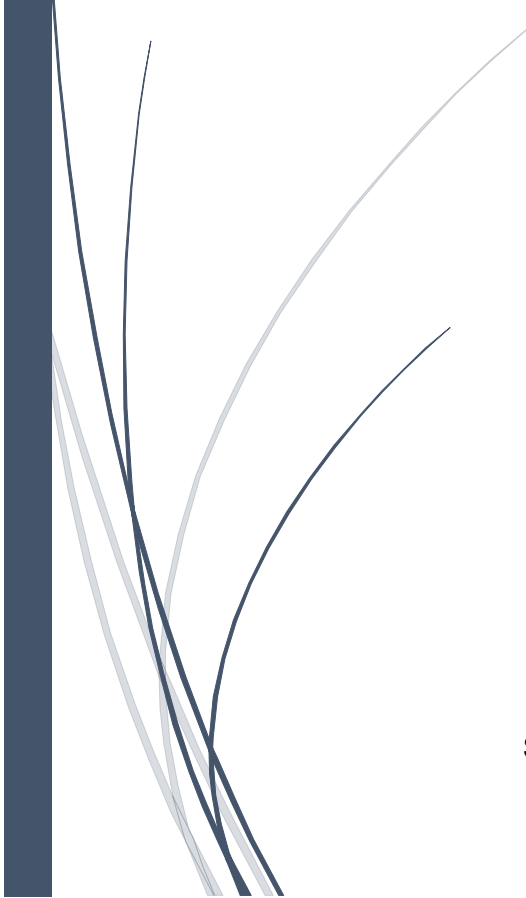




2019

Concept of 2021-2030 Migration Strategy of Georgia

Unofficial translation



State Commission on Migration Issues

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About the Concept

The present Concept is a general policy paper examining the need for elaboration of the 2021-2030 Migration Strategy. The document provides with problem identification, the vision, principles and sectorial priorities, which the Strategy should be built upon. It also includes the information on the mechanisms for the Strategy implementation.

The Concept is valid until the new Strategy is adopted (based on the given Concept) by the Government.

General framework of the Strategy

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

Consequently, applying the principle of 'Migration and Development' in the process of elaboration and practical implementation of the Strategy includes:

1. Formulation of goals and objectives at the Strategy elaboration phase, accomplishing of which will have a direct and positive impact on the country's development;
2. Inclusion of targeted programmes and specific supportive mechanisms in the process of Strategy Action Plans elaboration;
3. Elaboration of the Strategy evaluation indicators, which will make clear and measureable the impact of the specific goals/objectives' outcomes on the country's development.

Situation analysis

Development of the migration management system in Georgia started in the 1990s of the last century. Shortly after the country re-gained its independence, the basic structures were put in place (1995) and the first conceptual vision was elaborated (1997), which had to define the process of the further advancement of the system. Further on, increasing approximation to the European Union gave a new impetus to this process.¹ In order to further improve the system and increase its efficacy, the Migration Strategies for 2013-2015 and 2016-2020 were elaborated and enforced, and a corporate management body – the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI/Commission) was established (2010). It gathered all important actors operational in the field, and based the action on the whole-of-government approach. The 2016-2020 Strategy took into account the lessons-learned and was adjusted to the new realities, which in 2015 were established by the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and Visa Liberalisation Action Plan. During the implementation of the current Strategy, the new challenges emerged resulting from the major shifts and transformations that occurred in the sphere of migration at national, regional and global levels. Therefore, the forthcoming Strategy will be tasked to adjust to the new realities and continue addressing the modern challenges.

The current Strategy employs the notion of ‘Migration and Development’; however, like other aspects, it is represented as one of the separate chapters of the Strategy (therefore, failing to fully highlight the potential of development on the basis this very principle), and not as a frame, thus overlooking its overarching role. The main reason for such an approach was to make the implementing agencies better acquainted with the essence of this novelty. To some extent, this task was partially fulfilled and a platform was developed, which can be successfully applied for mainstreaming all integral components under the umbrella of ‘Migration and Development’ and formulate new strategic goals and objectives through this very prism.

