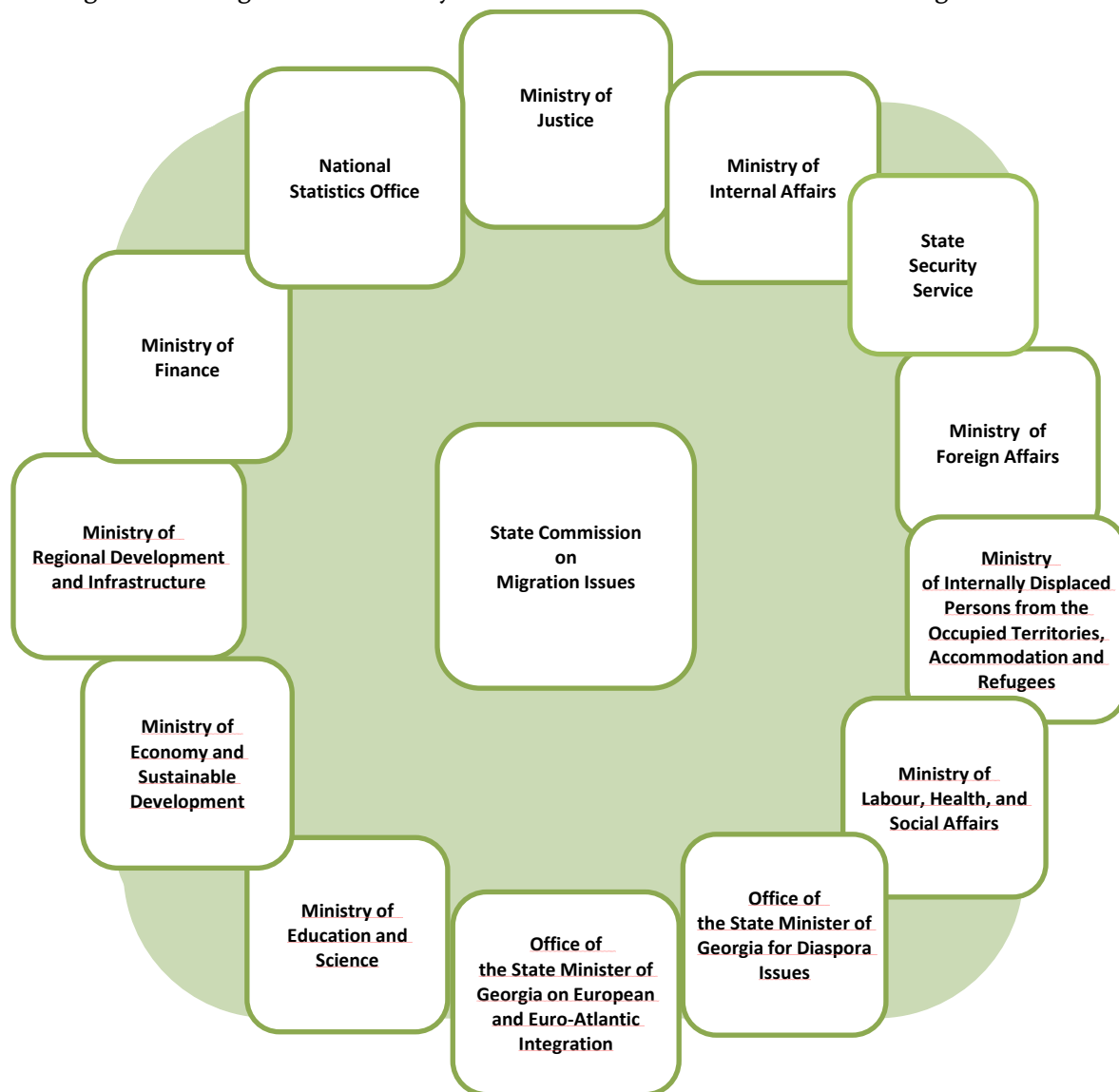
### **(c) The target groups of the Strategy**

- citizens of Georgia residing on the territory of Georgia;
- citizens of Georgia residing abroad and the diaspora representatives;
- persons with refugee or humanitarian status, and asylum seekers in Georgia;
- immigrants residing in Georgia irrespective of their legal status;
- stateless persons residing in Georgia;
- migrants returned to Georgia.

### III. Institutional and legislative framework

#### Institutional framework

In Georgia, the process of institutionalisation of the migration management started in 2010, with the establishment of the State Commission on Migration Issues. The Commission was set up by the ordinance of the Government of Georgia to coordinate the migration policy of the country. The Commission is a consultative body of the Government, which discusses and decides on the issues related to migration management. Currently the Commission consists of the 13 state agencies:



The Commission is chaired by the Ministry of Justice and co-chaired by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Commission is the main platform for discussing migration related issues and constitutes an efficient instrument for coordinating the functions delegated to various agencies. In 2013, by decision of the Commission, a consultative status was granted to seven international and five non-

governmental organisations, which work on migration issues and actively participate in the work of the Commission. The Commission is provided with the analytical and administrative support by the Secretariat, established within the Public Service Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (Public Service Development Agency) with the assistance of and in cooperation with the EU.

Out of the 13 member agencies of the State Commission on Migration Issues, the following authorities are directly involved in the migration management process:

**The Ministry of Justice of Georgia** is responsible for administering the Unified Migration Analytical System (UMAS), considering and deciding on issues concerning residence permits and the citizenship of aliens, coordinating activities related to the fight against trafficking, issuing travel documents and determining the status of stateless persons or compatriots;

**The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia** is responsible for protecting the state border and the state border regime of Georgia, safeguarding and ensuring border regime, and for carrying out border control, and maintaining border regime at border check points. The Ministry is also responsible for combating illegal migration including human trafficking, and is authorised to implement readmission agreements;

**The State Security Service** is a system of institutions of executive authority with special functions directly subordinated to the Government of Georgia, and ensuring state security within its competence. One of the main areas of activity of the Service is combating terrorism, international crime, and other transnational crime posing threat to national security. To protect the security interests of the state, the State Security Service takes appropriate measures related to migration processes in accordance with the legislation of Georgia and within the scope of its authority;

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia** through the diplomatic missions and consular offices of Georgia abroad ensures the protection of the rights and legal interests of Georgian citizens and legal persons, and provides foreign citizens with Georgian visas;

**The Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues** is responsible for strengthening ties with compatriots living abroad, mobilising the economic and social potential of the representatives of the Georgian diaspora for the development of the country, and preserving the national identity of the diaspora;

**The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia** is responsible for granting refugee and humanitarian statuses, protecting the rights of these persons, and their integration into Georgian society as well as for the reintegration of returned Georgian citizens;

**The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia** is responsible for regulating issues related to labour migration, including monitoring of employment and paid work outside Georgia,



protection of interests of persons independently leaving Georgia for employment and paid work, monitoring of the rights and duties associated with the employment and paid work between migrant workers and local employers and for facilitating the integration of immigrants;

Other member agencies of the Commission also actively participate in the ongoing activities of the State Commission on Migration Issues and contribute to the migration policy development and implementation, within the scope of their authority.

### **Legislative framework**

In recent years, in parallel with the EU approximation process, the legislation of Georgia regulating migration has been updated significantly. This process was stimulated by the Visa Dialogue with the EU and the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP) for Georgia. The first phase of the Action Plan stipulated the implementation of necessary legislative changes in the field of migration according to EU standards. In the process of VLAP implementation, several important legislative acts were adopted:

A new Organic Law **on the Citizenship of Georgia** was developed and approved (2014). The law simplified the process of determining the citizenship of Georgia and introduced new regulations with respect to the procedures for acquiring citizenship by naturalisation. At the same time, the Law was brought in full compliance with the 1961 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

In order to improve migration management, a new Law **on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons** was adopted (2014), which sets new grounds for the entry and stay of aliens in Georgia, introduces new visa categories, classifies types of residence permits, and introduces effective mechanisms for removing aliens from the country, all being in full compliance with universally recognised principles and norms of international law, and ensuring the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. As a result of the monitoring of the implementation process, several amendments were made to the Law and certain provisions were further refined.

In order to regulate labour migration, the Law **on Labour Migration** was adopted (2015). The Law establishes a national mechanism for regulating labour migration and determines public administration principles in this field. The main purpose of the Law is to promote the development of legal labour migration and thereby reduce illegal labour migration and trafficking.

Under the Criminal Code of Georgia, trafficking in persons (in 2003) and smuggling of migrants (in 2006) across the State Border of Georgia and/or assisting them with appropriate conditions for illegal stay in Georgia were criminalised.

Other legislative acts regulating migration include:

- the Law of Georgia on the Procedure for the Citizens of Georgia to Leave and Enter Georgia (1993);
- the Law of Georgia on the Procedures for Registering Citizens of Georgia and Aliens Residing in Georgia, for Issuing Identity (Residence) Cards and Passports of a Citizen of Georgia (1996);
- the Law of Georgia on the State Border of Georgia (1998);
- the Law of Georgia on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (2006);
- the Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories (2008);
- the Law of Georgia on Refugee and Humanitarian Statuses (2011);
- the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection (2011);
- the Law of Georgia on Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organisations (2011).

It is noteworthy that one of the priorities in the EU integration process is the approximation of the national legislation to the European standards and the EU Acquis, which is stipulated by the following strategic documents: the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part; the Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia, and the EU Visa Liberalisation Action Plan.

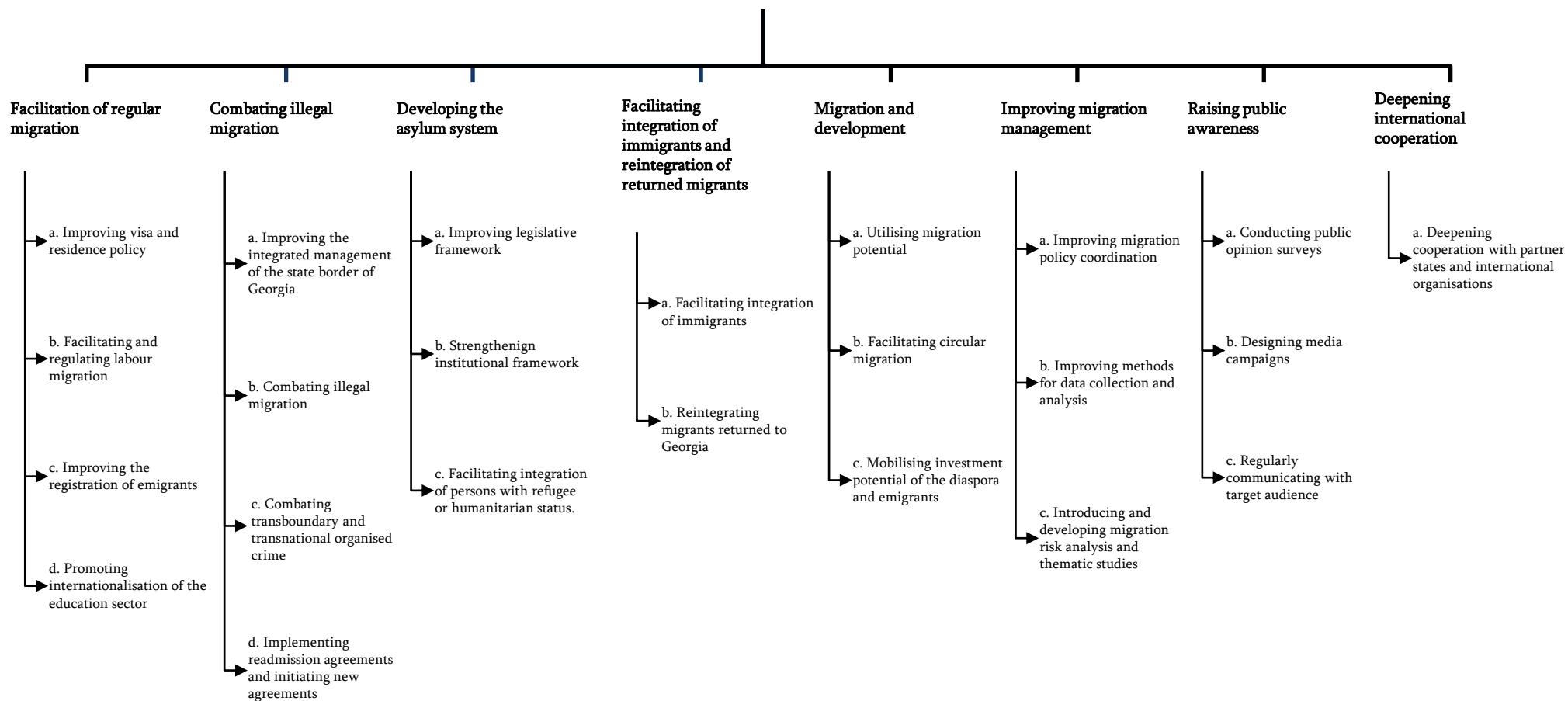
For the efficient implementation of the Migration Strategy it is crucial that it complies with the other strategic documents of the country and takes into consideration the priorities and goals of the state strategies developed in related fields. The following strategic documents of the country were taken into account when developing the Migration Strategy:

- the State Strategy for the Formation of the Labour Market in Georgia (2015-2018);
- the State Border Management Strategy of Georgia (2014-2018);
- the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights in Georgia (2014-2020);
- the Communication and Information Strategy for the European Integration (2014-2017);
- the Socio-economic Development Strategy of Georgia – ‘Georgia 2020’ (2014-2020);
- the Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia (2014-2016);
- the Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy of Georgia (2013-2020);
- the Diaspora Relationship Strategy of Georgia (2015 draft);
- the Policy Planning System Reform Strategy (2015- 2017);

This Migration Strategy is a principle document defining the state policy in the field of migration. The Strategy is in full compliance with the sectoral strategies in other related fields and policy documents.

