VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW
GEORGIA
VNR 2024
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<td>EPR</td>
<td>Extended Producer Responsibility</td>
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<td>GEOSTAT</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
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<td>Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>GEO/CO/6</td>
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<td>CEPA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement</td>
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<td>CGM</td>
<td>Continuous Glucose Monitoring</td>
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<td>CPT</td>
<td>European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Committee on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>DRG</td>
<td>Diagnosis-Related Group</td>
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<td>EFTA</td>
<td>European Free Trade Association</td>
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<td>EHR</td>
<td>Electronic Health Record</td>
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<td>EIMS</td>
<td>Environmental Information Management System</td>
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<td>Equal Pay International Coalition</td>
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<td>European Training Foundation</td>
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<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Good Distribution Practice in the pharmaceutical market</td>
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<td>GMP</td>
<td>Good Manufacturing Practice in the pharmaceutical market</td>
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<td>GRETA</td>
<td>Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings</td>
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<td>GREVIO</td>
<td>Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Criminal Court</td>
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<td>ICDO</td>
<td>International Civil Defence Organization</td>
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<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<td>KFW</td>
<td>KFW Development Bank</td>
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<td>LNOB</td>
<td>Leave No One Behind</td>
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<td>MEPA</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PM10</td>
<td>Particulate Matter</td>
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<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>SDGS</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SPT</td>
<td>Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</td>
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<td>TPES</td>
<td>Total Primary Energy Supply</td>
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<td>TSA</td>
<td>Targeted Social Assistance</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNWTO</td>
<td>United Nations World Tourism Organization</td>
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<td>UPU CA</td>
<td>Universal Postal Union Council of Administration</td>
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<td>UPU POC</td>
<td>Universal Postal Union Postal Operations Council</td>
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<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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This report assesses Georgia’s progress in implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and at the same time, it emphasizes the importance of transforming the state’s political commitment into sectoral reforms to improve the country’s well-being at the national, regional, and local levels. The document also focuses on the main challenges in achieving SDGs and the important steps taken by the Government of Georgia to address them.

Against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has had a challenging journey since Georgia’s 2nd Voluntary National Review submitted in 2020. During this period, there was a post-pandemic economic contraction, succeeded by rapid double-digit economic growth in 2021-2022, and followed by high economic growth in 2023. For 2024, the International Monetary Fund revised Georgia’s economic growth forecast upward to 5.7% from 4.8%. Among the countries in the region and Europe, Georgia is anticipated to achieve the highest average economic growth of 5.1% in the medium term (2024-2029).

It is also noteworthy that there has been a trend of decreasing unemployment levels since 2021, resulting in lower unemployment compared to the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, in 2023, this indicator reached the lowest level of the last decade, standing at 16.4%. According to data from the first quarter of 2024, it decreased to 14.0%.

Georgia is actively pursuing sustainable industrialization of the economy and the development of the processing sector within the country. According to data from 2023, foreign direct investment in the manufacturing industry has doubled compared to 2022. Additionally, small and medium entrepreneurship creates significant opportunities for the development of the industrial sector. According to the OECD SME Policy Index, the country holds the highest index among the Eastern Partnership countries at 4.02, which significantly exceeds the average index of these countries, standing at 3.61. The high level of information technology development in Georgia should be also noted, which serves as an important prerequisite for the process of sustainable industrialization. One of the key drivers of this progress is the Agency for Innovation and Technology, which implements projects aimed at facilitating access to finance, technology transfer, and fostering innovation within society.

To ensure sustainable industrialization, the Government of Georgia is implementing new approaches to encourage investment in renewable energy. Work is actively underway to directly link the country’s electricity market with the European market through the Black Sea Submarine Cable Project. Additionally, efforts are being made towards developing the production of green hydrogen and integrated energy and climate plans. In 2021, Georgia approved its 2030 Climate Change Strategy, which focuses on the goals and objectives set by the country in addressing climate change.

The report examines the country’s social policy directions, the measures taken to enhance the health sector, and the education system. Within the framework of this policy, strengthening vulnerable groups and addressing social inequality remain among the country’s priorities. Important measures have been implemented to ensure the welfare of pensioners, including the introduction of the cumulative pension system in 2019 and the indexation rule in 2020. Participation in the accumulated pension scheme ensures financial security and a dignified old age for the scheme participants. In the near and medium term, pension assets will create a significant (several billion GEL) investment capital base in the country, which will be crucial for the development of the capital market and sustainable economic growth in Georgia.

The country actively works to include vulnerable groups in the social system and provide them with benefits across various sectors. Social expenditures constitute a significant portion of the total govern-

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1 EaP countries: Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan.
ment expenditures, comprising more than a fifth of the state budget. At the same time, promoting regional development, with a special emphasis on high mountainous regions, remains a priority. This includes the introduction of EU cohesion (reduction of disparities) policy approaches with the support of the European Union. To increase the involvement of socially vulnerable families in the labor market, the Government of Georgia continues to implement the State Employment Promotion Program, which has been in place since 2015.

The constant improvement of the healthcare sector and the availability of healthcare services are supported by the Universal Healthcare Program. The purpose of this program, in addition to improving the quality of medical services, is to reduce citizens’ out-of-pocket costs for basic healthcare services. For the reporting period, the universal healthcare program covers 96% of the population. As a result of increased access to health services, the country successfully coped with the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the development of telemedicine. Georgia’s progress in controlling HIV/AIDS and reducing hepatitis C cases, aided by a successful hepatitis C elimination program, is noteworthy. However, Tuberculosis (TB) prevention and treatment remain a challenge, which the State TB Control Program aims to improve. Active work continues, and significant progress is observed in reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases. Specifically, the death rate related to cardiovascular diseases per 100,000 people decreased by 20% in 2022 (475.2) compared to 2020 (594.4). Additionally, the death rate of people suffering from cancer decreased by 44% in 2022 (122) compared to 2020 (217.3).

The Government of Georgia approved the 2022-2030 Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia, with the main goal of increasing the quality and inclusiveness of education. A new model of inclusive education support system was developed, consolidating support services into one space. It is noteworthy that by 2023, the percentage of fully adapted schools increased to 25%, and the share of partially adapted schools increased to 59%.

Budget funding for higher education has increased as well (funding for higher education from the general government budget amounted to 542.4 million GEL in 2022, and 610 million GEL in 2023). The Government of Georgia has also developed a new model of financing vocational education, aimed at supporting the growth of financial and human resources and ensuring more effective budget management in response to the expanding scale of vocational education.

During the reporting period, several important steps were taken to promote democracy and protect human rights. The level of equality in the country has increased, with improved legal guarantees for the protection of the status of women and girls, as well as enhanced institutional arrangements. Georgia has made significant progress in fulfilling its international obligations regarding gender equality and aligning with the requirements of international conventions. To enhance the rights of vulnerable groups, several strategic documents have been developed in the country, among which the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection (2022-2030) and its Action Plan hold particular significance. To ensure good governance, the country has strengthened its justice system, including the police and penitentiary systems. Within these institutions, additional guarantees have been established to promote the full integration of vulnerable groups. Taking into account the recommendation of the European Union, a completely new institutional approach was formed in the anti-corruption direction, leading to the creation of an independent Anti-Corruption Bureau. The Bureau consolidates a number of anti-corruption functions that were previously distributed across different agencies.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is being pursued against the backdrop of Russia’s illegal occupation of two indivisible regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. The Russian Federation continues the growing militarization of Georgia’s Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, constructing barbed-wire and artificial barriers along the occupation line, and taking other illegal steps. As a result, the security, humanitarian

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1 Available on the website of the Legislative Herald of Georgia.
2 Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of Georgia.
and human rights situation on the ground is deteriorating. Violations of fundamental human rights, including but not limited to the violation of the right to life, torture and ill-treatment, abduction and illegal detention of individuals, discrimination based on ethnic grounds, denial of the right to education in native Georgian language, restrictions on freedom of movement, and denial of access to property and healthcare, etc., by Russia and its occupation regimes, have been aggravating the heavy burden of occupation for the conflict-affected population. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees, forced from their homes due to multiple waves of ethnic cleansing, are still denied the opportunity to return to their homes in safety and dignity.

The Russian Federation takes active steps to integrate Georgia’s indivisible regions into its political, military, economic, social, cultural and other fields through signing so-called integration agreements or memoranda, as well as transferring strategically important lands and objects to the Russian Federation, such as Bichvinta Resort, Sokhumi airport, etc. Russia continues to restrict the activities of international organizations, particularly the UN agencies, and international non-governmental organizations in the Georgia’s occupied region of Abkhazia.

Occupation and effective control of Georgian territories by Russia have been confirmed by numerous decisions of international courts, including the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). These court decisions legally attested Russia’s full responsibility over the human rights violations in the occupied regions of Georgia.

Against the background of Russia’s occupation of Georgian territories, the Government of Georgia is steadfastly pursuing a policy of peaceful conflict resolution. This approach encompasses two equally important directions: the de-occupation of Georgian regions by the Russian Federation, and reconciliation and engagement between the populations divided by the occupation lines. Georgia spares no efforts to use effectively the Geneva International Discussions, utilizing this platform as a significant tool to ensure that the Russian Federation fulfils its international
obligations. The implementation of the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, and return of IDPs and refugees to their homes of origin.

On December 14, 2023, the European Council made a historic decision to grant Georgia the EU candidate status. This significant development elevated Georgia-EU relations to a completely new strategic level, further integrating the country’s future with the united family of European democracies. This recognition reflects the intensive work carried out by Georgia over the years. It should be followed by the commencement of negotiations on joining the European Union and a new wave of reforms aligned with EU standards.

The Government of Georgia will persist in its dedicated and consistent policy to overcome challenges on the path towards achieving SDGs. Additionally, it will continue to gather and disseminate best practices both regionally and globally.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RELEVANT POLICIES

During the reporting period, the emergence of the new pandemic caused by COVID-19 presented the world with numerous challenges. From the outset, Georgia proactively engaged in combating the threats associated with the virus and implemented appropriate measures to overcome it.

To mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic, the Government of Georgia implemented several targeted measures to strengthen the competitiveness of the business sector and enhance social protection mechanisms. These measures included: wage subsidies, financial support for the unemployed (including those in the informal sector), social transfers, tax benefits for businesses, support for loan restructuring, state support programs, liquidity supply mechanisms, and sectoral policy measures. These efforts helped maintain employment and create a solid foundation for the economy’s quick recovery.

Specific support programs were implemented in the agriculture, tourism, and construction sectors. These sectoral support instruments included grants, interest rate subsidies on loans and leasing, insurance schemes in the agricultural sector, credit guarantees, and assistance with the implementation of international standards.