In this view, a more conducive environment and opportunities were created in Georgia to ensure exercising the policy based on the above principle. From 2010 to date, the sectorial agencies had been established, developed and structurally expanded thus making possible to amalgamate the basic thematic directions and cluster them according to the existing linkages. A strong synergy between each thematic direction and their all with the overarching policy, is guaranteed by the platform represented by the Commission based on the corporate structure and shared responsibilities. On the other hand, the European Union is the main hub, to which the above-mentioned system is connected and receives the guidelines for further development and approximation to the European standards.

As the 2019 Migration Profile of Georgia shows, there is an increasing trend of emigration from Georgia in the course of the last years. With the visa free travel to the EU/Schengen area, the number of Georgian nationals being in irregular situation as well as facts of asylum applications have increased in these countries. However, it is also notable that the number of Georgian citizens legally residing abroad

¹ European Neighborhood Policy (2003); Eastern Partnership Initiative and Mobility Partnership (2009); Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements (2010); Visa Dialogue (2012); Visa Liberalization Action Plan (2013-2015); EU-Georgia Association Agreement (2014).

(and not only within the EU) is increasing as well, which indicates the growing trend of emigration. The findings of the studies carried out in the framework of the SCMI shows that due to poor social and economic conditions a certain part of Georgian population still plans to emigrate. Parallel to growing emigration, the volume of remittances is increasing as well, which according to the above mentioned studies represent a sole source of income for majority of migrant households. Hence, it can be rightfully suggested that reducing emigration flows from the perspective of the next years is less likely, which, consequently, raises the significance of bringing emigration flows under a safe and regulated framework and channel their potential towards country's development.

It is noteworthy that according to the official estimates made by UN DESA for 2019, the number of Georgian population by 2030 will fall down by 150 000², which in conjunction with other factors will be resulted from a higher rates of emigration.³

Parallel to growing emigration, an increasing number of returning emigrants is also noteworthy, and this trend is likely to continue in the coming years as well. It should be taking into account however, that the Migration Profile data refers the dynamics of return of the Georgian migrants who had been staying abroad illegally (the overall number of returning migrants can be bigger since the return of Georgian migrants legally residing abroad is not registered, hence, the relevant statistics is not available), underlining the need of collecting relevant data and improving statistics in this regard. Growing number of returning migrants demonstrates the likelihood of the greater need in reintegration services, which in turn can be translated into the increased budget of the state-run program of reintegration of returning migrants, which should be expanded in order to cover all categories of returnees.

According to the Migration Profile data, immigration to Georgia is on the rise as well. Due to liberal immigration policy, the educational environment being particularly attractive for foreigners, favourable conditions for doing business, increased international mobility as well as due to poor social, economic and political situation in certain countries the growing trend of immigration to Georgia is expected to continue for coming years. Provided that immigrants come to Georgia mainly for study, work or business activities, their growing number results in bigger contributions to the state budget and increased turnover of the educational or business institutions. However, the potential of these groups of immigrants for country's development is considerable, which by considering country's national interests necessitates putting in place a pragmatic integration policy and relevant programmes.

Structure of the Strategy

The gained experience and a long-term nature of the upcoming Strategy dictates to formulate the new objectives in the broader terms while specifying important details in the activities of corresponding

² <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

³ https://georgia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/3.%20Population%20Dynamics_ENGL%20_print_F.pdf

Action Plan. This will prevent duplication of objectives at the implementation stage and make it easier to fine-tune and relate specific activity to each objective, thus ensuring a strong nexus between the two. The above should also be supported by the sectorial strategies and/or other policy documents of the thematic agencies related to the field of migration management, as well as their good performance and relations with sectorial strategy. This in turn will expand the operational area and facilitate the implementation process. Proceeding from this principle, the term of the new Strategy will be expanded to ten years, the major themes will be broadened and the main emphasis shifted on its implementation mechanism (i.e. action plan).