## Long-term Vision of the Migration strategy of Georgia

The goal of the migration policy of Georgia is to create, by 2020, a legislative and institutional environment that: ensures the state's enhanced approximation to EU; facilitates peaceful cohabitation of various religious, cultural and ethnic groups, protects migrants' rights and their successful integration into society; promotes reintegration of returned migrants and the usage of the positive economic and demographic aspects of migration for the development of the country; and increases legal migration opportunities for the citizens of Georgia.



## IV. Facilitation of legal migration

### Situation analysis

#### Visa and residence policy

Visa policy is an important constituent of state security policy, free movement of people, and prevention of illegal migration. The visa regime is also one of the components of the country's foreign policy. The main goals of the Georgia's visa policy are:

- to register migrant flows and prevent illegal migration in accordance with the state interests and public security requirements;
- to create favourable conditions in the country for attracting foreign investments and qualified labour force, for developing tourism and deepening international cooperation in business, education, culture, and sports;
- to expand the free movement area for Georgian citizens;
- to facilitate the introduction of the visa-free regime with the EU.

Development of tourism and promotion of foreign investments are priorities for Georgia which positively affects the economic growth of the country. Currently, tourism accounts for 7% of the country's total output. In this regard, it is important to create and maintain free and simplified travel for citizens of strategic countries. Accordingly, the visa policy of the country is focused on providing incentives for the entry and stay of aliens in Georgia, which also means the simplification of bureaucratic mechanisms to the extent that is possible. However, bearing in mind the national interests and international challenges, it is important to maintain balance between the simplification of the visa regime and requirements for effective management of migration, including illegal migration.

The list of the countries whose citizens have the privilege of the visa-free entry to Georgia is defined in the relevant normative act<sup>3</sup> and on the basis of agreements on visa free movement for the holders of ordinary passports. In other cases, when the entry visa is required, aliens apply to the diplomatic missions or consular offices of Georgia abroad, or use the electronic visa portal (e-visa). In special cases visas may also be obtained at the Georgian state border. Immigration visas are also granted on the territory of Georgia by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. In this regard, it is important to continue improving existing mechanisms and strengthen the appropriate institutions with human and technical resources, in order to carry out administrative procedures faster and more efficiently.

Along with the visa policy, a special importance is attached to the issuance of residence permits to aliens. Residence permits are granted by the Public Service Development Agency. Submitting the application for extending the previously issued residence permit can also be made from abroad via online services. Based on the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, the types of residence permits were classified and brought in compliance with the immigration visa categories. As a result, the process of granting the residence permits to aliens and determining their

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<sup>3</sup> Ordinance No 255 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the List of the Countries whose Citizens Enjoy Visa-free Entry to Georgia; <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2867361>

purpose of stay in Georgia was improved, which, in turn, enhanced the quality of data collection and processing, that being an essential part of development of sound policies in the field of migration. Furthermore, the relevant residence permit issuance procedures are improved based on the analysis of the international best practice. The Public Service Development Agency is actively working to make this service available in all major population centres and to progressively develop the software required for the provision of the service. It is important to continue monitoring the implementation of the Law, improve the legislation, and ensure the institutional strengthening of the appropriate authorities to meet the relevant practical needs.

Expansion of the free movement area for the citizens of Georgia is important for enhancing the people-to-people contacts, easing the access of Georgian citizens to the world's leading markets and technological / scientific know-how, etc. It is in Georgia's national interest to establish bilateral visa-free regimes with more countries on the basis of the principle of reciprocity. Accordingly, relevant international agreements were and are being concluded to ensure the visa-free entry and short-term stay of citizens of Georgia in the contracting states.<sup>4</sup>

### **Labour migration**

The developed labour market and the possibility to attract necessary human resources is one of the important aspects for creating an open and attractive environment for businesses and investments. With the increased opportunities for legal emigration, the citizens of Georgia will have a greater access to the relatively high-paid employment opportunities in countries with developed economies; while the growth of the Georgian economy will increase demand for both high- and low-skilled human resources within the country. In 2015, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia conducted the first labour market study. It is important to continue this practice on a regular basis in order to have an up to date picture of the professions and skills in demand and to assess the capacity of the labour market to meet those needs.

It is important that the state develops an adequate response mechanism to retrain local human resources and attract foreign labour force, leading to a flexible labour market. In the process of implementation of the Migration Strategy it is advisable to analyse the impact of the Law on Labour Migration on the local economy and labour market, and if necessary to make further improvements to the Law.

### **Emigration**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia gradually began integrating into the world migration system. For the last two decades the nature, range, and directions of migration from Georgia have changed substantially. Currently, Georgian migrants reside in and move to many different countries of the world.

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, information on visa-free movement in foreign countries, <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/MainNav/ConsularInformation/VisaInfoGeorgian/Without-Visa.aspx>

One of the components of the Law of Georgia on the Procedure for the Citizens of Georgia to Leave or Enter Georgia adopted in 1993, is to review and decide upon the emigration of the citizens of Georgia. Since that time circumstances have substantially changed and certain provisions of the Law related to the emigration have become out-dated and impractical. The applicable version of the Law does not correspond to the current reality neither from practical nor from legal point of view and does not allow for tracking and accounting for the number of emigrants from Georgia according to destination countries. Therefore, a substantial revision of the Law is on the agenda in the coming years.

At present, Georgia faces three main challenges: 1) reduction of illegal emigration flows by raising the awareness of potential and actual emigrants and by expanding legal migration opportunities; 2) proactive protection of the rights of legal and illegal emigrants living abroad and preservation of their identity, especially in the countries, where the number of Georgian emigrants is high; 3) improvement of the existing mechanisms for registering and studying emigrant flows in an efficient manner.

Emigration is also accompanied by negative social side-effects. One such social effect is the deterioration of family unity, which can severely affect younger members of the family in particular, when the parents have emigrated. It is crucial that the State identify such minors and provide them with appropriate psychological and social care.

### **Internationalisation of the education sector**

To facilitate globalisation processes and the further development of the country, it is important to support Georgian citizens in studying and gaining experience abroad. Some young Georgians go abroad for study through exchange programmes and scholarships allocated by foreign countries. The Government of Georgia also finances Georgian citizens to receive higher education and qualifications abroad. In 2014 alone, the International Education Centre operating under the Administration of the Government of Georgia financed the studies of 77 Georgian citizens in leading universities across the world.<sup>5</sup> For those Georgians who are acquiring education abroad with state financing, the Government offers employment in the public service upon their return home. It is also important to make such opportunities available to those citizens of Georgia who acquired higher education abroad without state financing.

In recent years, the number of foreign students wishing to study in Georgia has sharply increased. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, the number of foreign students admitted annually to Georgian higher educational institutions increased from 294 in 2004 to 2,593 in 2014. It is important to promote the growth in numbers of foreign students to raise the country's attractiveness and to create opportunities for Georgian higher educational institutions to gain greater international visibility. Typically, foreign students pay higher tuition fees compared to Georgian students and their stay in Georgia has an overall positive economic effect. Enrolment of foreign students in Georgian higher educational institutions also positively contributes to further improving

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<sup>5</sup> International Education Center, students financed by the International Education Center in 2014; <http://iec.gov.ge/4240>

the educational programmes and upgrading their quality. In order to attract foreign students, it is necessary that the state or the private educational institutions bring their educational programmes in compliance with not only local but also the demands and standards of the international market and to provide students with the appropriate infrastructure. Due to these positive effects, the attraction of increased numbers of foreign students is one of the priorities of the State.

One of the objectives of the Bologna Process<sup>6</sup> is to increase the mobility of foreign students from the current 3% to 20% by 2020. The internationalisation of the education system, in turn, largely depends on the development and implementation of an adequate migration policy. The educational programmes tailored to the demands of the international labour market are important not only for attracting foreign students but also for increasing competitiveness of local human capital, this being an essential factor for promoting circular migration and attracting investment in Georgia.

## Goal

*Further expansion and improvement of legal migration opportunities.*

## Objectives

### **a. Improvement of the visa and residence policy**

1. Improvement of the current regulatory framework and ensuring gradual approximation to the best international practice, taking into account the national interests and needs of Georgian state;
2. Further refining the procedures for issuing Georgian visas and residence permits;
3. Further development and improvement of Georgia's e-visa system;
4. Institutional strengthening and enhancement of the qualification of the employees working at the agencies responsible for issuing Georgian visas and residence permits;
5. Cooperation with the higher educational institutions of Georgia on the issues related to the entry and stay of foreign students in Georgia;
6. Support of the training of judges on migration and related human rights issues;
7. Appropriate political and technical dialogue with the target countries to widen the area of the visa-free movement for Georgian citizens.

### **b. Facilitation and regulation of labour migration**

1. Evaluation of the labour migration regulatory framework's impact on the economy and the labour market and introduction of appropriate changes, if necessary;
2. Institutionalisation of the regular studies of the labour market and periodical update of the list of in-demand professions according to the labour market strategy;

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<sup>6</sup> The Bologna Process was established in 1999 with signing of the Bologna Declaration. The purpose of the Bologna Process is to create a single European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Process currently has 47 European participating countries; Georgia joined the Process in 2005.

3. Enhancement of the relevant institutional and administrative resources for the efficient implementation of the Law of Georgia on Labour Migration;
4. Monitoring activities of legal entities, individual entrepreneurs, or branches of foreign entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial legal entities, and entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial legal entities with respect to the provision of employment abroad in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Labour Migration.

**c. Improvement of emigration recording**

1. Development of efficient mechanisms to improve the recording of the number of Georgian citizens living abroad, including by encouraging voluntary registration at Georgian consular offices abroad;
2. Development of the mechanisms for voluntary preliminary registration of Georgian citizens at the relevant Georgian state authorities, when emigrating from Georgia for a long-term;
3. Study the shortcomings of the Law of Georgia on the Procedure for the Citizens of Georgia to Leave and Enter Georgia, and develop revised provisions related to the permits for emigration from Georgia;
4. Re-training of the employees of diplomatic missions and consular offices of Georgia abroad;
5. Identification of school age minors in emigrants' families and ensuing development and implementation of mechanisms for providing them with the proper psychological assistance, where necessary.

**d. Promotion of the internationalisation of the educational sector**

1. Development and expansion of new scholarship and exchange programmes that will allow the citizens of Georgia to acquire education or broaden their knowledge and experience abroad;
2. Regular assessments of the needs of foreign school-age and university students in Georgia;
3. Ensure the high quality of education and the internationalisation of programmes at higher educational institutions, and development of the adequate administrative resources;
4. Promotion of Georgian educational institutions abroad.



## V. Fight against illegal migration

### Situation analysis

Fight against illegal migration and related crime is important for both state security and EU approximation. Preventive measures against illegal migration positively affect the development of legal migration opportunities, while the increase of and access to legal migration opportunities facilitate the reduction of illegal activities and other migration related crime.

In parallel with the social and economic development, political stability and EU approximation, the appeal of Georgia as a destination and transit country is growing. It is notable that the social, political, and economic processes in the region can affect the volume of illegal migration flows significantly. Therefore, it is important to have mechanisms in place to respond to the above challenges effectively.

Most immigrants enter the country in full compliance with the entry rules and stay in Georgia on legal grounds. However, there are a number of cases of attempted illegal crossing of state border, or violation of the rules of legal stay after legally crossing the state border.<sup>7</sup> In this regard, it is crucial to ensure an effective system of border security and border control, which largely means having properly functioning border infrastructure, technical equipment, and well-trained personnel. It is also vital to ensure effective cooperation at interagency, intra-agency, and international level and put in place effective mechanisms for identifying aliens illegally staying in the country.

Against this background, it is important to make further progress on the improvement of the integrated management of the state borders, with special emphasis on continuation of delimitation and demarcation works at the state borders of Georgia.

### Occupied territories of Georgia

The occupation of Georgian territories by the Russian Federation violates the sovereignty and statehood of Georgia and negatively affects its social, political, and economic stability. Currently, the Georgian authorities are deprived of the possibility to exercise effective control over the occupied territories.

Relevant divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and those of the State Security Service (since 2008 and 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015 respectively), together with the EU Monitoring Mission have been present at the occupation line and its adjacent areas. In addition to ensuring the security of the local population, and the safety and stability in the region at large, these mechanisms serve to creating favourable conditions for civilians to cross the occupation line of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia in both directions, thus reducing the negative impact of the existing occupation line.

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<sup>7</sup> See the Migration Profile of Georgia 2015, Aliens Illegally Staying in the Country.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that in addition to the passport of the citizen of Georgia, the State issues the Status Neutral Travel Documents (produced in compliance with the international standards) to the persons legally residing in the occupied territories. Georgian State also requests for international monitoring to be exercised at relevant sections of the Georgia-Russia state border.

### **Border management mechanisms**

To respond to the challenges posed by illegal migration, continuing development of the state border security and control systems is very important. It is notable that the infrastructure of the border check-points set up for international movements and the technical resources of the border and immigration control system have been completely updated.

Significant progress has been made and important steps are still being taken in refining mechanisms for the detection of fraudulent documents and at the same time, particular attention is being paid to the improvement and modernisation of the infrastructure and equipment of the land and sea segments of the Georgian state border. Significant progress is evident in this regard. Among the ongoing projects, the development of an electronic surveillance system on certain parts of the state border between Georgia and the Republic of Turkey is noteworthy. Provided that (as the respective analysis shows) this border segment accounts for the majority of attempted violations of the Georgian state border, it is a high priority to ensure that this border section is fully equipped in parallel with the continuing efforts to introduce electronic surveillance systems on all sections of the Georgian state border. The introduction of electronic surveillance systems at land border sections is expected to improve the border security measures and contribute to more effective use of the human resources available.