To mitigate the consequences caused by the restriction of economic activity, significant changes were made to the Tax Code of Georgia. These changes included the establishment of benefits in the amount of income and property taxes, extending payment terms, and providing tax exemptions.

The country has also implemented important measures to improve the sustainability of the healthcare system, which include enhancing the ability of medical infrastructure, boosting the capacity of health personnel, and improving clinical management capabilities. The practice of remote delivery of healthcare services has also been established. In Georgia, the educational process has been conducted continuously and effectively. Significant steps have been taken in the education system through the introduction of distance and/or hybrid teaching methods and the integration of various innovative platforms into the educational process.
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an action plan for people, the planet, and prosperity. It brings together all countries and stakeholders to implement it and transform the world by protecting fundamental human rights and freedoms, eradicating poverty, and ensuring a high quality of life. Despite the significant progress made in various areas to date, there are still many effective steps that need to be taken in order to successfully achieve the target indicators outlined by the 2030 Agenda.

It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented the world with unprecedented challenges and significantly slowed down the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, this crisis has highlighted the specific challenges faced by countries. Under these conditions, the Government of Georgia implemented a number of important interventions to support economic growth and human capital development, thereby contributing to the smooth progress of the country towards the Sustainable Development Goals. However, despite the efforts made by the government, the impact of the pandemic is still being felt in many areas. For Georgia, the global crisis of the pandemic has particularly emphasized the importance of implementing SDGs in the areas of health and the economy.

Georgia continues to commit to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming to contribute to world peace and support people’s well-being. The ongoing socio-economic transformation and democracy-supporting reforms in the country, along with steps taken towards environmental protection, establish a solid foundation for implementing SDGs, guided by the principle of “leave no one behind” (LNOB).

In 2022, the Government of Georgia approved the comprehensive strategy of the national level – “Vision 2030 – Development Strategy of Georgia”⁴, which formed the framework of the country’s development management system. Achieving the results outlined in the document is ensured by implementing the set goals and objectives. Additionally, in 2019, the Government of Georgia approved the National Document for the Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at promoting the implementation of SDGs and planning relevant policies accordingly. It is also a significant priority for Georgia to implement the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level, and consequently, to undertake the process of localizing the SDGs in all 64 municipalities of Georgia.

Georgia submitted the Voluntary National Review (VNR) report (hereinafter – the “Report”) to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in both 2016 and 2020. The first report outlined the country’s initial efforts towards implementing the SDGs. Alongside a general assessment of the progress made, it also included future steps to be taken. In 2020, a second report was presented to the UN, detailing progress around the goals, challenges, and future plans. In 2024, Georgia presents its third report, reviewing the progress the country has made since 2020. Alongside best practices and challenges, the document discusses the initiatives and solutions that the government has implemented over the past four years to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

The 2024 report is a document created as a result of an inclusive and participatory process. The preparation involved various stakeholders, and existing institutional mechanisms were used for consultations. This report serves as another opportunity for Georgia to reaffirm its readiness to fulfill its commitments and uphold the principles of transparency and accountability throughout this process.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

The implementation of SDGs is coordinated nationwide by the Administration of the Government of Georgia, which serves as the central agency of executive power.

⁴ Available on the website of the Legislative Herald of Georgia.
The coordination of the process is overseen by the high-ranking Interagency Council for Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter referred to as “the Council”), led by the Head of Government Administration. The council comprises deputy ministers, representatives from international and local non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, members of parliament, and representatives from municipalities. The analytical and technical support for the Council is provided by the Secretariat of the Sustainable Development Goals Council (hereinafter referred to as the “Secretariat”), represented by the Policy Planning and Coordination Division of the Government of Georgia.

At the operational level, coordination of the implementation of goals and related processes is conducted through four thematic working groups:

- Economic development;
- Social inclusion;
- Sustainable energy and environment protection;
- Democratic governance.

To implement an inclusive approach in practice, each working group has a chairperson from the relevant public agency and two co-chairpersons. One co-chair represents a non-governmental organization, while the other represents a relevant UN agency.

The country ensures the measurement of progress in implementing the SDGs through indicators defined in the national SDG document. This document outlines 17 goals (identified as national priorities) and 201 indicators. These indicators correspond to the long-term goals of the country and are adapted to the local context. Progress is also measured through comprehensive monitoring of various sectoral policy documents approved by the government in accordance with prescribed regulations.

Responsibility for the implementation of the goals is distributed among public agencies according to their respective fields. At the same time, the Government of Georgia recognizes that for the successful achievement of these goals, it is crucial to have comprehensive dialogue and active involvement of stakeholders and society. This ensures that the progress achieved reflects the well-being of each citizen and that no one is left behind in the process.

It should be noted that in 2019, the Parliament of Georgia approved the “Strategy of the Parliament of Georgia for the Promotion and Monitoring of the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals,” which extends until 2030. The document aims to facilitate the implementation and monitoring process of the sustainable development agenda in the country by utilizing the Parliament of Georgia’s effective supervisory and law-making mechanisms.

**REPORT DRAFTING PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY**

The report was developed by the Administration of the Government of Georgia, which also serves as the secretariat of the Interagency Coordination Council for Sustainable Development Goals. Throughout this process, the administration closely cooperated with independent experts and relevant public agencies. The report includes contributions from the Parliament of Georgia, municipalities, civil society and international organizations.

An important role in the development of the report was played by the National Statistics Office of Georgia, responsible for collecting main data on sustainable development. In the process of data collection, a unified electronic platform for monitoring the implementation of SDGs was also utilized. This platform provides comprehensive information on Georgia’s data regarding national indicators of SDGs.

The structure of the document follows the official methodology and guidelines of the United Nations, while its content is derived from a comprehensive analysis of both the National Statistics Office and administrative data. Additionally, international and local studies, as well as various government reports discussing interventions carried out in Georgia at national or sectoral levels, have been incorporated into the document.

Following consultations with state agencies, three main priority areas were identified:

1. Human capital development and social welfare.
2. Economic growth.
3. Democratic governance.
The selected priority areas cover the full range of SDGs and align with the national and sectoral policies defined by the government. The document offers a comprehensive analysis of issues pertaining to human capital and social well-being, which constitute the cornerstone of the government’s agenda. It aims to enhance societal well-being and promote equality policies that guarantee access to essential services and developmental opportunities for all citizens. The document offers a comprehensive analysis of issues pertaining to human capital and social well-being, which constitute the cornerstone of the government’s agenda. It aims to enhance societal well-being and promote equality policies that guarantee access to essential services and development opportunities for all citizens. Economic growth is emphasized as a fundamental aspect of a country’s sustainable development. This priority is aimed not only at enhancing national well-being but also at ensuring a stable economy capable of addressing global challenges and fostering long-term development. Democratic governance is delineated as the third critical area, underscoring the government’s commitment to establishing a robust, inclusive, and results-oriented governance framework. This endeavor aims to foster transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in the political process, thereby fortifying democratic institutions and practices.

Each selected priority area assesses key achievements, challenges, best practices, and outlines future plans.

In the initial stage, the report development methodology, document structure, approaches, and schedule of activities to be implemented were established.

The second stage included thematic research, as well as statistical data analysis of 17 goals and indicators of their tasks. Based on this, the initial draft of the report was prepared. The developed document was shared within the thematic working groups of the SDG Council for consultations.

In the third stage, the team working on the document discussed the received recommendations and comments, incorporating them into the final version of the report accordingly.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In the policy-making process of the Government of Georgia, the economic, social, and environmental dimensions hold a central position. The interrelationship among these dimensions is crucial for fostering long-term prosperity and development, not only within Georgia but also globally.

To foster inclusive economic growth, government policy prioritizes job creation and the advancement of small and medium entrepreneurship. Government policy is aimed at promoting a diversified and sustainable economy, reducing dependence on individual sectors. To increase economic productivity, significant emphasis is placed on promoting the adoption of innovation and sustainable technologies, as well as implementing infrastructure projects.

In pursuit of improving the standard of living for the population, the government is consistently undertaking social policy reforms. Among its priority tasks are reducing poverty, promoting social equality, and ensuring quality education, which serves as a guarantee for human capital development and sustainable progress.

The government’s environmental policy aims at preserving natural resources and protecting biodiversity. This encompasses the establishment of sustainable land use practices, initiatives for reforestation, and the preservation of critical ecosystems. In addition, the transition to renewable energy sources is promoted to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and mitigate environmental degradation. Additionally, promoting a circular and green economy approach to waste minimization and environmental pollution elimination is an important priority.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND THEIR LINKAGES WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2019, the Georgian government approved the National Document on Sustainable Development Goals, which outlines the priority directions determined by the government at the national level. The purpose of the mentioned document is to promote
the implementation of SDGs and to plan relevant policies. The document equally addresses three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. Through inclusive work, all 17 goals were designated as national priorities, and the base and target indicators of 201 indicators were determined.

It should be noted that the government is reforming the policy planning and coordination system. Within this framework, in 2019, the stages of development, monitoring, and evaluation of policy documents5 were regulated for the first time at the legislative level. Unified procedures, methodology, and standards were developed. Importantly, the new legislative framework requires a clear link between national, sectoral, and institutional policy documents. It also mandates linking each goal and impact presented in policy documents to the SDGs.

It should be noted that to facilitate the strengthening of linkages between policy documents and the budget, a “policy classifier” was added to the electronic budget management system (ebudget) in 2022. This addition allows spending institutions to link their programs/subprograms to the relevant “policy classifier”, including the SDGs.

Following the establishment of new standards in policy planning, an important emphasis is placed on ensuring an inclusive process throughout the policy cycle. This implies consultation with citizens, beneficiaries, and stakeholders in general. Public consultations have become mandatory before the government approves policy documents. This approach ensures the promotion of one of the main principles of the 2030 Agenda – “leave no one behind”. The inclusiveness of the process at the policy-making stage guarantees that special attention is paid to the needs of every citizen.

The “Vision 2030 – Development Strategy of Georgia,” approved by the Government of Georgia, is the first long-term policy document developed in accordance with the new standards. It represents the unified vision of the government and includes the global directions and priorities of the country’s development. The document ensures continuity of reforms, systematic and coordinated policy planning, correct assessment of resources and potential, and their maximum effective use. The strategy is based on the principles of international cooperation and reflects all 17 Sustainable Development Goals declared as a priority by the country.