Commonly, such long-term strategies represent conceptual documents, aiming at articulating a long-term strategic vision in the field and formulating “global” goals. Such documents are usually more concise since there are many implementing actors, and each institution should, within the common framework, define how and in which form to reflect the principles and objectives of the Strategy in its own field of operation. Hence, keeping the relatively general text in such strategies has its own reasons. First and foremost, it will help to explicate the state’s long-term vision in the field of migration management. Secondly, a stronger demand will apply to the implementation process, its mechanism and the agencies involved, thus helping the coordinating body to avoid frequent amendments to the document.

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

Strategic directions

The set of strategic documents and concepts, developed in the fields relevant to migration, coupled with the obligations undertaken by Georgia under various international agreements along with the national legal and institutional framework, create the necessary context for developing a new Strategy.

The strategic goals (i.e. “umbrella directions”) are defined by several interlinked and mutually depended dimensions - the local, regional and global. As a rule, the local priorities are built upon the state’s national, individual and sectorial interests; however, they may also proceed from the regional (e.g. Europe/EU with the Association Agreement and long-term objectives of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan) and/or through it from global (e.g. UN - Sustainable Development Goals) framework.

To this end, the Objective 10.7⁴ of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is noteworthy, which is nationalised by the Government of Georgia and accomplishment of the major part of the 2021-2030 Migration Strategy and its Action Plans is defined as a key evaluation indicator. Herewith,

⁴ “Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”

ensuring essential relevance of the national strategy's main directions with the global (international) level evaluation indicators and measuring instruments⁵ of the Objective 10.7 is important in order to ensure synchronised process of implementation at both the international and the local levels.

Hence, under the overarching approach of 'Migration and Development' the new Strategy, in accordance with the national interests and specifics, will comprise of all directions present in three above-mentioned dimensions.

Taking into account the relevance of the main thematic areas (facilitation of legal and prevention of irregular migration, international protection, integration-reintegration, enhancing the migration management system, awareness raising and international cooperation) the goals of the new Strategy will not deviate from those given in its predecessor, the thematic directions of which were taken from those three above-mentioned and currently relevant dimensions. However, the implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be subjected to change.

The main goal of the Strategy, developed and launched by applying this very principle, will be – the formulation of the state's concrete national interests in the field, adjusting to them the 'Migration and Development' policy, and, by applying successful international practice, developing its own system aimed at providing response to the challenges faced by the modern communities.

Development of the Strategy

A well-organized working process for the strategy elaboration is the one of the important prerequisites for developing a good strategic document. The strategy by itself is not a collection of the "verity" notions and "right" policies experienced by other countries. It is a practical document, which first defines the future objectives based on available resources and given realities, and can be created only through the cooperation and distribution of responsibilities between of all interested stakeholders. No matter how "proper" the analysis and objectives of the strategy can be, it is absolutely impossible for the strategic document to reach the defined goal unless it is not well-considered and understood by its implementing stakeholders.

The Strategy development working process will be coordinated by the Migration Lab functioning under the Commission, unifying all its member agencies and offering an open working platform to other state entities as well as international and non-governmental organisations, academia, independent researchers/expert, i.e. all those capable to provide with thematic expertise during the elaboration of the document.

While working on the Strategy document, the working group composed of the field specialists with good knowledge and long-term experience will use the several sources: the results of evaluation of the

⁵ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=10&Target=10.7>

present Strategy and its Action Plans, and concrete recommendations of targeted studies outlining the shortcomings, ways to address them, challenges, opportunities and risks.

The requirements set by the new procedures of “Elaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents”,⁶ the generally applied standards of strategic planning as well as the experience gained from elaboration and implementation of the present Strategy will be duly considered.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy

The monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy include the following components: 1. Regular monitoring over the implementation of the Action Plans; 2. Annual evaluation of the Action Plan implementation based on monitoring reports; 3. Interim (2026) and final (2031) evaluation of the Strategy based on the performance indicators.

Along with the Strategy, the indicators to measure the results of its goals and objectives, will be developed and adopted.

⁶ The relevant package of documents developed by the administration of the Government of Georgia is in process of adoption.