It is important that a Unified Risk Analysis System is being developed and implemented at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. This will prevent illegal migration, organised crime, and other violations of the law both at the state border and inside the country by planning and implementing appropriate activities. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is also leading an Interagency Working Group on Migration Risk Analysis System operating under the State Commission on Migration Issues; the aim of this group is to analyse the data related to all types of migration flows, identify trends, evaluate the identified risks, develop preventive measures, and prepare recommendations to make appropriate responses.

For improving integrated border management and introducing new mechanisms, the Georgian State Border Management Strategy for 2014-2018 and its implementing Action Plan have been developed and are being implemented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and appropriate state authorities. The aim of the State Border Management Strategy is to ensure the observance of the open, but controlled and safe state border principle.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> "Georgian State Border Management Strategy" (2014-2018) <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2279821>

## Combating illegal migration

In order to prevent illegal migration, it is important to enhance the relevant documents and the information security mechanisms on a regular basis. Since 2010, Georgia has been issuing second generation biometric passports. The shift to biometric passport system has considerably increased the reliability of documents issued by Georgia. As of October 1, 2015, the number of Georgian citizens having biometric passports amounted to 750,181.<sup>9</sup> It is vital to continue activities aimed at ensuring document security with the gradual phasing out of non-biometric passports and continued roll-out of biometric travel documents.

Over recent years, one of the main challenges facing Georgia has been the lack of an effective mechanism for combatting illegal migration and monitoring migration flows across the country. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has been designated under the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons as the agency responsible for fighting with illegal migration. In order to perform the obligations assumed under the Law, the Migration Department was created as a structural unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in August 2014. The Department is responsible for identification of persons illegally staying in the country and implementation of relevant measures for their removal. Considering that after the adoption of the Law, the aliens staying in the country were given the opportunity to obtain the legal grounds for staying in Georgia without leaving the country, the Migration Department started to enforce the expulsion procedures only starting from July 1, 2015, when the grace period of the Law expired. By November 1, 2015, as a result of the measures taken by the Migration Department, the decision on expulsion of illegally staying aliens was made with respect to 42 persons, out of whom 21 have left the country, the rest of them still have time to voluntarily leave Georgia.<sup>10</sup>

The Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia also administers the Temporary Accommodation Centre for persons illegally staying in the country. The Centre fully complies with the international standards and requirements of human rights, particularly, the rights of vulnerable groups. To ensure the protection of the rights of persons accommodated in the Centre, a special division of the Migration Department is tasked to continuously monitor the protection of the rights of persons held in the Centre. Also, the Migration Department actively cooperates in this regard with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Association of Georgia, and the Public Defender's Office.

In order to identify the persons illegally staying in the country, special software was developed to process information on the legal grounds of an aliens' stay in Georgia and thus identify the persons illegally staying in the country.

In addition to the measures described above, close interagency cooperation is vital for effectively combating illegal migration. A Coordination Group on Illegal Migration has been established and operates within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. The Group is coordinated by the

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<sup>9</sup> Public Service Development Agency.

<sup>10</sup> According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, the decisions on expulsion have been made mainly with respect to the citizens of Nigeria (12), Nepal (6), Uzbekistan (4), Pakistan (3), also with respect to the citizens of Russia, India, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Lebanon, Latvia and Iran.

Migration Department and is comprised of the representatives from all those units of the Ministry dealing with migration management. If necessary, the competent agencies and international and non-governmental organisations may be invited to participate in the Group's work. To increase the effectiveness of the units responsible for identifying aliens illegally staying in Georgia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has developed Standard Operating Procedures.

In order to identify persons illegally staying in the country, interagency cooperation is also of vital importance. The Ministry of Internal Affairs closely cooperates with the following state agencies: the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Corrections and the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia. It is also important to deepen cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs. To identify the violations of the issued residence permits, the Public Service Development Agency, within the scope of its authority, closely cooperates with the higher educational institutions and large business companies.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs closely cooperates with the different international organisations in fight against illegal migration. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Mission to Georgia on the Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants from Georgia.

### **Readmission**

One of the important mechanisms for combating illegal migration is the agreements concluded between the states on the readmission of persons illegally staying on their territories. Under the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing Without Authorisation, 5,015 readmission applications were reviewed by Georgia from March 11, 2011 to October 1, 2015. Negative decision was made on 6.5 per cent of the total number of applications, and approximately 3,000 persons returned to Georgia. To implement the readmission agreement concluded between Georgia and the EU efficiently, Georgia is actively concluding implementing protocols with EU member states. Readmission agreements have been signed with Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland, also with Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. Negotiations on readmission agreements are underway with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Pakistan. Negotiations have also been initiated with other non-EU member states (India, Bangladesh, Israel, Sri Lanka, Algeria, China, Egypt, Iran, Nepal, Nigeria, and Kazakhstan) and with Georgia's immediate neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey).

Furthermore, to enhance the implementation of the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing Without Authorisation, a Readmission Case Management Electronic System was developed and is increasingly used by various EU states. The System significantly simplifies the process of receiving and reviewing readmission applications from the partner countries and facilitates effective coordination of all the agencies involved in the process.

All the measures described above are important for facilitating the return of the citizens of Georgia who have emigrated without legal grounds, and for simplifying the process for removal of aliens illegally staying in Georgia.

### **Combating transnational and trans-boundary organised crime**

International migration may be accompanied by various forms of transnational and trans-boundary organised crime. One of the main challenges in this regard is the fight against trafficking in human beings. The statistics on trafficking in recent years show that Georgia is a country of origin, destination, transit and exploitation of victims of trafficking.<sup>11</sup> Based on identified cases, the main form of exploitation in Georgia is sexual exploitation of women; there are also cases of labour exploitation of Georgian citizens both domestically and abroad. Most often, Georgian citizens fall victim to human trafficking in Turkey<sup>12</sup>. Most of the cases of trafficking in persons identified on the territory of Georgia include the sexual exploitation of citizens of Central Asian countries. Analysis of the identified cases of trafficking shows that the victims of trafficking and persons committing crime against them are mainly the citizens of the same country.

In order to respond to the existing challenges and to combat trafficking efficiently, Georgia has improved the relevant legislative and institutional framework; mobile groups of specialists have been established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia to facilitate proactive identification of cases of trafficking; guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures on criminal investigation, prosecution, and treatment of trafficking victims/affected persons have been prepared for employees of law enforcement authorities, and the unified information strategy for combating trafficking in persons was approved to strengthen crime prevention measures. Additional measures have been taken for minors who have become victims of/have been affected by trafficking, as well as for minor dependents, to ensure that the provision of services is tailored to their individual needs.

Prevention of transnational and trans-boundary organised crime such as terrorism, people smuggling, trafficking in persons, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, money laundering, financing terrorist activities, and other forms of crime are on the agenda of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and State Security Service of Georgia. Georgia actively cooperates with Interpol (International Criminal Police Organisation) and Europol (European Police Office), and has concluded bilateral agreements on the joint combating of crime and exchange of information with about 30 states.

The Interagency Coordination Council tasked with carrying out measures against trafficking in persons, continues its effective work with the involvement of the state authorities and representatives of the international and local non-governmental organisations. The Action Plan for 2015-2016 on the Fight Against Trafficking has been adopted by the Council and measures determined by the Action Plan are currently being implemented.

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<sup>11</sup> See Migration Profile of Georgia 2015, trafficking in persons.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## Goal

*Effective fight against illegal migration, trafficking in persons, and people smuggling.*

## Objectives

### **a. Improvement of the integrated management of Georgian State Border**

1. Development and implementation of the unified border risk assessment analytical system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia;
2. Further development of the border infrastructure and provision of appropriate technologies to improve the state border management;
3. Introduction and development of the institute of border representatives - the Border Commissioner - between the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and the respective authorities of the neighbouring states;
4. Continuation of delimitation and demarcation works on the state border of Georgia;
5. Retraining of employees of appropriate units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia on a regular basis.

### **b. Fight against illegal migration**

1. Institutional development of the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia;
2. Development of mechanisms for monitoring the protection of the rights of persons placed at the Temporary Accommodation Centre;
3. Evaluation of the operation of the Temporary Accommodation Centre and improvement of relevant technical and administrative capacities;
4. Further improvement of the software for the detection of persons illegally staying in Georgia;
5. Improvement of expulsion mechanisms for persons illegally staying in Georgia;
6. Development of incentive mechanisms for facilitating complete phasing out of non-biometric passports and roll-out biometric passports;
7. Continuation of the process of digitalisation of paper records of civil status acts;
8. Improvement in personal data protection and information security mechanisms in the Public Service Development Agency including development of control and risk management approaches and their implementation in practice, and regular monitoring and evaluation of processes;
9. Regular retraining and enhancement of qualification of employees responsible for the receipt and issuance of documents in the identification of fraudulent documents, personal data protection and information security standards.

### **c. Intensification of fight against trans-boundary and transnational organised crime**

1. Improvement of proactive identification mechanisms of cases of human trafficking and people smuggling, and conducting effective criminal prosecution;

2. Study and regular monitoring of the victim protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes, and fine-tuning of those programmes in accordance with new trends, if necessary;
3. Prevention of possible facts of trafficking in cases when the illegal migration is identified at the border and/or persons illegally staying in the country are detected;
4. Targeted qualification enhancement of all the relevant personnel involved in the prevention of human trafficking, people smuggling, and other trans-boundary and transnational organised crime; in particular, the qualifications of prosecutors, investigators, judges, employees of appropriate units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, coordinators of witnesses and affected persons, victims of human trafficking, employees of the State Fund for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking, employees of diplomatic missions and consular offices of Georgia abroad, Georgian military personnel participating in international peacekeeping missions and other target groups;
5. Further enhancement of cooperation between the state agencies and non-governmental organisations working on issues related to trafficking in persons to strengthen measures aimed at qualification development of target groups, prevention of human trafficking, and protection of victims of human trafficking.

#### **d. Implementation of readmission agreements and initiation of new agreements**

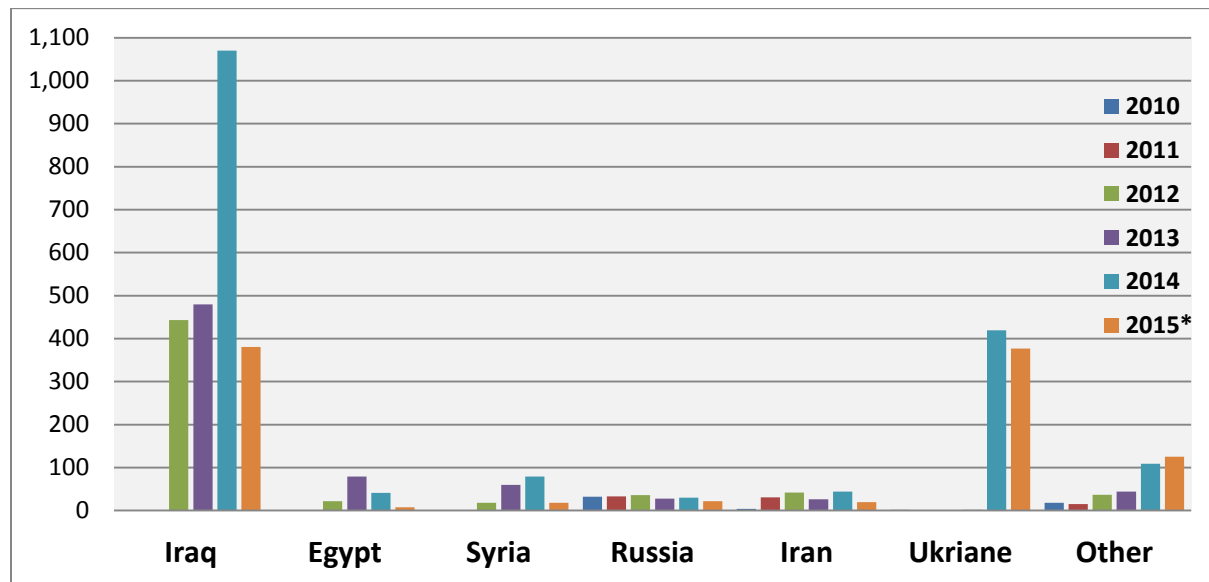
1. Finalisation of the process of concluding bilateral implementing protocols with the states that are parties to the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing Without Authorisation;
2. Conduct of relevant preparatory works and initiation of negotiations to conclude the readmission agreements with third countries of strategic importance;
3. Continuation of the format of annual joint meetings of committees for the monitoring of the implementation of the Agreement between the EU and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing Without Authorisation;
4. Encouragement of new states to join the Readmission Case Management Electronic System developed by Georgia and its promotion with third countries.

## VI. Development of the asylum system

### Situation analysis

In the history of independent Georgia, the first mass request of asylum occurred in 1999, caused by the renewed hostilities in the Russian Federation (the Autonomous Republic of Chechnya). The second wave of significant numbers of asylum seekers started in 2012. Compared to 2010-2011, the number of asylum seekers increased 20 times and more by the end of 2014 (see Chart No 1). Such an increase was mainly caused by the escalation of civil confrontation and armed conflict in the Middle East. The conflict that started in Ukraine in 2014 has also contributed to the increase of the number of asylum seekers in Georgia. Out of 951 asylum seekers registered in 2015, 377 were from Ukraine and 381 from the Republic of Iraq. The number of asylum seekers from other countries is also growing, slowly but significantly. By October 1, 2015, the number of persons with the refugee and humanitarian status totalled 1,215 in Georgia, out of whom 369 persons were granted refugee status, and 846 persons were granted humanitarian status.