In accordance with the “Vision 2030 – Development Strategy of Georgia” and the national document on Sustainable Development Goals, the Government of Georgia has approved a number of sectoral documents. One such document is the 2030 Climate Change Strategy6 of Georgia, which serves as a mechanism for planning and implementing coordinated efforts to achieve the goals set at the national level in the direction of mitigating climate change. Alongside it, the “Fourth National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia for 2022-2026”,7 which is the main strategic document of the country in the field of environment and natural resources management, is important. It is worth noting the “2022-2030 National Health Protection Strategy of Georgia”,8 which aims to improve the health status of the population through universal access to health services and equal distribution of the financial burden. The Government of Georgia approved the “2022-2030 Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia”,9 prioritizing quality, equality, and inclusiveness of education. In addition, during the reporting period, the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2023-2026 and the Open Government Action Plan of Georgia for 2024-2025 were approved. The purpose of these initiatives is to strengthen democracy, effective governance, transparency, and accountability, as well as to enhance the quality of service delivery to citizens at all levels. In 2022, a National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights was approved, addressing issues of human rights and freedoms and aligning with UN standards and Sustainable Development Goals.

6 Available on the website of the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture of Georgia.
7 Available on the website of the Legislative Herald of Georgia.
8 Available on the website of the Legislative Herald of Georgia.
9 Available on the website of the Legislative Herald of Georgia.
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<th>POLICY DOCUMENT</th>
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<td>Climate change Change strategy Strategy of Georgia – for 2021-2030</td>
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<td>National Strategy on Chemical, Biological, Radiation and Nuclear Threat Reduction</td>
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<td>2022-2030 National Healthcare Strategy of Georgia</td>
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<td>2022-2030 Mental Health Strategy</td>
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<td>Strategy for ensuring access to sources of livelihood for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and families affected by natural events and subject to displacement (eco-migrants)</td>
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<td>State Tobacco Control Strategy 2021-2025</td>
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<td>Public Internal Financial Control System Development Strategy 2021-2024</td>
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<td>National Road Safety Strategy – 2022-2025</td>
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<td>Capital Market Development Strategy of Georgia – 2023-2028</td>
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<td>State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030</td>
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<td>The National Human Rights Protection Strategy of Georgia for 2022-2030</td>
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<td>National Action Plan on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and Measures to be Implemented for the Protection of Victims (Survivors) for 2022-2024</td>
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<td>Strategy for the Public Administration Reform for 2023-2026</td>
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<td>National Strategy for Combating Organized Crime 2021-2024</td>
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10 Policy documents developed by the government.
In accordance with the Constitution of Georgia, issues of local importance are regulated at the level of local self-governance, where the representative function is performed by the municipal council and the executive function is performed by the mayor of the municipality. Local self-governance in Georgia is fully implemented in 64 municipalities. Therefore, in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda, special attention is paid to the active involvement of local authorities and stakeholders. The role of municipalities is unique in identifying local needs and priorities.

In 2021, the Administration of the Government of Georgia, which simultaneously serves as the secretariat of the Council, prepared an SDGs Localization Action Plan. This plan, formulated based on consultations with relevant agencies and partners, taking into account the best international practices, UN recommendations, and the Georgian context, was unanimously approved by the Council in the same year. According to the plan, it was determined that the process of localizing the SDGs will be implemented in 64 municipalities of Georgia.

### PROCESS OF SDG LOCALIZATION

The process of consistently introducing SDGs in municipalities is ongoing. This is attributed to the presence of a unified SDG localization Action Plan and localization handbook tailored to Georgia’s context, as well as to the functioning of the efficient, multisectoral, and representative coordination mechanism of the SDG implementation system at the central level. The presence of these factors led to the transition to the active phase of SDG localization in 50% of Georgian municipalities in a short period of time.

In line with global best practices, the introduction of SDGs commenced with informational events held in municipalities. Subsequently, SDG localization working groups were established in each municipality, involving representatives from city hall services and various stakeholders at different stages of the process. The purpose of creating these groups is to translate and implement Agenda 2030 within the local context, taking into account local needs and capacities, as well as fully respecting the principle: “Leave no one behind.”

### Diagram 1. Priority SDGs selected by 29 municipalities of Georgia

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11 All municipalities in Georgia are considered, with the exception of territories occupied by Russia.
As a result of the joint work, the framework documents for the SDGs of the municipalities were developed, defining the goals, objectives, and relevant indicators tailored to each municipality (including baseline and 2030 target indicators). The local SDG framework documents prepared by the working groups were approved by the municipal councils through relevant normative acts.

After the approval of the local SDG framework documents, the priority SDG goals and objectives identified by the municipalities were integrated into the relevant municipal priorities, programs, and sub-programs outlined in the municipalities’ policy documents, including action plans and annual budgets.

To promote and continually monitor the implementation of sustainable development goals, local councils for sustainable development goals and thematic working groups were established in municipalities. The councils were composed of representatives from local self-government bodies and stakeholders.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PLANS IN THE PROCESS OF LOCALIZING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The main challenge in the process of SDG localization is the shortage of human and financial resources for both local government and the business sector, as well as civil society organizations.

The absence of accurate statistical data at the municipality level poses another challenge. This factor complicates the development of suitable and effective interventions for SDG implementation, as well as the evaluation of the impact of implemented measures. These challenges are particularly pronounced in sparsely populated and mountainous municipalities.

In the upcoming years, with the active engagement of local and international partners, efforts will persist to enhance the implementation of the SDGs at the local level and address the existing challenges. According to the SDG Localization Action Plan, the localization process of SDGs is projected to be finalized in all 64 municipalities of Georgia by 2025.
Since Georgia’s last Voluntary National Review in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the country has encountered notable challenges. This period was marked by a considerable economic downturn due to the pandemic, succeeded by rapid double-digit economic growth in 2021-2022, and further high economic growth in 2023. Despite the geopolitical crisis in the region, the country managed to maintain macroeconomic stability and take significant steps toward sustainable, inclusive economic development. Consequently, from 2020 to 2023, the economy grew by an average of 5.7% annually (experiencing a 6.3% decline in 2020). In the post-pandemic period (2021-2023), the average economic growth equaled 9.7%. In the first quarter of 2024, real GDP grew by 8.4%. Despite significant challenges, in 2023, Georgia became a candidate country for EU membership, opening up new opportunities for maintaining high economic growth, sustainable industrialization, green economy, and energy development.

For the first time, Georgia participated in the process of preparing the medium-term economic reforms program using the methodology developed by the European Commission for candidate countries for EU membership. The country submitted the “Economic Reforms Program” for 2024-2026 to the European Commission within the stipulated time (January 15, 2024). This document serves as a tool for medium-term expenditure planning for candidate countries, encompassing the macroeconomic and fiscal framework alongside structural reforms. It draws upon the Country Basic Data and Directions Document 2024-2027 of the country, the 2024 State Budget Law of Georgia, Vision 2030 – Development Strategy of Georgia, and various policy documents.

4.1 ECONOMIC GROWTH

The year 2022 proved to be quite challenging for Georgia. Just as the region was beginning to recover from the adverse effects of the pandemic, another significant crisis unfolded – Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Against the backdrop of geopolitical instability, prices of goods increased significantly, and their supply became more difficult. Companies started to withdraw from the affected areas, and in response to disruptions and challenges in supply chains, the development of alternative routes became necessary.

- As a result of the global pandemic, the real GDP of Georgia decreased by 6.3% in 2020.
- In 2021 and 2022, the economy of Georgia demonstrated rapid recovery, with consecutive double-digit economic growth recorded at 10.6% and 11.0%, respectively.
- The trend of high growth persisted in 2023, with economic growth reaching 7.5%, as for the first quarter of 2024 reaching 8.4% (SDG 8.1.1), surpassing the sustainable development target indicator of 5%.

The aforementioned economic growth rate was attributed to several factors, among which was the European Union granting candidate country status to Georgia. This development significantly enhanced economic growth expectations. The International Monetary Fund revised its economic growth forecast for Georgia in 2024, setting it at 5.7% instead of the previously projected 4.8%. According to the current forecast, Georgia is expected to have the highest economic growth among the countries of the region and Europe in the medium term (2024-2029), with an average of 5.1%.

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12 National Statistics Office of Georgia
13 Preliminary calculations of the National Statistics Office of Georgia
14 Available on the website of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia
15 Preliminary calculations of the National Statistics Office of Georgia
Despite significant external challenges and the geopolitical situation, Georgia’s economy maintained its stability and achieved one of the highest rates of economic growth in Europe and the region, thanks to reliable and sound macroeconomic policies, institutional strength, and an attractive business environment. The most positive contribution to post-pandemic economic growth was the increase in investment activity, positively influenced by public capital expenditures. Over the past three years, foreign currency inflows have also grown significantly, contributing to the stability of the exchange rate. Migration flows played a positive role in economic growth in 2022, and a large part of them was maintained in 2023 as well. Overall, post-pandemic economic growth has been quite diversified.

According to data from 2023, Georgia’s GDP per capita saw a notable increase, reaching $8,219 (SDG 8.1.1). Foreign trade also exhibited a growing trend.

- In 2023, foreign trade turnover reached 22 billion USD, which is 13% higher than in 2022.
- In 2023, exports exceeded 6.1 billion USD, marking a 9% increase compared to the previous year.
- In 2019-2023, exports increased by 60%, while imports grew by 64%. With the growing investments and capital inflows, the country’s negative trade balance has also increased, reaching 9.5 billion US dollars.

Georgia has one of the highest rates of foreign direct investment among the countries of the region and Europe in relation to GDP. Following a significant decline in foreign direct investment in 2020, approximately USD 5 billion was invested over the last three years. On average, direct foreign investment amounted to 6.8% of GDP, which is higher than the indicator of similar countries to Georgia.

Additionally, capital inflows increased, and investment activities accelerated.
- Compared to 2021, direct foreign investments in Georgia increased by 67% in 2022, reaching 2 billion dollars.
- Compared to 2021, the ratio of total investments (direct foreign and domestic investments) to GDP increased to 24% in 2022 and further to 26% by 2023.

Despite global inflation processes, the National Bank of Georgia successfully managed to control inflation. As a result, the average annual inflation rate decreased from 11.9% in 2022 to 2.5% in 2023.

Georgia is also characterized by a low budget deficit, which reaches -3% of GDP in 2022 and -2.5% in 2023.

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16 Data for 2023 are preliminary calculations of the National Statistics Office of Georgia.
17 National Statistics Office of Georgia
18 National Statistics Office of Georgia
19 Ministry of Finance of Georgia
Diagram 3. GDP per capita (USD)

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

Diagram 4. GDP of Georgia – billion USD

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

Diagram 5. External Merchandise Trade of Georgia (Export and Import) (Billion USD)

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia
The rapid recovery and growth of the economy in the post-pandemic period were significantly facilitated by macroeconomic policies aimed at developing the private sector, increasing capital expenditures, and implementing targeted and consistent anti-crisis and post-crisis support programs. In addition, structural reforms promoting sustainable and long-term economic growth continued. Despite numerous challenges, the economy implemented reforms aimed at enhancing savings and productivity. These included pension reform, insolvency reform, reform of the automatic refund of excess VAT, management reform of state investment projects, and various measures aimed at developing the capital market and alternative financing. Additionally, efforts towards aligning with the regulatory framework of the European Union were actively continued.