**Chart 1.** The number of asylum seekers in Georgia 2010-2015



\* The 2015 data contains applications received in the first nine months (January – September).

**Source:** The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia.

Taking into consideration the events occurring in the Middle East and Ukraine, it is expected that the number of asylum seekers will remain high in the near future (1,792 applications in 2014, and 951 applications in the first three quarters of 2015). Similarly, the number of persons with refugee and humanitarian status will also increase. Given the above forecast, it is on the agenda of the appropriate authorities to prepare administrative and human resources for receiving and serving such flows, to provide asylum seekers with temporary accommodation, adjust the legislative framework to international standards, and implement efficient mechanisms for risk analysis.



## **Improvement of the legislative framework**

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia is working on a new law, which aims at introducing new important terms and procedures. The essential new elements of the draft law include the introduction of the notion of expedited procedures as well as new definitions such as minors' best interest, internal movement alternative, and other concepts and general principles.

The draft law also specifies the procedures for asylum seekers belonging to vulnerable groups and procedures for family reunification; introduces the concept of temporary protection for persons entering Georgia from conflict zones; refines the procedures related to the non-refoulement principle and introduces a concept of a refugee *sur place*. The new Law will further differentiate between the cases of termination, revocation, and deprivation of the status. After the adoption of the Law, appropriate amendments will be made to a number of by-laws.

## **Further development of the institutional framework**

As a result of the close cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia and the relevant state agencies, asylum seekers in Georgia are currently guaranteed safe entry and stay as well as impunity in cases of usage of falsified documents or absence of any documents at the time of entry. The status determination procedures are coherent and asylum seekers receive appropriate social and economic guarantees during the period when their status is being determined. Asylum seekers have the ability to appeal the decisions made on their status and have the right to enjoy free legal assistance provided by the state. To ensure the receipt and timely processing of the growing number of asylum applications it is necessary to train and enhance the qualifications of the employees of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia. The Quality Control and Training Department is being formed to serve this purpose and develop personnel training mechanisms at the Ministry. As the flows of asylum seekers are unstable and difficult to forecast, in order to prepare for the critical situations, similar to what has occurred in Georgia's neighbourhood in 2012-2014, it is also necessary to train and maintain reserve staff.

In 2014, the Country of Origin Information Department was created at the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia; the Department is responsible for obtaining, processing and periodically updating the information on the countries of origin of asylum seekers. The information on the countries of origin will be unified in the electronic database of the Ministry, operational since June 2015. The access to the database and availability of the information on the countries of origin will significantly improve the application reviewing process.

For timely and efficient implementation of administrative proceedings, the time limits for appealing decisions to a court have been extended and the procedural time limits for the review of the cases have been reduced. The appeal stages for judicial review have been reduced from three to two. The

upgrade of the qualification of judges concerning international protection issues will favourably contribute to the efficiency of court proceedings.

Naturally, due to the growing number of asylum seekers, the capacities for their temporary accommodation are limited. Currently, a new reception and accommodation centre is being built in Martkopi, where additional 72 persons could be placed. Hence, by 2016, it will be possible to accommodate at least 132 persons at the same time at both accommodation centres. In order to meet the increased needs, the Ministry is taking measures to mobilise funds and ensure temporary accommodation of asylum seekers.<sup>13</sup> In 2014, the Order of the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia on the Approval of the Rule of Admission to, Conduct in, and Removal from the Accommodation Centre was reviewed and improved.

### **Further development of integration policy**

In Georgia, there is a relevant legislative framework in place to facilitate the integration of refugees and humanitarian status holders; the regulatory framework guarantees the right of their social, economic, and cultural integration as they have access to health, educational, and other state services. However, existing mechanisms need further development and refinement for successful integration of persons with a refugee or humanitarian status. The integration policy covers three basic issues:

- 1) Amendment of the legislative framework to facilitate integration;
- 2) Facilitation of the socio-economic integration of refugees and humanitarian status holders, including by proactively informing them about available public services and opportunities, and by simplifying access to these services;
- 3) The socio-cultural integration of the refugees and humanitarian status holders, *inter-alia* with the focus on the improvement of the teaching of Georgian language as the most important precondition for integration.

According to the findings of the study<sup>14</sup> on integration needs, conducted with the coordination of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, refugees and humanitarian status holders face barriers in the recognition of their educational qualifications acquired abroad, learning the Georgian language, and the inclusion into professional retraining programmes. All the above factors affect the employment opportunities of the refugees and humanitarian status holders in Georgia, which is being one of the most important factors in their successful integration.

Asylum seekers as well as a refugee and humanitarian status holders have access to educational and health services available in Georgia.

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<sup>13</sup> The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia is receiving financial assistance from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

<sup>14</sup> Participatory Assessment for Identification of Integration Needs of Refugees and Humanitarian Status Holders in Georgia (2014). The study was conducted with the participation of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Association of Georgia, and the Innovations and Reforms Centre.

Refugees and humanitarian status holders can be enrolled in public schools in Georgia and can take intensive Georgian language courses free of charge. At this stage, the language courses are fragmented and lack systematisation; hence, it is necessary to institutionalise these courses and extend them to adult refugee and humanitarian status holders. Georgian language skills will significantly increase their chances to benefit from the state programmes, to be enrolled in vocational and higher educational programmes, or benefit from the professional retraining opportunities for finding their place in Georgia's labour market.

In parallel with removal of legislative barriers, it is important to simplify access to state services and opportunities. The progress achieved in providing relevant identity and travel documents to the asylum seekers, refugee and humanitarian status holders in Georgia must be noted. Furthermore, it is planned to issue travel documents to persons holding humanitarian status.

Refugees are guaranteed the right of naturalisation and enjoy simplified requirements for obtaining Georgian citizenship; these requirements being: knowledge of the official language, the basics of the history of Georgia and Georgian law within certain limits, and legal residence in Georgia for the last five years. From 2009 until June 2015, 480 refugees were granted Georgian citizenship; most of them were citizens of the Russian Federation. To encourage the naturalisation process, Georgian language and history programmes are regularly improved and made available to refugees.

## Goal

*Further development of the legislative and institutional framework of the asylum system considering the integration needs.*

## Objectives

### **a. Improvement of the legislative framework**

1. Adoption of the Law of Georgia on International Protection;
2. Adoption of the appropriate by-laws on the basis of the Law of Georgia on International Protection.

### **b. Institutional development of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia**

1. Qualification enhancement of the employees working on asylum issues;
2. Effective functioning of the Quality Control and Training Department of the Ministry to systematically enhance the qualification of employees;
3. Further development of the Country of Origin Information database and ensuring access to the database for all interested parties;
4. Identification of existing gaps and exploring the possibilities of increasing the accommodation capabilities of asylum seekers.

### **c. Facilitation of integration of refugee and humanitarian status holders**

1. Development of indicators of successful integration of refugee and humanitarian status holders and improvement of the data collection necessary for monitoring these indicators;
2. Guaranteed access to educational institutions for asylum seekers, refugees and humanitarian status holders through identifying and eliminating existing gaps;
3. Further development of the intensive programmes in the Georgian language, culture, civic education, and basics of law and offering these courses to the school-age and adult refugees in Georgia on a regular basis to support their naturalisation process;
4. Improvement of Georgia's formal and informal education recognition methodology in compliance with the 2013-2020 Vocational Education Reform Strategy of Georgia and the document on the strategic areas of the education and science system development that will positively affect the recognition of formal and informal education of refugee and humanitarian status holders in Georgia;
5. Involvement of refugee and humanitarian status holders in the state programme for the professional training-retraining for job-seekers and the advanced training for job qualification enhancement;
6. Support the enrolment of refugee and humanitarian status holders in Georgia's vocational educational institutions established by/with the participation of the State;
7. Issue of travel documents to persons holding humanitarian status;
8. Improvement of accommodation capacity for asylum seekers, refugees and humanitarian status holders in Georgia;
9. Protection of the rights of asylum seekers, refugee and humanitarian status holders in Georgia, including their right to family reunification.

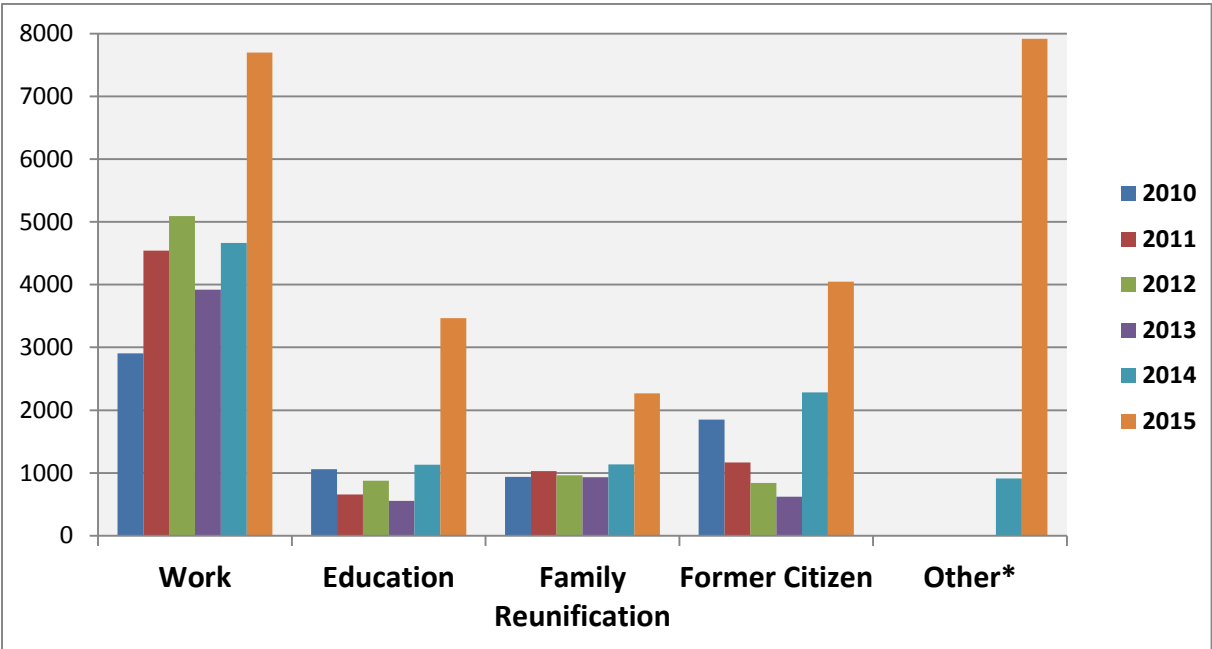
# VII. Facilitation of the integration of immigrants and reintegration of returned migrants

## Situation analysis

### Integration of immigrants

The number of aliens holding residence permits in Georgia has been growing during recent years. 63,469 residence permits were issued to the citizens of foreign countries in 2010-2015<sup>15</sup> (see Chart 2). The major part of the residence permits was granted to the citizens of the Russian Federation on the grounds of former citizenship of Georgia. The residence permits on the grounds of family reunification were issued mostly to the citizens of Russian Federation, Turkey, and Ukraine. The majority of work residence permits were issued to the citizens of China; a significant number of work residence permits were issued to citizens of Turkey, India, Iran, and the Russian Federation. Most of the study residence permits were issued to Indian nationals, followed by the citizens of Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Turkey and Middle Eastern countries.

**Chart 2.** Residence permits issued in 2010-2015\*\* by the types of permit



\*Includes short-term, special, investment, and permanent residence permits. These types of residence permits have been issued since September 1, 2014 under the new Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons.

\*\* 2015 data includes the data of only three quarters (January-September).

**Source:** Public Service Development Agency.

The increase in the numbers of foreign students in general educational institutions of Georgia is also reflected in the growth of the overall number of immigrants. While in the 2011-2012 academic year,

<sup>15</sup> 2015 data includes the data of only three quarters (January-September).

the number of foreign students at Georgian secondary schools was 1,147 across the country, in 2014-2015 academic years this numbers increased three-fold, reaching 3,404.<sup>16</sup>

As a result of comprehensive legal changes implemented in 2013-2015, the legal regulations related to integration such as the legal status of aliens, issuance of residence permits or granting citizenship of Georgia have been synchronized with international best practice. Certain issues concerning the integration of persons such as refugees or humanitarian status holders, asylum seekers, and stateless persons have been included into the competences of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia and the Public Service Development Agency. However, to facilitate the integration of other categories of immigrants it is important to improve the integration policy of Georgia in the following areas: civic engagement of immigrants, access to educational institutions at all levels, and provision and improvement of acculturation and integration possibilities. The revision of the institutional and legislative framework for integration may also be put on the agenda.

A comprehensive study of the abovementioned processes is a necessary precondition for the development of an informed immigration and integration policy. In this regard, one of the main objectives is to develop integration indicators and carry out regular monitoring and evaluation of their performance, in coordination with the appropriate state authorities. A brief description of the current situation in the various fields of integration of immigrants is given below.<sup>17</sup>

- **Labour market mobility.** In terms of regulating the access of aliens to the labour market, the immigrants residing in Georgia act with the same conditions as the citizens of Georgia do. The only requirement for local employers is to inform the LEPL Social Service Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia on the employment of an immigrant in Georgia. The above is regulated by the Law of Georgia on Labour Migration and the Ordinance No 417 of August 7, 2015 of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the Procedure for Employment of Migrant Workers (aliens without a permanent residence permit in Georgia) by Local Employers and of the Procedure for Engaging in Paid Work. It is also important that aliens with the permanent residence permit in Georgia have access to employment facilitation and professional retraining programmes of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia;
- **Right to family reunification** is recognised and protected by Georgian legislation, which envisages issuance of immigration visas and residence permits for family reunification purposes. In addition, permanent residence permits may be granted to the spouses, children, and parents of citizens of Georgia. For spouses of the citizens of Georgia simplified procedures have been introduced for acquiring Georgian citizenship;

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<sup>16</sup> 2015 Migration Profile of Georgia; Immigration to Georgia.

<sup>17</sup> The integration indicators developed by the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) are the following: labour market mobility, family reunification of the citizens of third countries, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to naturalisation and non-discrimination ([www.mipex.eu](http://www.mipex.eu)).

- No discriminatory regulations are in place with respect to aliens in terms of **access to general, vocational and higher education**. However, some issues related to the access to vocational education and the recognition of informal education still needs improving. Provision of more opportunities for learning the Georgian language<sup>18</sup> is also on the agenda to enable immigrants to enrol in the state educational programmes and improve the quality of their integration into Georgian society;
- **In terms of political engagement**, as regulated by the Georgian legislation, foreign citizens do not have the right to become a member of political party, engage in respective activities, establish a political party in Georgia, or participate in elections. However, aliens like citizens of Georgia, may become members of public associations, trade unions, scientific, cultural, sports, and other similar organisations, and enjoy the freedom of assembly and demonstration;
- Under the legislation of Georgia, aliens may receive **temporary or permanent residence permits**. A relevant residence permit is issued according to the purpose of stay of an alien in the country;
- The legislation of Georgia determines several forms of **acquisition of citizenship by naturalisation**: granting Georgian citizenship under Regular Procedure; granting Georgian citizenship under Simplified Procedure; granting Georgian citizenship by Exception; granting Georgian citizenship by its Restoration. For acquiring the citizenship of Georgia under the Regular Procedure, aliens must pass a test in the official language, history, and the basics of the law.
- The Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons recognises **non-discriminatory treatment** as one of the basic principles related to the entry, stay, transit, and departure of aliens from Georgia. The Law also prohibits the discriminatory, humiliating, and degrading treatment of aliens. In addition, the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination has been in force since 2014 in Georgia.

### **Reintegration of returned migrants to Georgia**

Considering the demographic, social, and economic situation in Georgia and the migration forecasts for the coming years, one of the priorities for the country is to encourage the return of the citizens of Georgia residing abroad and facilitate their reintegration. Currently, most of the reintegration programmes in Georgia are targeting only those returnees who have been staying abroad illegally. However, the return and reintegration of the citizens of Georgia legally residing abroad for educational purposes is equally important for the development of the country.

In order to collect reliable data on returning migrants flows, it is important to improve the mechanisms for registering and processing the data on returned migrants in the unified database in order to accurately determine the volume, educational level, qualifications and professional skills, and consequently, define the needs of the target groups for reintegration programmes.

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<sup>18</sup> Educational portal created by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia to facilitate the learning of Georgian as a foreign language: [http://geofl.ge/#/page\\_home](http://geofl.ge/#/page_home)

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia is responsible for the reintegration of returned migrants. Furthermore, an interagency coordination mechanism - Working Group for Consolidation of Reintegration Activities is operating under the State Commission on Migration Issues, led by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia. It is also vital to develop mechanisms for the assessment of the risk of a potential mass return of Georgian citizens, its impact on Georgia's socio-economic environment, and the relevant mitigation measures.

To ensure the reintegration of returned migrants to Georgia, the State actively cooperates with international organisations. Currently, the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, in coordination with the IOM, is implementing the EU-funded project "Reinforcing the Capacities of the Government of Georgia in Border and Migration Management". One of the main areas of the project is support to the reintegration of the Georgian returnees. Under the project, Mobility Centres operate at the Central Office of the Ministry and in three regions of Georgia (Kutaisi, Telavi, and Batumi); their main function being facilitation of reintegration of Georgian returnees. Since 2014, Mobility Centres have been offering various reintegration services to relevant beneficiaries.

From December 2016, the Ministry will gradually and completely take over the management of the Mobility Centres, ensuring continuation of sustainable funding of the Centres, and enhancing their capabilities, in response to the needs of returned migrants and their estimated numbers. At the same time, to improve the reintegration process of the returned citizens of Georgia, the analytical reporting system estimating the numbers of returned citizens will be actively used, development of which has already started.

Under the project "Supporting Reintegration of the Returned Georgian Migrants", the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia is cooperating with non-governmental organisations selected through an open call grant competition. The selected non-governmental organisations provide services for the returned migrants in the following areas: funding of medical care and medications (including psychosocial rehabilitation), professional training, funding of social projects, paid internships, legal assistance, and public awareness programmes. The project contributes to the dignified reintegration of returned citizens of Georgia, on the one hand, and to the development and strengthening of the non-governmental organisations in the field, on the other hand.

Presently, there is a lack of reintegration opportunities for highly-qualified returnees who legally resided abroad. This category of returned emigrants is also in need of social and psychological support from the State for reintegration in the social and cultural environment of Georgia. Therefore, it is important to develop, in coordination with international partners, initiatives for facilitating the reintegration of highly-qualified returnees with due regard to their potential for the country's development. Several international organisations and state agencies are already carrying out programmes facilitating the recruitment of highly-qualified returnees in the Georgian public sector. For example, the Centre for International Migration and Development project (CIM) supported by



the Government of Germany, project Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN III) supported by the Government of Netherlands and the internship programme of the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues.

It is important to broaden state initiatives for more active and efficient use of the potential of highly-qualified returnees. In particular, this applies to the graduates of foreign universities. At the same time, the difficulties associated with the recognition of vocational and informal education faced by returnees must also be taken into account. It is important to provide relevant information to the returned migrants on the opportunities for starting a business in the country and on the priority sectors of the economy in which to invest. It is noteworthy, that the state programme “Produce in Georgia” began in 2014, intended to promote industrial and agricultural production and provide financial and technical support to encourage micro and small entrepreneurial activities, with exclusive focus on the regions of the country. The Programme extends to all citizens of Georgia including returned migrants.

One of the important elements for the efficient implementation of integration and reintegration policies is the organisation of intensive information and awareness raising campaigns both in Georgia and abroad. In this regard, the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia actively cooperates with the non-governmental organisations active in the field of migration in Georgia. More detailed analysis of the current situation in terms of awareness raising and the future plans is given in Chapter X of the Strategy.

## Goal

*Improvement of the immigrant integration policy and fine-tuning of the reintegration programmes for migrants returned to Georgia.*

## Objectives

### **a. Promotion of the integration of immigrants**

1. Evaluation of the identified integration needs and development and adoption of the relevant legislative amendments to improve and institutionalise immigrants’ integration policy;
2. Development and implementation of targeted Georgian language and culture programmes for foreign students enrolled at Georgian schools, and their parents;
3. Development and introduction of informal education recognition procedures in compliance with the vocational education reform strategy’s action plan;
4. Further development and refinement of the on-line platform for learning and teaching Georgian as a foreign language;
5. Support to immigrants’ enrolment in vocational education programmes;
6. Ensure access to state programmes for professional training-retraining and advanced training for foreign citizens with the permanent residence permit in Georgia.

## **b. Reintegration of migrants returned to Georgia**

1. Provision of sustainable funding for reintegration programmes and their capacity building based on the results of relevant needs assessment and forecasts;
2. Improvement of returnee registration methods, as well as development of mechanisms for the risk assessment of mass return of migrants, and mitigation measures;
3. Process and analyse reintegration programmes' statistics to further enhance the reintegration of returning migrants;
4. Improvement and expansion of reintegration programmes targeting returned migrants who illegally resided abroad;
5. Development and implementation of reintegration programmes targeting returned migrants who legally resided abroad;
6. Improvement of accessibility to professional retraining programmes for migrants returned to Georgia;
7. Evaluation and recognition of the educational qualifications and professional skills acquired abroad by returned migrants, to facilitate their successful reintegration.

## **VIII. Migration and development**

### **Situation analysis**

Migration is considered to be a process facilitating country's development due to its profound economic and societal impacts. The so called "Agents of Development" may be both the Georgian emigrants and their family members who remain in the country and immigrants who bring with them international experience, skills, and, in certain cases, financial capital. Regular remittances and investments made by emigrants (diaspora direct investments - DDI, foreign direct investments - FDI, and portfolio investments), as well as philanthropy, trade and other relationships encouraged between the host and the home countries significantly contribute to poverty reduction and the economic development of the migrants' countries of origin. Returnees bring back new knowledge and skills, modern technologies and values, ideas and innovations, which are no less important than the financial resources.

Migration affects socio-economic development at different levels (national/regional) and in various areas (business, culture, and education). In order to harness the benefits of migration, development of specific state programmes and the relevant policy is becoming an increasingly topical issue worldwide. International organisations and Forums such as the UN, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Organization for Migration, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), the UN Global Development Agenda 2030, etc., urge and support countries to account for the potential of migration when planning and implementing migration or other policies.

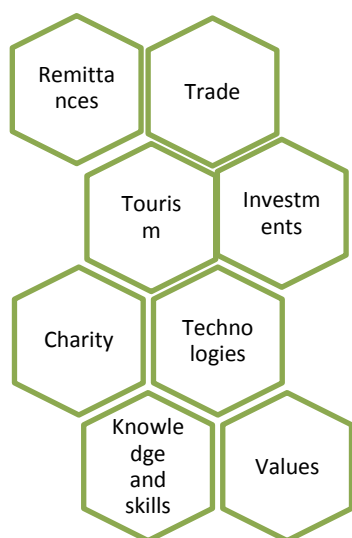
The development potential of migration is not directly highlighted in the strategy of socio-economic development of Georgia – “Georgia 2020”; however, the increase in the availability of financial capital, mobilisation of investment resources and inclusive economic development in the country are included in its fundamental goals. The achievement of these goals is directly linked to the mobilisation of financial resources of emigrants and diaspora, as well as of immigrants and returned migrants, and the inclusion of all these groups into the economic development of the country both at national and local levels. It is noteworthy that migration and development issues are not among the priorities of the 2010-2017 State Strategy for Regional Development of Georgia or in other regional development strategies for different years approved by the Government of Georgia.

The 2016-2020 Migration Strategy is the first strategic document for Georgia, which consolidates and coordinates various state policies and programmes in the area of migration and development. The Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues is also working on the diaspora relations strategy, which, in the future, will focus on the investment potential of the diaspora more comprehensively.

The utilisation of migration’s potential requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach in different sectors, both at national and local levels. Accordingly, it is essential to establish an institutional system that facilitates coordination, with the municipalities as well. In order to thoroughly evaluate and effectively use the potential for development, the links and interrelations between migration and socio-economic development have to be studied and, where appropriate, apply the recommendations derived from the relevant studies.

### Using the potential of migration

In Georgia, the main source countries of remittances are Russia, Greece, Italy, the USA, and Ukraine.<sup>19</sup> In 2014, the amount of remittances to Georgia decreased by approximately USD 40 million



compared to 2013; the downward trend continued in 2015 (see Chart 3) largely due to the crisis in Russia and Ukraine. Despite this fact, the amount of remittances in 2014 exceeded USD 1.440 billion, making up to 8.7 per cent of Georgia’s GDP.<sup>20</sup> According to the World Bank estimates, remittances transferred to Georgia electronically make up about 60-70% of all the remittances flowing into the country.<sup>21</sup>

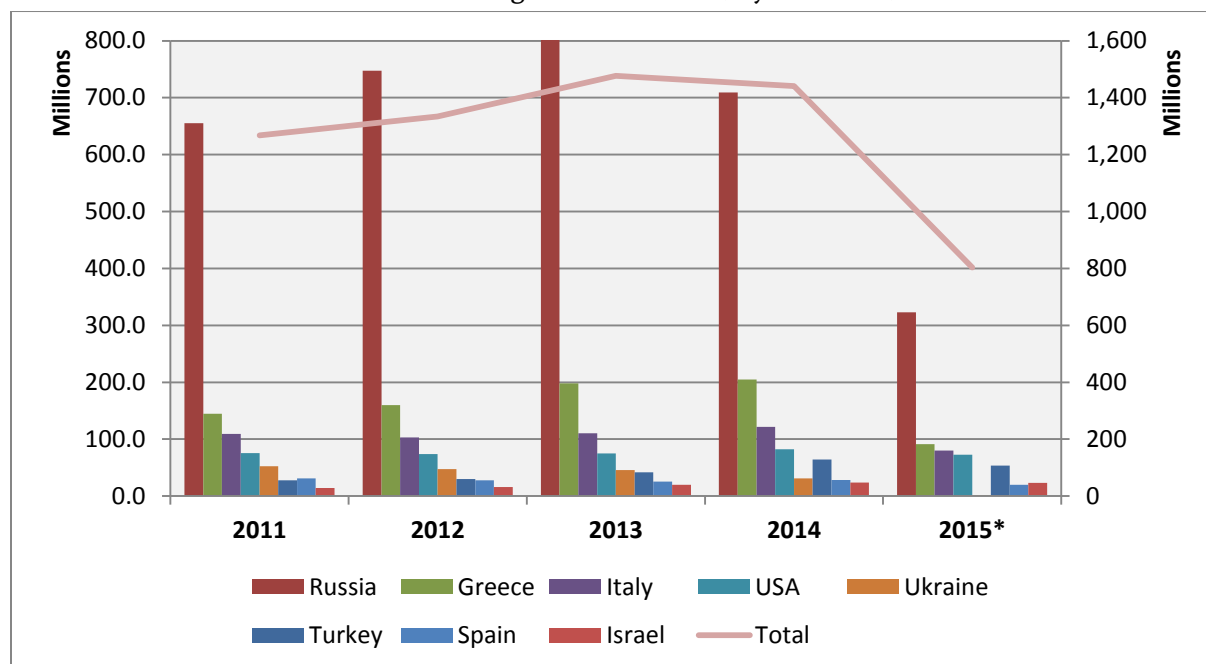
<sup>19</sup> National Bank of Georgia, Remittances by countries. <https://www.nbg.gov.ge/index.php?m=304>

<sup>20</sup> National Statistics Office, Georgian GDP; <http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&pid=119&lang=eng>

<sup>21</sup> The World Bank, Topics in Development- Migration, Remittances, Diaspora and Development.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/0,,contentMDK:21924020~pagePK:5105988~piPK:360975~theSitePK:214971,00.html>

**Chart 3.** Remittances transferred to Georgia in 2010-2015\*, by countries, in USD



\*The data for 2015 includes only first three quarters (January-September).