### 4.2 ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND INCLUSIVENESS

The structure of the Georgian economy has remained largely unchanged since 2020. According to data from 2023, the largest sector of the economy is still wholesale and retail trade, accounting for 15.6% of GDP, followed by significant contributions from activities related to real estate (10.2% of GDP), manufacturing industry (9.5% of GDP), construction (7.9% of GDP), and agriculture (6.9% of GDP) (SDG 9.2.1)\(^\text{20}\). Georgia’s economy is quite diversified; however, increasing the productivity rate and expanding the share of activities with high added value remain important challenges.

The tourism sector has experienced significant growth in recent years, leading to the creation of more job opportunities in the hospitality and related industries. The share of tourism-related activities (direct contribution) accounts for 7.1% of GDP, nearing the 2025 goal (SDG 8.9.1 – 7.9)\(^\text{21}\). It is important to emphasize that the tourism sector was one of the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite this, significant growth has been observed in recent years. The income generated from tourism in 2022 and 2023 exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

![Diagram 6. Revenues from tourism (billion USD)](image-url)
The tourism sector is one of the strategic priorities for the country’s economic development. The government’s efforts are focused on providing high-quality services, strengthening infrastructure, and diversifying tourism products. Through coordinated and timely actions between the public and private sectors, including the creation of new and competitive tourism offers and increased air connectivity, Georgia has made significant strides after the pandemic. This progress is reflected in the increased income from tourism and the number of international visitors.

In 2023, income from international tourism exceeded the 2019 level by 26.2% (USD 856.7 million) and the 2022 level by 17.3% (USD 608.7 million). Georgia received a record USD 4.1 billion in revenue. In addition, revenues from international tourism in the first quarter of 2024 exceeded the 2019 level by 39.6% ($229 million) and the 2023 level by 1.5% ($12.3 million). In Q1 2024, Georgia received a record quarterly revenue of $807.7 million.

Visits by travelers have also increased significantly. In 2023, 7,072,220 international travelers visited Georgia, representing a 75.6% recovery of pre-pandemic levels and a 30.3% increase compared to 2022. Additionally, the high recovery rate of tourist visits is noteworthy. In 2023, international tourist visits reached 4,669,467, marking a 91.9% recovery from 2019 levels and a 27.8% increase compared to 2022. In the first quarter of 2024, 1,300,551 international travelers visited Georgia, which represents an 80.4% recovery of pre-pandemic levels and +7.6% increase compared to 2023. Additionally, the rate of full recovery of tourist visits is significant: international tourist visits reached 938,644 in the first quarter of 2024, +6.4% increase compared to 2019 data and an +11% increase compared to 2023. In 2021, Georgia joined the Executive Board of the United Nations World Tourism Organization for the 2021-2025 term. In 2024, Georgia will host World Tourism Day under the theme “Tourism and Peace,” serving as a crucial platform for promoting global cooperation and the sustainable development of tourism.

### 4.3 LABOR MARKET

It should be noted that due to the economic development in the post-pandemic phase (2022-2023), the employment rate increased while unemployment decreased. The number of employed persons reached a historical maximum, and the unemployment rate reached a historical minimum. The
A downward trend in post-pandemic unemployment rate began from Q4 2021, resulting in a decrease in unemployment compared to the period before the COVID-19 pandemic as well. Although significant effort is still required to reach the target rate by 2030 (target for 2030 – 9.5%; 2023 – 16.4% (8.5.2)), the establishment of a decreasing trend in unemployment, coupled with a high rate of economic growth, fosters positive expectations in this regard.

In 2023, unemployment decreased for both women and men: the unemployment rate for women dropped to 14%, and for men, it fell to 18%. As for the first quarter of 2024, unemployment rate for women stands at 11.1% and for men at 16.3% (SDG 8.5.2). The distribution of unemployment across age groups highlights the significant challenge encountered by young people in the Georgian labor market. High levels of unemployment are observed among young people aged 25-29, with the rate reaching 20.1% (2023). Additionally, it is worth noting that a primary concern for businesses and investors is the inadequacy of labor force qualifications, as highlighted by several labor market studies (MoESD 2022).

To address these challenges, the government of Georgia has developed the National Strategy of Labor and Employment Policy for 2024-2028. This strategy outlines the government’s vision for implementing systematic and strategic reforms and measures in the field of labor and employment. To address employment challenges, Georgia established the Vocational Skills Agency in 2021 which aims to develop sectoral skills and support the workforce in upgrading vocational skills. The Agency is working on piloting and implementing models and services necessary for the further development of the skills ecosystem. Additionally, the agency is focusing on the following key directions to promote personnel with qualifications that meet labor market demand and facilitate their transition into the labor market: developing partnerships and qualifications, promoting the institutional development of educational institutions, fostering inclusive development, enhancing career services, and more. In addition, the Agency is actively working on the following areas: supporting entrepreneurship competence and the entrepreneurial ecosystem, strengthening the institutional capacity of vocational educational institutions, developing inclusive vocational education, advancing research and evidence-based approaches, and promoting the internationalization of vocational education. Furthermore, an important step is the government’s initiative, according to which graduates will undergo at least 4-month paid internships in both public and private institutions. This initiative serves as a significant incentive for young individuals to establish themselves in various professions.

It should also be noted that, according to 2023 data, the percentage of young people (15-24 years old) who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) has decreased. In 2020, their number was 28.5% (28.3% women and 28.7% men), and by 2023, this figure had reduced to 21.0% (21.6% women and 20.4% men). The data show improvement as the age range increases, with the NEET rate among 15-29 year-olds at 26.9% (30.9% women and 23.2% men).

In 2023, the professional standard for youth workers was approved, and an educational standard was developed, officially recognizing youth work as a profession for the first time in the country. In 2022, the average monthly nominal income of employees increased to USD 529. During the same period, the average salary for women stood at USD 427, while for men, it was USD 626 (SDG 8.5.1). According to 2022 data, the highest-paying fields are as follows: the information and communications sector (USD 1,040 per month), financial and insurance activities (USD 936 per month), professional, scientific, and technical activities (USD 784 per month), and the mining sector (USD 728 per month).

It should be taken into account as well that as of 2023, Georgia is characterized by a fairly high labor force participation rate of 53.3%. However, there is a significant difference in labor market participation by gender; specifically, the participation of women is 43.1%, while the participation of men is 65.1%. It should also be noted that the rate of self-employment in Georgia is quite high, reaching 31%, which...

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23 Business Demand on Skills – Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia 2022
24 National Statistics Office of Georgia
is largely explained by the high level of informal employment\textsuperscript{25}.

It is worth noting the institutional strengthening of the field of labor inspection. Specifically, in 2023 compared to 2020, alongside the growth of human and material resources of the labor inspection, the financial resources of the agency doubled, the number of labor inspectors doubled, and the number of inspected workplaces increased by 11 times. As a result, more active business entities are included (with their volume increasing from 0.18\% to 1.22\%). Labor inspection activities, including initial and repeated inspections (until violations were completely eliminated) increased 16 times\textsuperscript{26} compared to 2020.

4.4 SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION

Georgia is actively working towards the sustainable industrialization of its economy and the development of the processing sector within the country. The nation maintains a liberal trade policy, endeavors to sign more free trade agreements, and to actively engage in international supply chains. Georgia is a member of the World Trade Organization and has signed a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the European Union. In addition, there are active trade agreements with the CIS countries, Turkey, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA – Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), China, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. In addition, an agreement on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership (CEPA) with the United Arab Emirates entered into force in 2024. Furthermore, negotiations for the signing of the CEPA with the Republic of Korea are planned to be completed by the end of 2024.

The aforementioned free trade agreements provide Georgia with a robust foundation to successfully integrate into the global production chain, encompassing the largest portion of the world’s economy. Georgia is actively enhancing its trade and transit infrastructure, aiming to bolster the development of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route, also known as the Middle Corridor. Due to ongoing events in Ukraine and the regional geopolitical crisis, the potential of the Middle Corridor as an alternative route linking Europe and Asia is rapidly expanding. Integration into international transport systems and global supply chains promises to reduce transportation costs and time, fostering increased economic activity within the country. The current trade conditions provide a fertile foundation for the development of Georgia’s industries, which, amidst growing trade flows, will facilitate the generation of additional value.

4.4.1 Manufacturing Industry and Green Economy

According to 2023 data, the processing industry in Georgia accounts for 9.5\% of GDP (SDG 9.2.1), generating an additional value of approximately $2.5 billion – 6.6 billion GEL\textsuperscript{27}. The mentioned trend has remained largely unchanged since 2019. However, the development of trade routes and the increasing investment in the processing industry create a fertile environment for the sector’s development. According to the 2023 data, direct foreign investments in the manufacturing industry doubled compared to 2022, amounting to 291 million US dollars\textsuperscript{28}. Such an increase in investments augments the potential for a more active development of the processing industry in Georgia. Despite lagging behind the target index defined for 2020 (the share of manufacturing industry in GDP: 17\%), with the continued growth trend of investments in the sector, the country will be able to reach the target index by 2030 – a share of industry in GDP of 22\%. According to the 2022 data, 7.2\% of employees work in the processing industry (SDG 9.2.2), slightly below the target figure for 2030, which stands at 10\%\textsuperscript{29}. Moreover, the development of the processing industry presents significant po-

\textsuperscript{25} National Statistics Office of Georgia
\textsuperscript{26} Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
\textsuperscript{27} National Statistics Office of Georgia
\textsuperscript{28} National Statistics Office of Georgia
\textsuperscript{29} National Statistics Office of Georgia
tential for addressing unemployment and income inequality in the country. The Agency “Produce in Georgia” has established several supporting mechanisms to foster the development of the industrial sector. These include programs such as the loan interest co-financing program, credit guarantee mechanism, regional consulting centers, export support initiatives, capital market development schemes, and programs aimed at promoting small and micro-businesses.

Box 2. Entrepreneurial Environment

The main goals of the “Produce in Georgia” project are to improve the business environment, develop the private sector, promote Georgia’s investment climate, and boost exports.

To ensure dynamic economic development, the agency combines three components: business (local production), export, and investment.