**Source:** the National Bank of Georgia.

As a rule, a major part of remittances is used for unproductive consumption (for essential commodities); although, emigrants and families receiving remittances also invest money in real estate, education, and healthcare. Therefore, remittances play a significant role in poverty reduction in Georgia. Nevertheless, the share of remittances accumulated and invested in entrepreneurial activity is very low in Georgia.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, it is vital to direct the potential of remittances towards socio-economic development and raise the financial awareness of remittance receiving household members.

Brain drain hinders development of the country of origin. However, channelling the knowledge and qualification acquired by emigrants abroad towards the development of the home country and the effective use of this potential may become a significant driver of economic growth. Likewise, aliens residing in a given country can serve as an important human, intellectual, and financial resource for the host countries. Many countries of destination in the world meet their labour market and growing economic needs thanks to foreign labour.

Studies show that both in receiving countries and countries of origin migrants are more entrepreneurial than the rest of the population;<sup>23</sup> 17-18 per cent of the polled returned migrants are either employers or self-employed.<sup>24</sup> The studies conducted by different organisations on the

<sup>22</sup> European Training Foundation (2013), Migration and Skills in Georgia, results of the 2011/12 migration survey on the relationship between skills, migration and development; p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2010, Entrepreneurship and Migrants, Report by the OECD working party on SMEs and Entrepreneurship.

<sup>24</sup> European Training Foundation (2013), Migration and Skills in Georgia, results of the 2011/12 migration survey on the relationship between skills, migration and development; p.40.

Georgian diaspora and emigrants<sup>25</sup> point to the brain and talent drain from Georgia and identify the skills and needs of emigrants to be integrated into Georgian society. However, these studies provide only a fragmented picture. In order to analyse a full picture of the brain drain and brain gain, it is necessary to conduct a more comprehensive study of emigration and diaspora, which is one of the objectives of this Strategy.

For the effective use of this resource, significant measures are already being taken under the state strategy for the labour market development. However, it is essential to develop further mechanisms for the temporary and long-term employment/recruitment of emigrants to ensure the most effective use of the qualifications and knowledge of emigrants from Georgia and immigrants residing in the country. This requires the administration and enhancement of coordinated activities of the Employment Department of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, professional retraining and vocational education centres, private employment agencies, and employers' associations.

### **Circular migration**

The benefits of emigration may be enhanced through the development of circular migration schemes. Such schemes help in putting migration flows within legal limits, facilitate meeting the demands of host countries and return of migrants. Circular migration can improve the economic conditions, professional skills, and overall migration experiences of Georgian citizens. Presently, negotiations on labour migration agreements are underway between Georgia and the three EU countries (Austria, Greece, and Germany). Furthermore, pilot circular migration projects are being implemented in cooperation with Germany, Estonia and Poland with the support of the German Society for International Cooperation, and the International Organization for Migration.

Labour force supply and demand in Georgia's labour market should serve as the basis for the development of the circular migration schemes and international labour agreements. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia plans to conduct regular studies of the labour force demand on foreign labour markets, which is important not only for the development of circular migration schemes, but also for the development of Georgia's vocational education system, which, in time, must adapt to the demands of both the Georgian and the global markets.

Proactively informing and preparing potential emigrants for future job placement abroad is the precondition for successful circular migration. Pre-departure orientation trainings should cover topics such as relevant laws and norms, opportunities for employment, education, employment upon return, and reintegration.

In parallel with the implementation of circular migration schemes, it is important to assess their impact on migrants, on their employers in sending and receiving countries, and on their family members. Such assessments are necessary after the implementation of pilot schemes as well.

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<sup>25</sup> Among such studies, the following are worth mentioning: Georgian diaspora and migrant associations in Germany, Greece and Turkey (ICMPD, April 2014); Individual assistance to Georgian migrants; Baseline survey report (CiDA, 2014); Interrelations between the public policy, migration and development in partner countries (OECD, 2013-2016).

## **Mobilisation of diaspora investment potential**

Georgian diaspora groups live in many countries of the world. They have a different socio-economic and legal status in their host societies and the level of their involvement in Georgia's socio-economic life varies accordingly. It is vital that relevant agencies study the investment potential of the Georgian diaspora and develop investment packages available that are suitably attractive.

To effectively mobilize diaspora investment and human resources it is important to enhance the cooperation between the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues, the National Investment Agency of Georgia and Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency.

## **Goal**

*Channelling the economic and human resources of Georgian citizens residing abroad, diaspora representatives, and immigrants into the development of the country.*

## **Objectives**

### **a. Utilization of the potential of migration**

1. Development of targeted programmes to attract and employ highly-qualified Georgian citizens residing abroad;
2. Support to recruitment and employment of highly-qualified foreign citizens to Georgia based on the needs identified by labour market study;
3. Based on the needs identified by the labour market study, direct the knowledge and experience of highly-qualified immigrants towards the development of the local workforce;
4. Develop and implement targeted financial literacy training programmes for emigrants and their family members residing in Georgia;
5. Provide immigrants residing in Georgia with access to the investment projects to mobilise their financial capital.

### **b. Facilitation of circular migration**

1. Facilitation of inter-state cooperation in the areas of circular migration and temporary labour force employment;
2. Conduct regular studies and situation analysis of potential partner states' labour market demands to lay the foundation for legal exchange of labour force and foster bilateral cooperation with the European Union and other countries in the area of temporary labour migration;
3. After completion of the pilot circular migration scheme cycle, assessment of its impact on all those involved;

4. Periodical updating of Georgian vocational educational institutions with the study results of labour markets of the partner states and the main destination countries for Georgian emigrants;
5. Initiation and facilitation of pilot circular migration projects through cooperation with partner states and international and local non-governmental organisations;
6. Take into account the study results of the Georgia's labour market and in-demand professions while designing circular migration schemes or in the course of relevant negotiations, to prevent the outflow of people with professions already in short supply in the Georgian labour market;
7. Qualification enhancement of state agency employees implementing circular migration schemes as well as of the relevant personnel of diplomatic missions and consular offices of Georgia abroad on labour migration issues, and their direct involvement in the implementation of circular migration schemes.

#### **c. Mobilisation of diaspora and emigrants investment potential**

1. Conduct a study of the investment potential and the needs of the Georgian diaspora;
2. Establish relations between the local communities<sup>26</sup> and the diaspora organisations to engage the Georgian diaspora in the local community development projects;
3. Ensure the accessibility of investment projects to attract the financial resources of the diaspora;
4. In cooperation with donor organisations, develop and implement the pilot matching fund projects for emigrants' investments and provide support through training programmes.

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<sup>26</sup> Community is a unity of persons living in certain geographic area, under common social, economic, and cultural conditions and having similar interests, problems, and needs.

## IX. Further development of migration management

### Situation analysis

#### Migration policy coordination

In recent years, the Government of Georgia has implemented significant measures through the **State Commission on Migration Issues** to improve the coordination of migration policy. The Working Groups set up under the Commission provide an effective platform for interagency cooperation. Currently, there are six working groups:

- Working Group for the Reduction of Statelessness;
- Working Group for the Consolidation of Reintegration Issues;
- Working Group on Migration Strategy;
- Working Group for the Unified Migration Analytical System;
- Working Group Monitoring the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons;
- Working Group for Migration Risk Analysis.

The Commission and its Secretariat actively cooperate with the academic community and educational institutions in order to develop educational programmes and conduct research in the field of migration. A Memorandum on Mutual Cooperation has been concluded between the Commission and Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

Furthermore, migration policy coordination requires efficient operation of interagency councils such as the Coordination Council for Implementing Measures against Human Trafficking and the Interagency Coordinating Council for Combating Illegal Migration under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. One sign of the close interagency cooperation is the improvement of mutual access to the electronic databases of partner agencies such as the databases on readmission, trafficking, and country of origin information. Along with the improvement of policy coordination, it is planned to further expand mutual access to the databases in the future.

One of the important components of the coordination of migration policy is the regular monitoring on implementation of the policy defining document - the Migration Strategy, which is executed quarterly by the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues. Further development of the monitoring and evaluation of the Migration Strategy implementation is another priority in the coming years.

Along with the development of migration policy, new and complex issues are emerging. To resolve these issues, in certain cases, it will be necessary to strengthen coordination in the future, and in other cases, to create new implementing entities. For example, new policy areas such as immigrant integration and directing opportunities created by the international migration towards the development of the country require additional interagency coordination and institutionalisation.

It is also crucial to further strengthen the appropriate structural units involved in migration management.



## Data collection and analysis

One of the main challenges in developing migration policy is the lack of reliable data, which adversely affects the respective statistics and the informed decision-making in the field. Therefore, it is necessary to take action in the following three directions:

- 1) **improvement of statistical data collection**; development of indicators to evaluate the efficiency of migration policy and collection of a new type of data by both the state agencies involved in migration management and the National Statistics Office of Georgia; refinement of the form and means of collecting and exchanging data by agencies.

Data collection must be improved in the following areas:

- emigration flows;
- citizens of Georgia living abroad;
- integration of aliens and persons with the refugee and humanitarian status;
- reintegration of returned migrants;
- economic activity of immigrants.

- 2) To maximize the **technical potential for analysing the existing data**, the Unified Migration Analytical System is being developed; the concept of the system has already been defined and the preparatory work has been completed. The aim of the Unified Migration Analytical System is to facilitate processing and analysis of migration data; the System will be used solely to keep statistics and conduct analysis.
- 3) To **institutionalise** the regular analysis and update of the full migration picture in the country. Georgia has joined the countries which update their **migration profiles** on a regular basis. A migration profile is a short analytical document summarising the statistical data describing different aspects of migration, intended to inform a wide audience, contribute to policy development, and provide resources for researchers.

## Policy planning and thematic studies

In recent years, significant changes have been made to the legislative framework regulating migration in Georgia in order to harmonise it with the European standards and to improve overall migration management. Taking into account the complexity of migration policy and the challenges identified in the law-making process, it is important to introduce the practice of conducting a meticulous preliminary study of the issues that are to be regulated. This will allow for the preliminarily assessment of the expected social and economic impact of the new regulations and implementation of preventive measures. In this respect, migration policy must be developed in conformity with the Strategy for the Policy Planning System Reform of the Government of Georgia.

It is important that the harmonisation of the national legislation with the EU Acquis, stipulated by the Association Agreement with EU continues consistently; EU regulations and directives on

migration are comprehensively studied and the appropriate agencies incorporate and use them in the law-making process, as required.

One of the necessary components of proper policy planning is the introduction of the practice of **regular and comprehensive risk analysis**. The State Commission on Migration Issues has already approved the concept of the Migration Risk Analysis System. Within the framework of this concept, it is important to ensure the phased implementation of the individual action plan within the agencies, promote interagency cooperation in this direction, and introduce the comprehensive risk analysis system.

To contribute to informed migration policy development, it is also important to conduct various thematic (both small- and large-scale) studies of the current policy issues, and to evaluate and analyse the implemented measures. The objective of the Commission and its Secretariat is to facilitate the enhancement of analytical resources both locally (within the Commission and the Secretariat) as well as around the Georgian academic community and the non-governmental sector; it is desirable to attract additional budgetary and non-budgetary funds for this purpose.

Priority issues to be studied for the next five years:

- preliminary evaluation and monitoring of the impact of the implemented or planned legislative amendments on social, economic, and business sectors;
- integration of immigrants;
- emigration;
- reintegration of returned emigrants;
- migration and development in Georgia;
- internationalisation of education;
- potential of circular migration in Georgia;
- public attitudes towards immigrants and persons with a refugee and humanitarian status;
- employment of foreign workers in the Georgian labour market by the sectors of their job placements.

## Goal

*Improvement of the migration policy planning and the means of data collection and analysis for informed decision-making.*

## Objectives

### a. Improvement of migration policy coordination

1. Enhancement of interagency cooperation and consolidation of the existing coordination mechanism for migration management (the State Commission on Migration Issues, Secretariat);
2. Reinforcement of the relevant administrative units of the agencies involved in migration management;

3. Taking account of the personal data protection regulations, widening of mutual access to the migration databases of the state agencies involved in migration management to facilitate the comprehensive and effective fulfilment of their obligations;
4. Improvement of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the implementation of the Migration Strategy of Georgia;
5. Under the framework of the Commission, preliminary evaluation/study of the issues subject to regulation and appropriate planning of the working process, while working on important or especially complex legislation;
6. Make fundamental EU regulations and directives related to migration freely available in the Georgian language;
7. Qualification enhancement of the municipality employees on migration related issues;
8. Engage with and raise awareness of the academic community and the non-governmental organisations working in different areas of migration;
9. Institutionalise proper planning and coordination of the immigrant integration policy in one or more agency (agencies) involved in migration management;
10. Incorporate the migration policy priorities in the main strategy documents of the State.

#### **b. Improvement of the data collection and analysis methods**

1. Regular collection and analysis of migration data via the Unified Migration Analytical System;
2. Identification of the new types of data needed for the migration policy analysis;
3. Development of indicators of immigrant integration and economic activity and collection/monitoring of relevant data;
4. Development of reintegration indicators of emigrants returned to Georgia and regular monitoring of performance based on these indicators;
5. Introduction of a new practice of comprehensive data description and analysis by developing and periodically updating the Migration Profile of Georgia.

#### **c. Introduction and development of the practice of migration risk analysis and thematic studies**

1. Introduction of the practice of regular thematic studies of priority issues mentioned in the Strategy and conduct of regulatory and/or policy impact analysis, to enable the Secretariat and the member agencies of the Commission to provide the latter with relevant expertise on the issues raised;
2. Implement and institutionalise the concept of inter-agency and complex risk analysis covering all aspects of migration policy;
3. Enhancement of cooperation between the state agencies involved in migration management, the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues, and the academic sector of Georgia.

## **X. Public awareness raising**

### **Situation Analysis**

One of the pre-requisites for the effective implementation of a migration policy is to raise public awareness as well as to inform the general public of the main goals and objectives of the policy. In parallel to the 2013-2015 Migration Strategy, and as part of the respective action plan an information campaign “Legal Migration – The Best Choice” was elaborated and implemented. Major components of the information campaign were: 1) asylum; 2) legal migration and reintegration; 3) visa issues and readmission; 4) prevention and eradication of illegal migration. In addition, migration-related issues are also covered by the EU Integration Communication and Information Strategy of the Government of Georgia for the period of 2014-2017.

In spite of the ongoing information campaigns, the level of awareness of the wider public on the process and outcomes of the visa liberalization regulations with the European Union remains a challenge. Equally challenging is the provision of timely and comprehensive information to specific target groups concerning the rapid and far-reaching legislative and administrative changes in the field of migration in recent years. For the successful implementation of activities and objectives planned under the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy it is important that the information and media campaigns are developed as an integral part of the strategy. The awareness raising chapter unites the public awareness raising activities of all stakeholders involved in migration management under one umbrella in order to avoid the duplication/overlap of activities and foster inter-agency cooperation and formulation of the uniform messages.

Stemming from the goals and directions of the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy, the need for the public awareness raising has been identified in the following five core areas:

1. Legal migration and the threats associated with the illegal migration;
2. Asylum;
3. Integration of immigrants and reintegration of migrants returning to Georgia;
4. Migration and development;
5. Prevention of statelessness and the reduction of the number of stateless persons.

The needs that have been identified in each of these core areas are presented below (target groups, information campaign messages, and suggested media outlets). They shall be further specified in the process of elaboration of the respective information and media campaigns.

### **Legal migration and risks associated with illegal migration**

Fostering legal migration is one of the priorities of the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy of Georgia. To this end, it is important to raise the awareness of target groups on the opportunities for legal

migration and the risks associated with illegal migration; namely, provision of information on visa and residence policy, possibilities of labour and educational migration, or migration for family reunification purposes, threats of trafficking and adverse consequences of residing in a foreign country without legal grounds. It is of great importance to raise public awareness of the EU visa liberalisation process to create accurate expectations concerning the purpose of and the opportunities provided by the process.

Key messages of the information campaign:

- a. Legal migration is the best choice for protecting your rights and benefiting from migration;
- b. Legal residence in a foreign country helps to protect you against the threats emanating from illegal migration; maintain a legal status while abroad;
- c. The State cares for its citizens: notify the diplomatic mission or consular office of your country about yourself to help your country to protect you;
- d. Visa-free movement with the EU does not mean traveling to the EU for work or education without an appropriate visa; when the visa-free regime is enacted, Georgian citizens holding biometric passports will be able to visit the EU countries (the “Schengen” member states) for short-term purposes (tourism, business trip, visiting friends and family) without a visa needing to be obtained before travelling.

Direct target groups:

- Citizens of Georgia planning to travel abroad for a short or long-term purposes;<sup>27</sup>
- Citizens of Georgia residing abroad and the diaspora representatives;
- Immigrants residing in Georgia.

Means of communication:

- Television, radio (central and regional channels);
- Social media;
- Printed media (central and regional);
- Entertainment media;
- Face-to-face information meetings with the target audiences;
- Online informational sessions with the target audiences.

**Asylum**

In recent years, as a result of Georgia’s development and the overall situation in the region, the number of asylum seekers and persons with the refugee and humanitarian status has been increasing significantly in the country. It is important to raise the awareness of these groups concerning the relevant administrative procedures and their rights, as well as the opportunities to integrate effectively in Georgia. It is of equal importance to prepare and inform the population of Georgia on

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<sup>27</sup> Economically active population, with special emphasis on ethnic minorities; target groups must be narrowed at the stage of the planning of media campaigns, based on the collection of additional data and public opinion survey results.

the conditions and needs of asylum seekers and a refugee and humanitarian status holders in order to avoid their alienation and isolation.

Key messages of the information campaign:

- a. Your rights are protected and a fair socio-economic environment is guaranteed in Georgia;
- b. Asylum seekers do not leave their home country voluntarily; they come to Georgia due to the unfavourable environment in their countries.

Direct target groups:

- Asylum seekers in Georgia;
- Refugees and humanitarian status holders in Georgia;
- Georgian population.<sup>28</sup>

Means of communication:

- Face-to-face meetings with the target audiences;
- Information materials in a language understandable to the target audiences;
- Social media;
- Television, radio (central and regional channels).

**Integration of immigrants and reintegration of returned migrants**

In recent years, along with the social and economic development of the country, the number of foreign citizens travelling to Georgia for long-term stay has increased. Hence, it is becoming increasingly important to facilitate their integration into the Georgian society. Immigrants should be informed about the integration opportunities in Georgia (education, recognition of educational qualifications, employment, self-employment, residence, citizenship, etc.). Given the fact that integration is a two-way process, different layers of Georgian society should also be informed about the benefits of immigration; tolerant attitudes towards aliens must be fostered and the positive aspects of a multicultural society must be highlighted.

The number of migrants returning to Georgia has also been on the rise in recent years. To ensure sustainable reintegration, returned migrants should be well-informed about the reintegration programmes, retraining, employment, and self-employment opportunities available in the country.

Key messages of the information campaign:

- a. People with different experiences and cultures enrich Georgian society, but this can be achieved only through two-way integration and mutual openness;
- b. It is important for Georgia that the reintegration of returned migrants occurs in a dignified manner.

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<sup>28</sup> With the special emphasis on the regions with great number of asylum seekers, target groups should be narrowed down at the planning stage of the informational campaign, based on the additional information collected and the result(s) of public opinion survey(s).

#### Direct target groups:

- Immigrants residing in Georgia;
- Migrants returned to Georgia;
- Population of Georgia.

#### Means of communication:

- Face-to-face information meetings with target audiences;
- Individual consultation service for target audiences;
- Online informational sessions with target audiences;
- Social media;
- Television, radio (central and regional channels);
- Printed media (central and regional);
- Entertainment media.

### **Migration and development**

Taking the potential of migration for the country's development into consideration ensures that the advantages of migration are fully utilized and its disadvantages are minimized. For the effective use of this resource, it is crucial to accurately inform the society concerning the possible effects of migration, as well as how the professional experience, financial, and other resources that Georgian citizens acquired in emigration can be used and invested. It is also important to increase the awareness of the population on financial issues, and improve access to information on existing opportunities for investing remittances.

It is likewise important to recognise and use the social, cultural, and human capital of immigrants residing in Georgia as a resource for development; to achieve this, it is necessary to integrate immigrants and inform them of all available opportunities on a regular basis.

#### Key messages of the information campaign:

- a. "Share your experience with homeland";
- b. Save remittances and make profitable investments;
- c. Take part in the development of your town/village;
- d. If planned properly, migration can become a success story for you, and the countries of your destination and origin.<sup>29</sup>

#### Direct target groups:

- Georgian emigrants;
- Georgian diaspora;
- Georgian citizens planning short or long-term travel abroad;
- Family members of emigrants left behind;

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<sup>29</sup> The concept of "triple win" entails that a successful migratory experience can become beneficial for the host country, sending society, and personally for the migrant and his/her family.

- Migrants returned to Georgia;
- Immigrants residing in Georgia.

Means of communication:

- Face-to-face information meetings with target audiences;
- Online information sessions with target audiences;
- Individual consultations for target audiences;
- Development and dissemination of educational and information materials to target audiences;
- Social media;
- Television, radio (central and regional).

**Prevention and reduction of statelessness**

In recent years, significant progress has been made in the area of statelessness, in particular: Georgia became a party to the both UN Conventions (1954 and 1961); a new Organic Law of Georgia on the Citizenship of Georgia has been in effect since 11 June 2014, which provides a number of mechanisms for the prevention and elimination of statelessness. Also, Georgia is among the ten countries having a written procedure for determination of the statelessness.

Nevertheless, Georgia still faces the problem of statelessness, as there are undocumented persons at risk of remaining stateless, partially due to the low level of civil activity and a lack of information.

Key messages of the information campaign:

- a. Without putting your identification documents in order, you cannot enjoy the same rights and opportunities available to the citizens of Georgia;
- b. Apply to the Public Service Development Agency, Public Service Halls, and Community Centres to put your documents in order;
- c. Change your status from stateless person to citizen.

Direct target groups:

- Population of Georgia in regions, particularly in the mountainous regions and the ethnic minority communities.

Means of communication:

- Face-to-face information meetings with target audiences;
- Television, radio (central and regional);
- Individual consultations for the target audiences.

**Guiding principles for planning the information and media campaigns**

Below are a number of criteria, based on which the success of each information and media campaign can be evaluated.



As a result of a successful information campaign, Georgian citizens and immigrants residing in Georgia:

- Must have the access to the information needed through the various means of media and public services;
- The information provided should be of the quality corresponding to state policies;
- Information must be provided in a language understandable to the target audience.

Besides,

- Media coverage of the topics raised by the campaign should increase, mainly in the positive context;
- Evidence of public awareness-raising should be reflected in public opinion surveys.

**Mediators** acting as a link to the main target groups of the campaign are:

- educational institutions (kindergartens, schools, and universities);
- non-governmental and community organisations<sup>30</sup> (especially, in the regions);
- media;
- state agencies and their public relations services;
- diplomatic missions and consular offices of Georgia abroad;
- diplomatic corps accredited to Georgia;
- Georgian diaspora organisations abroad;
- foreign diaspora organisations in Georgia;
- employers' associations, business associations, and trade unions;
- private employment agencies;
- territorial offices of state agencies;
- municipalities;
- Community Centres;
- all levels of the judicial system;
- international organisations.

The desired methods for **communicating information campaign messages** are:

- Development of electronic/on-line means of communication with the target audience;
  - informing via SMS;
  - electronic publications, blogs;
  - social media campaigns;
  - information phone service (call centres).
- Introduction of the practice of holding periodic public meetings with target groups at the municipality level;
- Updating mediators with information on migration issues on a regular basis;

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<sup>30</sup> Community organisation means a private or public non-profit organisation, which represents a significant portion of the local community and strives to meet the educational, environmental, public security related or other needs of this community.

- Launching innovative media-campaigns, for example, raising issues in popular television shows, TV series, and other non-news high-rating shows;
- Renewal/development, publication, and distribution of printed information materials among the target groups.

## Goal

*Raising the awareness of the population of Georgia, immigrants, refugees and humanitarian status holders, asylum seekers, as well as Georgian citizens residing abroad and the diaspora representatives on the key priorities defined by the Migration Strategy.*

## Objectives

**a. Conduct public opinion surveys covering the five core directions outlined in the 2016-2020 Migration Strategy in order to assess the current situation and progress achieved in this regard.**

Public opinion survey to be conducted at the first and the last stages of the implementation of 2016-2020 Migration Strategy Action Plan (2016-2017) in order to assess the progress made and to plan the activities for the next years' Action Plans accordingly.

*The Ordinance of the Government of Georgia No. 226 dated 04.05.2017 – website, 08.05.2017.*

**b. Design and implement media campaigns in the five core directions outlined in the Situation Analysis, taking into account the defined priorities and guidelines.**

1. Planning and implementation of the individual media campaigns by the responsible agencies;
2. Developing social advertisements about legal migration opportunities to circulate on television, radio, and the Internet;
3. Systematic update of the legal emigration and legal immigration guidebooks developed by the State Commission for Migration Issues, and their dissemination among the target groups;
4. Development of the informational Internet resources.

**c. Design and use in practice the regular communication mechanisms for the relevant state agencies to reach their target audiences**

### **Promotion of legal and prevention of illegal migration**

1. Introduction of the practice of regular meetings with diaspora representatives and the diaspora organisations by the diplomatic missions and consular offices of Georgia abroad, as well as by the Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Diaspora Issues, in order to inform them about the legal regulations concerning the Georgian citizens abroad and on the state programmes available;

2. Raise the public awareness on preventing trafficking in persons by conducting information campaigns on the threats posed by trafficking;
3. Inform the public about the opportunities for legal migration, the rules and procedures for visa-free movement with EU and the possible risks associated with the illegal migration by the relevant state agencies, including Mobility and the Community Centres;
4. Regular update of foreign citizens' targeted groups (students, migrant workers, etc.) about the regulations on entry and legal stay in Georgia;
5. Conduct of the pre-emigration awareness-raising on migrants' rights and risks associated with illegal migration, involving both the mediators and relevant state agencies.