“Produce in Georgia” actively supports renewable energy producers, thereby contributing to the development of the green economy in the country. The agency’s programs include the following directions:

- The Credit Guarantee Mechanism aims to improve access to finance for small and medium-sized businesses that cannot meet existing requirements for loan collateral.
- Micro and Small Business Promotion Program: This program provides grants of up to 30,000 GEL for the development of micro businesses. Between 2020 and 2023, it had 3,137 beneficiaries, 50% of whom were women.
- Regional Consulting Centers: To promote the development of micro, small, and medium-sized businesses in Tbilisi and the regions, and to increase access to information, “Produce in Georgia” establishes regional consulting centers.
- Capital Market Development Program: The program aims to promote the capital market by stimulating the placement of securities. This includes co-financing the costs associated with obtaining a credit rating and the service fees (commission) of brokerage companies.
- Export Support Programs provide technical assistance to businesses in obtaining the necessary licenses and certificates, participating in trade shows, and certifying export managers. Between 2021 and 2023, 423 instances of co-financing of participation in trade exhibition were recorded.

More than 300 economic activities are supported within the framework of the “Produce in Georgia” program.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) create an important opportunity for the development of the industrial sector. According to the 2022 data, the business sector in Georgia creates 50.5% of the added value (SDG 9.3.1)30, which is a target indicator for the country’s sustainable development. Additionally, according to the data of 2022, small and medium-sized businesses employ 60% of the workforce in the country. According to the data of 2024, Georgia has made significant progress in improving the environment for SMEs. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Small and Medium Business Policy Index, the country has the highest rate among the Eastern Partnership countries (4.02), which is also significantly higher than the average rate of these countries (3.61). It should be noted that, in relation to the assessment of 2020, Georgia has made significant progress in practically all directions according to the index, including SMEs in the area of green economy development policy. Compared to the 2020 indicator (2.74), it showed a significant increase (3.08).

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30 National Statistics Office of Georgia
At the end of 2022, the development of the green growth strategy and action plan was initiated. The purpose of this strategy is to modernize Georgia’s economy and promote its development through sustainability, green development, and the introduction of new technologies. Additionally, the strategy will focus on increasing the efficiency of energy and resource-intensive sectors and the need to introduce the principles of a low-carbon and circular economy. The application of green economy principles in these fields will ultimately result in reduced emissions.

4.4.2 Information Technologies

Information technologies have reached a significant level of development in Georgia, which is an important prerequisite for sustainable industrialization. According to the 2022 data, the density of the mobile network reaches 170%, and the density of mobile Internet subscribers reaches 119% (SDG 9.c.1). The mentioned data significantly exceeds the commitment made by the country’s SDGs for 2030, which is set at 85%.

According to the 2023 data, 89% of households have access to the Internet, marking a 10-percentage-point increase compared to the 2019 data.

84% of the population over 6 years of age use a smartphone, indicating an increase of 14 percentage points compared to 2019.

94.4% (2024) of enterprises utilize the Internet.

According to the project ‘Log-in Georgia,’ as part of the state internetization program, 800 km of fiber optic infrastructure has been constructed. Additionally, the total volume of completed and ongoing tenders exceeds 2,100 km. By 2025, the plan is to install 5,000 km of fiber optic infrastructure and deliver high-quality, high-speed broadband internet to up to 1,000 rural residents.

Internet access is high in both urban and rural areas, although there are slight differences. 93% of households in cities and 83% in rural areas are provided with internet.

The Innovation and Technology Agency is actively working to properly utilize the availability of information technologies and increase innovative activities in enterprises. It implements projects aimed at facilitating access to finance, technology transfer, and the development of innovations in society.

### Box 3. Fostering Innovation

The goal of the Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency is to establish an appropriate ecosystem for the development of innovations and technologies in Georgia, promote the commercialization of knowledge and innovation, stimulate the use of innovations and technologies in all sectors of the economy, and create an environment necessary for the growth of high-tech product exports.

Projects that promote the development of Georgia’s innovation ecosystem include:

**Construction/development of technoparks and innovation hubs:**

The agency oversees nine technoparks, providing individuals with the opportunity to receive qualified assistance from idea generation to model formation and business development. From 2020 to 2023, up to 32,000

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31 National Statistics Office of Georgia
32 Georgian Agency for Innovation and Technology
people benefited from the infrastructure and services of the technoparks, engaging in approximately 1,300
different types of projects or activities.

Also, among the significant initiatives is the pre-acceleration program, designed to cultivate new startups in
the regions, particularly in the realm of innovative entrepreneurship. This program not only aims to dissemi-
nate knowledge but also to integrate young individuals into the regional innovation ecosystem. From 2021 to
2023, the program successfully trained 641 beneficiaries.

**Startup access to finance and technology transfer:**
This encompasses financial support for startups through various grant programs, offering an international ac-
celeration program, venture fund investment, and the promotion of scientific project commercialization.

Within the framework of the “Start-up Matching Grants Programme”, during the project’s validity period, the
agency financed 259 projects in the amount of GEL 41 million. The mentioned startups generated income up to
GEL 200 million and attracted external capital of GEL 300 million. Also, in 2023, the program – “Innovative Grants
for Regions” was launched in 10 regions of Georgia, within the framework of which 41 startups were financed.

As part of the “500 Georgia” international acceleration program, 63 startups were accelerated, including
startups from neighboring countries. As of December 2023, the venture fund had invested a total of GEL 2.5
million in 25 startups.

Projects in the field of innovative entrepreneurship and technologies are also being implemented, with the
primary goal of creating and enhancing the relevant human capital within the country.

### 4.5 ENERGY

Georgia possesses significant potential in renewable energy resources, including hydropower, solar, and wind power. **As of 2022, the share of renewable energy in total primary energy consumption (TPES) stands at 20.3% (SDG 7.2.1)**. In the mentioned data, hydropower represents 16.2%, biomass 3.6%, 0.1 wind, and 0.4% geothermal, solar and other energy sources. Georgia aims to increase the share of renewable energy to 30% of the TPES by 2030. It is also noteworthy that according to the 2022 data, the primary source of energy in Georgia is imported natural gas (accounting for 50% of TPES). Approximately a quarter of the energy (24% of TPES) is derived from petroleum products. Additionally, Georgia demonstrates relatively lower dependence on polluting natural resources such as coal, constituting 4% of TPES. However, over the last 4 years, the share of renewables in TPES has exhibited a decreasing trend, primarily attributed to a faster rate of consumption growth (averaging 4.25% annually over the last 5 years) compared to the growth of renewable energies (0.16% annual growth over the same period). New approaches aimed at encouraging investments in renewable energy by the Georgian government offer an opportunity to address the aforementioned challenges.

According to 2022 data, this figure stands at 4.2 TJ per one million GEL of GDP (SDG 7.3.1), while Georgia’s target for 2030 is 5.8 TJ per one million GEL of GDP. The downward trend in energy intensity, coupled with active efforts towards low-emission development, presents an opportunity for economic development to occur with relatively low energy intensity. However, further industrialization and the development of the manufacturing sector may contribute to an increase in energy intensity.

To harness the potential of renewable energies, Georgia has conducted capacity auctions twice. For the first auction of 300 MW capacity, applications concluded in March 2023, while those for the second auction of 800 MW capacity, closed on February 12, 2024. This will significantly contribute to increasing

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33 National Statistics Office of Georgia
34 National Statistics Office of Georgia
35 National Statistics Office of Georgia
the share of renewable energies in Georgia’s total energy supply (SDG 7.2.1.1) and will make it possible to achieve this goal of sustainable development by 2030. For the advancement of green energy, Georgia is also undertaking projects involving green hydrogen and underwater power transmission lines in the Black Sea.

**Box 4. Green Hydrogen**

**Green Hydrogen Development** – As part of the Green Hydrogen Strategy and Action Plan, Georgia is focused on augmenting the proportion of green energy within its energy balance. Also, priority is given to the development of green hydrogen production, with considerations for integrating green hydrogen into the local legal framework.

In 2022, the Government of Georgia established the Green Hydrogen Committee under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia and the Energy Development Fund. The committee’s goal is to create a favorable environment for the production and export of green hydrogen in Georgia, in parallel with the development of pure hydrogen production by the European Union, and to position Georgia as a significant contributor to the global market for pure hydrogen.

In 2023, the Energy Development Fund of Georgia became a member of the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance, established by the European Commission. This alliance brings together approximately 1000 local public institutions from the European Union, as well as international and private organizations active in the energy sector.

In 2023, JSC Georgian Oil and Gas Corporation, Batumi Municipality City Hall, and the German KfW Development Bank signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia. This memorandum involves investing 1.3 million euros in the green hydrogen project, which, in its initial stage, will support Batumi’s municipal transport by integrating green hydrogen resources.

**Box 5. The Black Sea Submarine Cable Project**

The Black Sea Submarine Cable Project is one of the key initiatives under the EU Economic and Investment Plan. The project is spearheaded by the electric transmission network operators of Georgia and Romania, with support from the World Bank. This project aims to enhance the energy security of Georgia and the Caucasus region.

In 2022, in Bucharest, the governments of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary signed a memorandum of strategic partnership for the development and transmission of green energy. This transmission line will create additional incentives for the development of green energy in the Caucasus region and facilitate its supply to the European market.

The power transmission line will be 1,155 km long and capable of supplying up to 1,500 megawatts of energy. The investment volume is projected to exceed 3 billion euros. The project is expected to commence in 2030.

Currently, the feasibility study for the Black Sea cable is underway and is expected to be completed by June 2024. Additionally, procurement procedures for geological and geophysical studies of the Black Sea seabed are planned for the near future.

To further develop Georgia’s energy policy and effectively implement SDG 7, the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of Georgia was created. This plan includes five main directions: decarbonization – renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy security, energy market and research, innovation and competitiveness. Additionally, the “Green Growth Strategy” is currently being developed.

According to the 2022 data, 99.9% of Georgia’s population is connected to the electric grid (SDG 7.1.1)\(^5\), actually meeting the target set for 2030 by the SDGs.

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\(^5\) National Statistics Office of Georgia
For the purpose of inclusive access to energy resources for the population of Georgia, access to natural gas is increasing. According to the Energy Resource Use Survey, **88% of households (SDG 7.1.3)** have access to natural gas. With this result, Georgia has already achieved the goal set for 2030 by the indicator of Sustainable Development Goal 7.1.3.

However, the use of firewood as a solid fuel remains a significant challenge. In 2020, Georgia adopted a new Forest Code, establishing a legal basis for sustainable forest management in several areas, including the reduction of illegal logging and the introduction of a sustainable timber harvesting and supply chain through business yards by the National Forestry Agency. Consequently, households reliant on firewood will receive improved service from these business service yards, ensuring the supply of high-quality wood resources. This initiative aims to reduce the inefficient utilization of the forest’s energy value. Furthermore, in 2023, the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia initiated a co-financing program for energy-efficient stoves. This program aims to replace inefficient stoves throughout the country with energy-efficient alternatives. Furthermore, the aforementioned program aims to develop a market for energy-efficient stoves, which, in the long term, will alleviate pressure on forests and benefit households reliant on firewood for heating. Alongside energy-efficient stoves, the country is actively fostering the development of the alternative fuel market, including briquettes and pellets. Within this framework, funding has been provided to support the establishment of two alternative fuel-producing enterprises.