### **Asylum**

1. Establish the practice of regular meetings with asylum seekers at the Temporary Accommodation Centre(s); informing them about living in and integrating into Georgian society, legislative amendments, their rights and the means for defending those rights;
2. Regular update of refugee and humanitarian status holders on legislative amendments, new state programmes and initiatives available;
3. Disseminate the information brochure published in 2015 by the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (in Arabic, Persian, English, French, and Russian languages) among target groups, to inform them on administrative procedures, daily life in Georgia, and integration opportunities;
4. Awareness-raising of local communities, non-governmental organisations, educational institutions, and other mediators about the goals of the asylum system and the integration policy in Georgia.

### **Integration of immigrants and reintegration of returned migrants**

1. Conducting of regular information meetings to provide information on the Law on Labour Migration and the regulations laid down in relevant subordinate acts;
2. Introduction of the practice of regular information meetings to inform foreign students studying at higher educational institutions of Georgia, those enrolled at general educational institutions and their parents about the opportunities for integration and involvement in the social life of the country;
3. Inform immigrants on a regular basis about the opportunities of obtaining citizenship and initiatives planned or implemented in this regard;
4. Raise the awareness of migrants returned to Georgia about the possibilities offered by reintegration programmes;
5. Support the diaspora organisations to conduct reintegration training sessions and consultative meetings with Georgian citizens residing abroad.

### **Migration and development**

1. Establishment of information centres under the diaspora organisations;
2. Conducting of regular information campaigns for diaspora representatives and foreign investors on the existing investment and economic climate, and potential in Georgia;

3. Hold information forums for strengthening ties between the businesses operating in Georgia and abroad;
4. Respective agencies to inform their target groups and beneficiaries in a timely manner about upcoming or implemented legislative amendments;
5. Conduct awareness-raising campaign for the emigrants and their family members on financial instruments available and the investment of their financial resources in the economy;
6. Hold consultations on how the emigration can be turned into a successful plan for all those interested;
7. Provide consultations with participants in circular migration schemes on the norms of legal migration and the employment opportunities, including for employment or education upon return.

#### **Prevention and reduction of statelessness**

1. Under the framework of the global campaign launched by the UN to end statelessness, develop and implement a 10-year state action plan, to set out the activities to be performed by the State to prevent and end statelessness;
2. Raise public awareness of statelessness and its negative side-effects;
3. Inform stateless persons about integration into society, rights of stateless persons, as well as opportunities and ways of obtaining the citizenship.

## **XI. Expansion of international cooperation**

### **Situation analysis**

The impact of migration flows and global migration policy transcends the boundaries of any state. Therefore, the participation in international bilateral, regional, or global cooperation formats has great importance for the effective implementation of migration policy.

Georgia's political association and the economic integration with the EU, as well as the approximation of Georgian legislation to the EU Acquis and the dynamic integration of European standards at a national level are priorities of both the external and domestic policies of the Georgian Government. The legal framework for Georgia-EU relations is "The Association Agreement between Georgia, of the one part, and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part" and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, as its component. With respect to the migration policy, the implementation of the objectives defined in Articles 15 and 16 of Title III of the Agreement and completion of the EU-Georgia Visa Dialogue is of particular importance.

On June 27, 2014, the Association Agreement between Georgia, of the one part, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the other part, was signed. It is implemented on the basis of the Association Agreement and the Annual National Action Plan of the Association Agenda. The Government Commission of Georgia on EU Integration is the main coordination platform with regard to the country's integration into the EU. The Commission is chaired by the Prime Minister of Georgia, whereas the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration performs the functions of a secretariat and ensures interagency coordination. The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia coordinates the implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement. The implementation process of the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda includes annual planning, reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and the achieved progress is assessed by the Association Council, committees and subcommittees.

The EU-Georgia Visa Dialogue was launched on June 4, 2012, and the Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation was granted to the Government of Georgia on February 25, 2013. A visa-free movement with the EU is one of the most important priorities on the way to the EU integration. Direct and tangible positive results of visa-free movement is the extension of the free movement area for the citizens of Georgia, setting up partnerships between students and academic circles and representatives of civil society, development of exchange programmes, increase of tourism and deepening of cultural ties. The facilitated movement will significantly contribute to the introducing the European values and ideas to Georgia.

The facilitated movement to Europe is also a significant political message to both Georgian citizens and persons living in the occupied territories of Georgia. Visa-free movement is evidence of the progress that Georgia has made towards European integration and the success of the comprehensive multi-year reforms carried out by the Government of Georgia, thus making the passport of a citizen of Georgia more attractive for persons living in the occupied territories.

During the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan, Georgia carried out a number of legislative and institutional reforms to develop and introduce European standards for document security, new mechanisms for migration management, an integrated border management system, standards of personal data protection, effective mechanisms for combating organised crime, and improved standards of human rights protection.

### **Participation in international processes**

The association with the EU and the approximation to the European standards of migration management do not end once the right of the visa-free movement in the EU is granted. To retain this right and deepen the EU integration, the reforms have to continue and be strengthened. Therefore, it is important that the state agencies involved in migration management actively participate in international processes, develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation formats, and continue cooperation with the partner states and organisations.

Georgia's engagement in international processes allows Georgian state agencies to not only keep up with international dynamics and debates, but also to participate actively and express the position of Georgia on the issue(s) in question; raise topics important to the country; learn about achievements of other countries, and share its own experience with them.

Currently, through the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues and other state agencies, Georgia participates in the following international processes and forums:

- The **Prague Process** unifies EU, "Schengen" area, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, and the Central Asian countries. The Process is a political forum for deepening cooperation in the area of migration among member states. Currently, several pilot projects are in progress, including those implemented in Georgia aimed at improving the exchange of information among countries on the potential of legal migration, combating illegal migration, migration and development, and asylum. The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia actively participates in the seventh pilot project of the Prague Process in the area of asylum;
- The **Budapest Process** is a consultative forum of more than 50 governments and 10 international organisations. The Process was initiated by Germany in 1991 to work on joint measures against illegal migration. Currently, all components of migration are discussed at the forum. The number of countries involved in the Process is increasing, currently covering the so called Silk Road Countries as well. The Budapest Process works in three regions: South-East Europe, the Black Sea region, and the Silk Road region;
- **Global Forum on Migration and Development** is a comparatively new initiative of the UN aimed at studying and improving the relationship between migration and development policy at

national and international levels. One of the goals of the Forum is to agree upon international priorities and the agenda for migration and development issues;

- The **Panel on Migration and Asylum** is established under the Eastern Partnership Platform on Democracy, Good Governance and Stability. The Panel was created on the basis of the *Söderköping Process*. After becoming the member of the Eastern Partnership in 2011, Georgia also joined the Panel along with other Eastern Partnership member states. The main objective of the Panel is to enhance cooperation between the European Union and the Eastern Partnership member states to strengthen asylum and migration systems, advance dialogue, and facilitate the exchange of best practices;
- Under the framework of **Mobility Partnership**, the EU cooperates with the partner states, including Georgia, on combating illegal migration, stimulating legal migration, and developing the potential of circular migration.

### **The areas of international cooperation**

For the Georgian state, it is of particular importance to develop international (both bilateral and multilateral) cooperation formats in the following areas:

**Fight against illegal migration** - international cooperation in the areas of prevention, detection, and eradication of crime is carried out in compliance with the Law of Georgia on the International Cooperation in Law Enforcement (2014). To cooperate with the partner states in bilateral format, Georgia actively uses the police attachés who as of 2015 are deployed to Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Germany, Turkey, Greece, France, Armenia, Ukraine, Poland, and Spain. Attachés are planned to be deployed to other countries as well. The implementation of the current readmission agreements along with signing and effective enforcement of new agreements are the priorities of the Ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs of Georgia and are discussed in detail in Chapter V of this Strategy.

**Border cooperation** - agreements in the area of border management have been signed with neighbouring countries and the EU member states; action plans are developed annually together with the border authorities of partner countries. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has signed a working agreement with the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX). It is planned to introduce the position of a border representative – border commissioner in the future. The commissioner will facilitate bilateral cooperation and prevent border incidents, or in case of their occurrence, to conduct immediate investigation.

**Facilitation of circular migration and the nexus between migration and development** - at the international level, two government entities - the Office of the State Minister of Georgia on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia focus on circular migration agreements and temporary employment of skilled citizens of Georgia abroad. Under the 2013-2015 Migration Strategy, consultations were held with a number of countries to sign an agreement on circular migration. A temporary employment agreement is signed with the Republic

of France; however, the latter has to complete certain internal legal procedures for the agreement to be enforced. Since 2013, under the Mobility Partnership, a pilot circular migration project is being implemented within the Public Service Development Agency in partnership with Germany. In late 2015 a pilot project was launched with Estonia and Poland. The efforts to promote legal migration and the use of knowledge and qualifications obtained by migrants abroad for the development of the country will continue between 2016-2020 as well.

**Social protection for migrants** - it is important that Georgia seeks active cooperation with the main destination countries of Georgian migrants in order to sign relevant agreements with them.

The **development of asylum system** - international cooperation with the countries that have recognised experience in the area of asylum is important for the professional development of the employees, obtaining information about the country of origin, and for improving the overall asylum system. The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees actively cooperates with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other partners.

**Data collection and analysis** - For the collection and analysis of the migration-related data, it is important to improve the methodology for developing and calculating new indicators and for collecting, processing, and analysing data, through increased cooperation with the international organisations and the partner agencies of the relevant European or other countries. The deepening of cooperation between the National Statistics Offices and Eurostat is especially important not only for the professional development, but also for the improvement of data collection methodology, data exchange between agencies, data comparison and analysis.

## Goal

*Strengthening cooperation with partner countries and international organisations in compliance with the strategic objectives laid out in the document, and use the potential stemming from these partnerships for the further development of the migration policy.*

## Objectives

### a. Deepen cooperation with partner countries and international organisations

1. Deepening cooperation in criminal matters, as stipulated in the agreement on mutual legal assistance, and conducting the joint investigations, if necessary, to further simplify the exchange of information;
2. Sign the international law enforcement agreements or memorandums between Georgia and the appropriate agencies of foreign countries;
3. Develop partnership and sign agreements on operational cooperation with the European Police Office (EUROPOL) to increase the efficiency of combating the trans-border crime;
4. Further expansion of police attachés/liaison officers' network;



5. Work with other states to develop and sign the circular migration agreements to identify potential partner countries and launch negotiations on the subject of the agreements;
6. Establish a format for cooperation with the European Asylum Support Office to enhance the qualification of employees on the Georgian side, and develop and institutionalise the methodology of internal quality control of the asylum system;
7. Deepen cooperation between the National Statistics Office of Georgia and the Eurostat in order to collect, exchange and process data;
8. Enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation under the EU Eastern Partnership framework;
9. Under the framework of the Mobility Partnership, further develop existing initiatives and make effort to increase the number of projects.

## **XII. The approval and implementation of the Strategy**

After the public discussion over the draft Migration Strategy and agreeing upon the feedback provided by the relevant stakeholders, the project of the Strategy is endorsed by the State Commission on Migration Issues and submitted to the Government of Georgia for approval.

The implementation of the Migration Strategy will be coordinated by the State Commission on Migration Issues. An Action Plan will be developed comprising several stages - the first stage will cover 2016-2017, while the second stage (2018-2020) will comprise one-year Action Plans accordingly. The Migration Strategy Action Plan will be approved by the State Commission on Migration Issues. At the initiative of the Commission's member agency or of the international and non-governmental organisations having a consultative status in SCMI, the latter is authorised to consider the issue of amending the Action Plan.

*The Ordinance of the Government of Georgia No. 226 dated 04.05.2017 – website, 08.05.2017.*

The implementation of the Strategy is financed from the State Budget of Georgia with the financial support of donor organisations and partner countries.

The state agencies sitting on the State Commission on Migration Issues are the main implementing agencies of the Strategy. Local non-governmental and partner international organisations actively participate in the implementation of particular activities and in the accomplishment of the comprehensive goals provided for in the Action Plan.

### **Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy**

For the successful implementation of the Migration Strategy, a flexible monitoring mechanism and evaluation system is needed.

Monitoring and evaluation is one of the important components of the Strategy and represents an effective instrument for analysing the achieved results. The monitoring will determine the efficacy of the implementation of the activities set out in the Action Plan and identify the specific gaps and challenges during the implementation process. The evaluation system is necessary for assessing the achievement of the strategic objectives.

The monitoring on the implementation of Migration Strategy and action plan is carried out by the Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues. For this purpose, the Secretariat requests the responsible agencies to report on the progress made on a **quarterly basis** and subsequently, drafts a quarterly monitoring report.

To facilitate the monitoring and evaluation processes of the Migration Strategy, each agency must assign a contact person who will be fully informed about the obligations imposed by the Action Plan on the respective agency and will be responsible for providing the Secretariat with progress reports in a timely manner.

Once a year, the Secretariat will prepare a report on the implementation of the Strategy Action Plan based on the monitoring results and submit it to the Commission for consideration.

The Strategy is evaluated upon the completion of each part of the action plan in order to determine the achieved results, detect gaps in the implementation process and address shortcomings. The final evaluation report and recommendations are submitted to the State Commission on Migration Issues and to the Government.

The Migration Strategy may be evaluated by both the internal and external evaluators.