An important legislative reform is underway to promote energy efficiency. Specifically, according to the law “On Energy Efficiency,” 15 subordinate normative acts were approved in 2022-2023. **Seven subordinate normative acts** have been developed and will be approved in the near future.

Among the **important subordinate normative acts** adopted in accordance with the law are:
- Minimum energy efficiency requirements for buildings, parts of buildings, or elements of buildings;
- National methodology for calculating the energy efficiency of buildings;
- The procedure for producing a database of independent experts and a registry of energy efficiency certificates for buildings and inspection reports of heating and air conditioning systems;
- The procedure for developing one or several energy efficiency calculation programs and their utilization.

In terms of access to clean energy and renewable energies (SDG 7.1.2–7.2.1), the number of renewable energy micro-electric plants is increasing significantly in Georgia. Through the net metering support program adopted by the National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission of Georgia
in 2016, with the involvement of donor organizations and the financial sector, as of March 2024, there are 1,066 micropower plants in Georgia with a total installed capacity of 67 MW. For comparison, in 2023, there were 760 micropower plants in Georgia with a total installed capacity of 39 MW. **Compared to the data from 2020 (246 microelectric plants), today’s number has quadrupled.** Most of these stations are solar power stations. This remarkable growth rate indicates a significant increase in the population’s access to renewable energy.

### 4.6 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS

Sustainable development of cities and settlements is a key priority for the Georgian government. In 2022, the Spatial and Urban Development Agency was established to address these goals. It should be noted that since 2020, planning documents (9) (spatial planning plans and/or urban development plan concepts/final plans) have been developed and approved. These documents ensure the implementation of the principles stipulated in the “New Urban Agenda” in city planning documents. Currently, the number of dense and substandard housing units in Georgia is not very high (SDG 11.1). Although the exact amount of poor housing (barracks) has not been fully assessed, we can judge the current situation based on studies of housing conditions. According to 2022 data, the number of houses with outer walls made of earth, mud, or clay is only 0.3% nationwide, both in urban and rural settlements (SDG 11.1). However, in this context, it is also an important indicator that the existing housing stock in the cities of Georgia is quite outdated. The situation in rural and urban areas is particularly interesting from an energy efficiency perspective. According to the 2022 data, the proportion of houses with insulated windows is 55.3% in urban areas and 38.6% in rural areas. Additionally, thermal insulation of external walls, floors, and ceilings is present in less than 5% of homes (SDG 12).

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38 Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
39 National Statistics Office of Georgia
In addition to the aforementioned, rural settlements and high mountainous regions still face limited access to basic services such as roads, drainage systems, central water supply systems, and natural gas supply, as well as quality healthcare and education. To address these issues, the government of Georgia has been actively implementing water supply rehabilitation and gasification projects in recent years.

- By 2025, approximately 93% of households will have access to a central natural gas supply system. Additionally, the percentage of households with access to installed water supply systems increased by 3% from 2020 to 2022, with the prospect of further improvement.
- By the end of 2025, large cities will have access to 24-hour water supply, and by 2030, the entire population will have access to drinking water supply services. Additionally, since 2012, almost 100% of the population has had uninterrupted access to electricity service (SDG 1.4.1).

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**Box 6. Gasification**

**Gasification Program**

- Between 2013 and 2023, a total of 782 settlements throughout the country were gasified, benefiting 193,395 subscribers.
- More than 10.9 million meters of gas pipelines were built, including 120,054 meters of high-pressure header pipelines.
- With the completion of the planned works, it is expected that the country’s gasification level will increase to 93% by 2025.

Municipal waste management is also a significant challenge in settlements, where local self-government holds responsibility for this task. In 2022, the Government of Georgia adopted the National Waste Management Action Plan for 2022-2026 and updated the National Waste Management Strategy 2016-2030. These initiatives define the country’s priorities in this direction. By 2026, Georgia aims to recycle 50% of paper, glass, and plastic waste, and to collect 95% of municipal waste by 2026, with the goal of reaching 100% by 2030 (SDG 11.6.1).

Currently, complete data on the level of municipal waste collection is insufficient. However, according to 2022 data, the amount of municipal waste placed at landfills appears to be relatively stable, reaching 1.05 million tons. In 2023, the amount of municipal waste placed at landfills totaled 1,110,000 tons. According to the available data, the total rate of coverage of municipal waste collection and provision of services to the population is 92%. Additionally, the amount of waste generated per capita in Georgia is approximately 279.4 kilograms per year, which is significantly lower than the European indicator of 2020 (513 kilograms) (SDG 12).

Starting in 2022, Georgia began implementing the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system, marking a new approach for the country. The EPR system is considered a key financial and economic tool. It promotes the implementation of waste management schemes, separate collection of waste, recycling, and the introduction of circular economy principles. Four technical regulations have been adopted: on batteries and accumulators waste, on electrical and electronic equipment waste, on residual oils, and on tire waste management.

Since 2021, the electronic register of EPR (waste.mepa.gov.ge) has been operating, with more than 12,200 producers registered as of February 2024.

An important challenge in the urban settlements of Georgia is the spread of small solid particles in the ambient air.

- According to the data of 2021, the emission of PM10 particles per capita is 3.3 kilograms, and PM2.5 particles is 2.6 kilograms.
- The annual average concentration of PM10 solid particles in the main urban settlements of the country is 38.6 μg/m³, which is quite close

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40 National Statistics Office of Georgia
41 Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
42 Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
43 European Environment Agency
to the permissible limit of 40 μg/m³ (SDG 11.6.2).

It is worth noting that Georgia fulfills the obligation defined by the sub-goal of sustainable development (SDG 11.6.2). In 2023, the 2023-2025 Air Quality Management Plan (for the central zone) was developed and approved for large urban settlements, which will contribute to the improvement of air quality.

Achieving the 11th goal of sustainable development is also related to addressing issues of regional inequality, which is strongly expressed in Georgia in terms of access to basic infrastructure, productivity, and income. Noticeable differences exist between the capital and other regions. Tbilisi alone creates more than 50% of the country’s GDP, while the GDP per capita of the second highest-income region is only 63% of the similar indicator of Tbilisi, and of the poorest region – less than 53%.

Taking into account the aforementioned challenges, in 2020, the Government of Georgia initiated the implementation of “The Integrated Development Program for the Pilot Regions for 2020-2022.” Within this framework, targeted measures worth 205 million GEL were implemented in Kakheti, Imereti, Guria, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti regions. Within the framework of the program, support was provided for strengthening the economic, cultural, and social role and functions of regional centers. Additionally, efforts were made to establish new urban renewal areas, as well as to revitalize former industrial cities and undeveloped areas. Furthermore, the program ensured the development of infrastructure, financing of various measures aimed at business development, provision of training for acquiring new skills among the population, and promotion of tourism. In total, 147 urban infrastructural projects, amounting to GEL 154 million, were implemented or financed within the framework of the Integrated Development Program for the Pilot Regions for 2020-2022, focusing on local integrated as well as tourism development.

In addition to the above, within the framework of the third priority (increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises and promoting innovations) of the Integrated Development Program for the Pilot Regions, the Rural Development Agency, “Enterprise Georgia,” and Georgia’s Agency of Innovations and Technologies have taken significant measures:

- **424 projects were financed**, and 150 enterprise employees were trained, with a total value of GEL 38.7 million.
- Within the 2020-2022 pilot regions integrated development program, **37 projects supporting small and medium-sized businesses** were financed directly in high mountainous settlements. These projects focused on supporting small hotels, agricultural products, food and beverage production, innovations, and technologies.
- **Eighteen infrastructure projects** necessary for tourism and business development were implemented, resulting in the creation of additional jobs.

According to the Law of Georgia on the Development of High Mountainous Regions, the Fund for the Development of High Mountainous Settlements was established. A total of GEL 161,000,000 was allocated from the enactment of the law until 2023, out of which:

- More than GEL 97 million was allocated for the development of infrastructure in high mountainous settlements, leading to the implementation of over 290 infrastructure projects.
- State programs in high mountainous settlements were financed, with an allocation of more than GEL 62 million.

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44 Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
45 It should be considered that in the main urban centers of the country (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Rustavi), the number of days with a high level of PM10 solid particles above the daily limit is 66, with an average of 25 days caused by the intrusion of desert dust in the country. This type of pollution is especially problematic in the city of Rustavi, where the number of days exceeding the daily threshold norm is 97 (with 35 of those days caused by the intrusion of desert dust).
46 Available on the website of the National Statistics Office of Georgia
47 Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
48 Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
The 4-year “Renewed Regions” program, initiated in 2021, encompasses 63 municipalities in Georgia, with an indicative cost of GEL 500 million for its first stage alone. This program aims at the urban renewal of the regions, entailing the development of crucial facilities owned by the state, municipality, and private entities. In 2023, a new 5-year state program for the development of cities and resorts was launched, financed by one billion GEL from the state budget. The program aims to enhance and rejuvenate the appearance of urban and resort areas, which will showcase their potential and create new urban renewal zones.

4.7 RATIONAL USE OF NATURAL RESOURCE

Sustainable use of the environment and climate change are important challenges for Georgia, as well as for other countries around the world. Regarding climate change, Georgia is actively working on both mitigation and adaptation measures. In 2021, the 2030 Climate Change Strategy of Georgia was approved, the goal of which by 2030 is:

- Achieve a 15% reduction of emissions from the energy generation and transport sectors;
- Promote low-emission technologies in the building sector;
- Achieve a 5% reduction of greenhouse gases generated by the industry sector;
- Encourage the use of climate-smart technologies in the agriculture and waste management sectors;
- Increase the carbon sequestration capacity of the forestry sector by 10% compared to 2015.

In 2021, Georgia also approved a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which establishes specific targets for greenhouse gas reduction and adaptation mechanisms (SDG 13.2.1), and also creates a robust greenhouse gas accounting and monitoring system. Between 2013 and 2017, greenhouse gas emissions in Georgia averaged 17.5 megatons per year (SDG 13.2.2). A concept of long-term low-emission development was developed, through which the country clearly stated that its goal is to achieve a carbon-neutral economy by 2050. By taking this significant step, Georgia is aligning its policies with those of the European Union and the principles of Paris Agreement.

The Center for Environmental Information and Education, which has been operating in Georgia since 2013, among other things, contributes to raising public awareness of climate change and adaptation to it (SDG 13.3). As of 2023, protected areas of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categories (I-VI) make up 13.1% of the country’s territory (9.1 km²) in Georgia. More than half of the mentioned territory – 54% are national parks (5 km²) (SDG 15.1.2). According to the 2022 data of the LEPL National Forestry Agency, 1812 hectares of forest areas have been restored and developed (SDG 15.2.1). From 2020 to 2024, the Agency developed and approved forest management plans for 9 forest areas (SDG 15.2.1).

Along with sustainable forest management, it is important to protect mountain ecosystems and preserve biodiversity. To safeguard mountain ecosystems, Georgia has established five protected landscapes, covering a total area of 1.65 thousand km² (SDG 15.4.1). Starting in 2022, based on a decision by the UNESCO “Man and Biosphere” Council, Georgia created the first biosphere reserves in the South Caucasus, located in the Kakheti region: the “Dedoplistskaro Biosphere Reserve” (251,952 ha) and the “Sami Alazani Biosphere Reserve” (199,944 ha).

At the end of 2023, work on the draft law of Georgia “On Biological Diversity” was completed. The purpose of this law is to protect biodiversity and to maintain and improve the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of its ecological, social, and economic functions.

The sustainable management of water resources is a significant challenge for Georgia in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem protection. In this regard, introducing integrated water resources manage-
ment approaches is an important step for the country. To this end, in 2023, Georgia adopted the Law on Water Resources Management. Based on this law, seven basin management units (river basin areas) were defined in the country. In accordance with the principles of the EU Water Framework Directive, basin management coordination and advisory councils will be formed in these units (SDG 6.5.1). With the involvement of interested parties, this will contribute to the sustainable and rational management of water resources, as well as to strengthening the principle of “leave no one behind.”

Integrated management of water resources will also contribute to the sustainable use of underwater resources in the country, as two of the most important river basins flow into the Black Sea in Georgia (SDG 14). Since 2017, an electronic fishing monitoring system has been operating in Georgia, which is an integral part of the Environmental Information Management System (EIMS).
Social protection systems are critical for safeguarding vulnerable populations from unpredictable crises such as regional wars and global pandemics. The existence of inclusive social assistance programs helps to increase the well-being of citizens and ensure stability. The steps taken in the direction of social security, health care, and human capital development in Georgia are an important prerequisite for the formation of a sustainable social security system.

The actions of the Government of Georgia are aimed at establishing a consistent social policy. There are various targeted programs in the country to reduce poverty among the population and reduce the risks of impoverishment, one of which is the Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) program for supporting families below the poverty line. Since 2015, a program specifically for children aged 0 to 16 has been incorporated into the “Child Benefit” initiative. Over the last four years, both the monthly disbursement and the program’s coverage have increased. Additionally, the scope of the targeted social assistance program has expanded overall. In addition, measures for the long-term resettlement of displaced families are continuously implemented.

It is worth noting the introduction of the state pension indexation rule, which is an important stage of the pension reform in Georgia. Additionally, this year, the rule of indexation for the social assistance package for persons with disabilities (PWD) was also approved.

In addition, access to healthcare services in Georgia has significantly improved, and the country has successfully coped with the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of improving the healthcare system, progress is also noticeable in the implementation of the universal healthcare program, which now covers 96% of the population. Along with the quality of medical services, this program has significantly increased access to basic healthcare services and reduced out-of-pocket costs for citizens.

Alongside the aforementioned initiatives, education reforms aimed at meeting modern standards and improving access to education have shown significant progress in addressing existing challenges.

It should be noted that the Government of Georgia has received and is supporting more than 25,000 Ukrainians affected by the Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine. These efforts include integrating Ukrainian citizens into the healthcare system, by granting them access to most services available to Georgian citizens. Additionally, the Government of Georgia provides cash assistance to Ukrainians primarily for covering rental expenses. The Georgian education system has enrolled Ukrainian students, many of whom receive general education in the Ukrainian language following the standard Ukrainian curricula, through the establishment of Ukrainian-language sectors in public schools in Tbilisi and Batumi.

5.1 Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

Since 2019, the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line has decreased by 39.5%,53 which aligns with the goal of reducing the poverty rate in the country by 2030 (SDG 1.2.1).

The decline was particularly noticeable in the urban population (about 25% decrease)53.

By gender, absolute poverty decreased for men (by 37.9%), while the decline was even more pronounced for women (by 40.9%)54.

53 National Statistics Office of Georgia
54 Available on the website of the National Statistics Office of Georgia
Also, the absolute poverty rate of children decreased to 16.0% (2023) which was 22.7% in 2021. It should be noted that the reduction in child poverty is partly due to the increased value of state allowances for children and the significant rise in the number of beneficiaries.

Despite recent progress, nearly one-sixth of the total population remains on the list of targeted social assistance recipient and from 2020, a public work employment program was launched for them to facilitate their activation in the labor market and their inclusion in economic activity. Extreme poverty increased slightly during the pandemic and remained at a higher level in 2021 than in 2019 (4.8% in 2019 and 5.5% in 2021). This highlights the importance of the active social and economic policies implemented by the state to reduce the share of the population living on less than $2.15 a day to less than 1% by 2030 (SDG 1.1).

Diagram 9. The share of the population below the absolute and international poverty line

The per capita income growth rate for the bottom 40% of the population reached 23.6% in 2022, significantly higher than the growth rates of 7.7% in 2019 and 3.1% in 2020. It should be noted that the pandemic had a negative impact, particularly on the vulnerable part of the population. This explains the relatively low rate of income growth in 2020. Additionally, the percentage of the population below 50% of the median income has decreased, indicating a narrowing of the economic gap between the mean and median indicators (SDG 10.2). Specifically, from 2020 to 2023, the percentage of the population below 50% of the median income decreased by 7.1%.

The actions of the Government of Georgia are aimed at establishing a coherent social policy to assist socially vulnerable persons. The primary means of supporting families below the poverty line is the Targeted Social Assistance Program (TSA), which provides both monetary and non-monetary assistance to the most vulnerable part of the population.

As of March 2024, more than 1.2 million individuals are registered in the TSA program, representing a significant increase compared to March 2019, accounting for 32.5% of the population.

As for the share of the population using TSA, the indicator has decreased compared to 2020 (12.3%) and is projected to be 10.7% in 2023 (SDG 1.3).

As of November 2022, according to the Social Services Agency, 229,633 children received assistance socially vulnerable persons. The primary means of supporting families below the poverty line is the Targeted Social Assistance Program (TSA), which provides both monetary and non-monetary assistance to the most vulnerable part of the population.

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56 Extreme poverty is measured by the absolute poverty rate, defined as living on less than $2.15 a day (2017 PPP)

57 Household incomes; Available on the website of the National Statistics Office of Georgia.
sistance, which accounted for 26.2% of the total number of children nationwide58.

In addition to TSA, municipalities provide additional social assistance in both monetary and non-monetary forms.

Providing social assistance plays an important role in combating poverty nationwide, and Georgia’s goal is to strengthen the social safety net for vulnerable groups. Social expenditures constitute a significant part of the total government expenditures, comprising more than a fifth of the state budget, a large part of which is related to the provision of the old-age pension of the population. In recent years, there has been an upward trend in government spending on basic services such as education, health, and social protection (SDG 1.A.2).

It should be noted that Georgia has made significant progress in providing long-term accommodation for displaced families59.

In 2021, number of displaced families satisfied or provided with long-term accommodation increased to 45,080 households;

By 2023, number of displaced families satisfied or provided with long-term accommodation exceeded the 2030 target, reaching 50,000 households (SDG 1.4.2.2);

In 2023, the percentage of internally displaced families living in dilapidated and/or uninhabitable dwellings containing increased danger to life or health, handed over to them in lawful possession, decreased to 0.3%. The target rate for this indicator by 2030 is 0.2% (SDG 11.1.1).

It should be noted that the Government of Georgia is taking further steps towards the development of the social protection system, especially in response to the challenges identified during the COVID-19 pandemic. State policy is still focused on the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the social policy system, raising the welfare of the population reaching retirement age, ensuring a dignified old age, maintaining the sustainability of social expenditures in the budget, and economically empowering socially vulnerable families.

In July 2020, the Parliament of Georgia approved the rule of indexation of state pensions, marking an important stage in the pension system reform. This rule aims to maintain the current level of the replacement ratio, ensure fiscal sustainability, and mitigate fiscal risks.

**Box 7. Pension indexation**

In July 2020, the Parliament of Georgia approved the indexation rule of the state pension, marking a decisive step towards the reform of the pension system. This ensures the indexation of the state pension based on economic parameters. The scheme guarantees the annual increase of the pension, considering objective factors, which will provide social security for the population of retirement age in the conditions of low taxes. By the same law, the conditions for the annual increase of pensions for the population under 70 years and over 70 years were separated. Pensions for retirees aged 70 and older will increase annually by 80 percent of inflation and economic growth.

The indexation rule serves several critical purposes:

- Ensuring a proper replacement rate;
- Ensuring fiscal sustainability by stabilizing pension costs;
- Avoiding fiscally unfavorable pension adjustment decisions, resulting in reduced fiscal risks.

The Parliament also approved the indexation rule for the social package of assistance to persons with disabilities, which came into force in 2021 and is similar to the age pension indexation rule. Additionally, with the amendment made in 2022 to the rule approved by the Government of Georgia “On the determination of the social package,” all persons with disabilities gained the right to receive a social package, in parallel with the implementation of public activities. This forms a sustainable mechanism for

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58 Available on the website of the Social Service Agency.
59 Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
the growth of the mentioned social package, which is a crucial tool for overcoming the poverty of persons with disabilities and children.

The pension agency established in Georgia in 2018 began collecting and administering the funds of participants in the mandatory cumulative pension scheme as of January 1, 2019. The cumulative pension scheme operates on the principle of 2%+2%+2% accumulation, with equal contributions from the employee, employer, and the state.

The high level of informal employment remains a challenge for Georgia. As of 2023, the share of informally employed people in non-agricultural employment amounted to 27.6% (32.6% for men and 21.7% for women), reflecting a decrease compared to 31.7% in 2020. However, it still falls short of the target of 10% by 2030 (SDG 8.3.1).

5.1.1 Hunger, Food Security and Agricultural Productivity

Ensuring food security becomes one of the key priorities in the country’s socio-economic agenda. The country managed to reduce the prevalence rate of stunting among children under 5 years of age, and from 2018 to 2021, the rate was reduced from 6 to 5. (SDG 2.2.1). According to the 2018 Multi-Cluster Indicator Survey of Georgia (MICS, 2018), 6% of children in Georgia were overweight, and according to the World Health Organization’s model assessment in 2022, this indicator improved by one point and amounted to 5%. On the other hand, the rate of underweight (wasting) in children is less than 1% (SDG 2.2.2). At the same time, stunting is more common among girls and children living in rural areas.

In 2022-2024, in Georgia, food and non-alcoholic beverages accounted for 33% of the consumer basket, and in 2022, the food consumption expenditure in total household consumption expenditure was 31.5%, which, in turn, emphasizes the importance of food price stability for market functioning (especially considering that as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic and Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine, food prices have increased significantly). In order to strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of the agricultural sector, the priority of the Government of Georgia is to provide affordable loans, promote the processing of goods, strengthen agro insurance, introduce an agricultural mechanization program, and help young entrepreneurs.

Box 8. Agricultural Mechanization

The state co-financing program for agricultural mechanization aims to improve the availability of agricultural machinery in all municipalities and self-governing cities of Georgia. In 2021-2027, the total budget of the program is 78.6 million GEL (out of which 32.0 million in the period 2024-2027).

The main goal of the program is to increase the availability of agricultural machinery and, through co-financing, to improve access to the necessary finance for the purchase of machinery.

Co-financing support applies to various types of agricultural machinery, including agricultural tractors, hand tractors, tractor trailers and self-propelled equipment intended for agricultural land rehabilitation projects.

For the purpose of fostering long-term and sustainable development in agriculture, within the framework of programs aimed at enhancing the agro-food sector (2012-2023), the total investment in agriculture surpassed GEL 7.5 billion, with nearly GEL 2.0 billion provided as state co-financing.

As a result of the implementation of supportive programs, the output of agribusiness products (both primary and processed) reached GEL 16.6 billion in 2023. This represents a 118% increase over the past 12 years, with a 4% rise compared to 2022. In addition, over the last 12 years, the added value created

60 National Statistics Office of Georgia
61 Age-appropriate height that is 2 standard deviations below the mean of the World Health Organization Child Growth Standards
62 World Health Organization available here
63 The National Statistics Office of Georgia
in the field has increased by 102%, amounting to GEL 4.8 billion. As of 2023, the unemployment rate in rural areas stood at 14.6%, marking the lowest rate in the last 11 years. This indicator has decreased by 7.8 percentage points compared to 2012, while the number of employees in rural areas has increased by 4%.

To increase agricultural productivity, the government is focused on rural infrastructure and business development, including investing in water resources management and improving land management and irrigation. Efforts are also aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of climate change, including preventing floods and droughts. As part of the rehabilitation of the existing melioration infrastructure, the area of land melioration has increased to 193,549 hectares as of today.

Box 9. Water Resources

The Law of Georgia on Water Resources Management of June 30, 2023 introduces the principles of integrated management of water resources in the country. These principles also include the river basin management mechanism, whereby the country is divided into seven basin areas with corresponding management plans. The reform expands the water monitoring network and strengthens measures for protection from the pollution. Attention is also focused on improving the quality of water and fair distribution of resources among water users.

It should be noted that on January 1, 2022, a reform of systematic land registration began, the goal of which is to systematically measure land plots and register privately, state, or municipally owned land plots, which includes more than 1,000 administrative units.

The government-initiated land registration reform in 2016, which continued by systemic reform in 2022 aims to increase the proportion of the total adult population with secured legal rights to land to 80% by 2030. The number of women with land right shall be increased by 10-15% in this process (SDG 1.4.2.1). By 2023, the proportion of the adult population with land ownership registered in the public register is 67%, and the number of registered women land owners is 48.65%, which is significant progress compared to 2020.

Box 10. Land registration

A nationwide systematic land registration reform focuses on private, state or municipal land plots, excluding Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia and large cities. The purpose of the project is to protect the rights of owners, promote social projects and plan effective land management policies, promote sustainable economic growth in the agriculture and agribusiness sectors.

As part of the systematic land registration reform, as of April 18, 2024, a total of 919,985 plots have been measured, of which 665,682 land plots have been registered. About 3,500 – 4,000 are measured and about 2,700 plots of land are registered daily. Ultimately, by modernizing land administration and promoting inclusive development, Georgia aims to strengthen economic activities and social equity.

5.2 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

To achieve the sustainable development goals related to healthcare, the state policy is aimed to increase average life expectancy, reduce maternal and child mortality risks, lower premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, strengthen healthcare financing, and enhance the availability of health services. To achieve universal access to medical services,

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64 Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia
65 National Agency of Public Registry
the funds allocated by the state for health care increased almost 5 times (2012 – 450 million GEL, and 2023 – 1,796 million GEL).66

Despite the fact that Georgia has taken significant steps towards increasing the availability and quality of healthcare services, the sector has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. After the end of the pandemic, most of the main indicators have returned to the pre-pandemic development trend, however, some challenges still remain.

5.2.1 Life Expectancy, Mortality, and Sexual and Reproductive Health

Since the beginning of the 2000s, expected life expectancy has been characterized by an increasing trend. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021, the mentioned indicator deteriorated sharply, however, the situation improved in the following year, and the indicator soon exceeded the pre-pandemic level. By 2022, women’s expected life expectancy equalled 78.1 years, while men’s life expectancy was 69.4 years.67 Since 2015, the maternal and infant mortality rate has been continuously decreasing.

Infant mortality decreased from 7.9 to 7.6 per 1,000 live births in 2020-2022. However, the neonatal mortality rate remained unchanged at 5.3 cases per 1,000 live births (SDG 3.2.2). Nevertheless, there is clear progress compared to the baseline (2015) rate (5.8 per 1,000 live births) and the indicator is as close as possible to the target rate of 5 neonatal deaths per 1,000 live births.68 The stillbirth rate decreased from 8.7 to 7.8 per 1000 births in 2020-2023.

Maternal and infant mortality rates have worsened dramatically in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, thereafter, all of the above-mentioned indicators (for example, under-5 mortality and neonatal mortality) have improved compared to pre-pandemic levels and are approaching target levels. In 2020, maternal mortality (SDG 3.1.1) was 30.1 per 1,000 live births. In 2021, the rate doubled to 71.8, with 68% of maternal deaths attributed to diseases caused by the new coronavirus. By 2023, following reforms, the maternal mortality rate decreased69 to 22.4. Georgia aims to further reduce maternal mortality to 12 cases per 100,000 live births by 2030.

The under-5 mortality rate is decreasing at a slow pace after 2020, from 9.3 per 1,000 live births to 9.2 in 2022 (SDG 3.2.1).70

Diagram 10. Mortality of children under 5 years of age, per 1,000 live births

Source: National Center for Disease Control and Public Health

66 Ministry of Finance of Georgia
67 The National Statistics Office of Georgia
68 National Center for Disease Control and Public Health
69 National Statistics Office of Georgia – GEOSTAT
70 The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
The improvement of the above indicators is attributed to the successful initiatives and reforms implemented in recent years. Among them, it is worth noting the state program of immunization, which ensures the protection of the population from vaccine-preventable infections.

The coverage of medical services for children aged 0-5 years, which is integrated into the universal health care program, provides the necessary financing for the relevant health costs. Modernization of the Maternal and Child State Health Program is one of the initiatives aimed at reducing maternal and infant mortality, reducing the incidence of premature births, and preventing congenital anomalies by increasing geographic and financial access, as well as providing highly qualified medical services and necessary medicines.

It should also be noted that the Electronic Module for Pregnant and Newborn Health Surveillance launched in the country in 2016, known as the Georgian Birth Registry significantly improved the situation and made it possible to continuously monitor and assess the health status of pregnant women, from the first antenatal visit to delivery. Another important reform is related to the regionalization of perinatal and antenatal services. This reform plays an important role in the process of improving the standards of maternal and child healthcare since it is focused on raising the quality of medical services, and improving processes and outcomes. There are 157 perinatal and antenatal service providers operating in the country, which fully meet the regulations on infrastructure and medical equipment established by the Government of Georgia. All facilities
are adapted for the safe movement of persons with disabilities.\textsuperscript{71}

In addition, it is particularly important to improve sexual and reproductive health services, as well as increasing access to modern contraceptives. Adolescent births (ages 10-14 and 15-19) per 1,000 women decreased from 27.2 in 2020 to 21.5 in 2022.\textsuperscript{72} It should be noted that the target rate of the above-mentioned indicator meant a 40% reduction in the birth rate among adolescents (compared to the baseline (2015) year by 2030), and in 2015-2022 the reduction rate was higher than the target rate and amounted to 55.3% (SDG 3.7.2).

5.2.2 Disease Control and Treatment of Infections

Georgia still maintains a low rate of HIV infection:\textsuperscript{73} By 2015, the number of HIV infection cases was 0.19 per 1,000 people, and by 2020, this figure had decreased to 0.14, and by 2022, it had increased to 0.17. The target indicator of Georgia in 2030 is 0.125 (SDG 3.3.1).\textsuperscript{73}

The country has made significant progress not only in preventing the spread of HIV infection but also in terms of its treatment. Current programs include state programs for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, safe blood, and the state program on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS.

In addition, Georgia has made significant progress in reducing hepatitis B and C cases. Despite the remarkable results, prevention and treatment of tuberculosis remains an important challenge for the health care system of Georgia. In 2020, the incidence of tuberculosis was 39.7 per 100,000 people, and this figure will increase slightly to 40 by 2022.\textsuperscript{74} However, it should be noted that the State TB Control Program that started in 2015, by which the state fully ensures the availability of first-line anti-hypertensive and anti-tuberculosis drugs for patients, has significantly improved the situation. In particular, in recent years there has been a downward trend in the number of registered patients and new cases.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Diagram13.png}
\caption{Diagram 13. Morbidity of the population with tuberculosis (male)}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Diagram 13. Morbidity of the population with tuberculosis (male)}

\begin{table}
\begin{tabular}{l|l|l|l}
\hline
Year & Number of registered patients & New cases & \\
\hline
2020 & 1,831 & 1,537 & \\
2021 & 1,647 & 1,365 & \\
2022 & 1,654 & 1,317 & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textbf{Source:} National Center for Disease Control and Public Health

In addition to the above, Georgia has made significant progress in preventing the spread of tuberculosis in the penitentiary system. Between 2020 and 2023, the prevalence rate of tuberculosis cases (per 10,000 inmates) in penitentiary institutions decreased from 114 to 43. Consequently, the country

\textsuperscript{71} Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
\textsuperscript{72} National Statistics Office of Georgia
\textsuperscript{73} National Center for Disease Control and Public Health
\textsuperscript{74} National Center for Disease Control and Public Health
was able to reach the 2030 target ahead of schedule, according to which the prevalence of tuberculosis should be less than 100 per 10,000 prisoners. In addition, the number of newly registered cases by year is as follows: 2020 – 32; 2021 – 27; 2022 – 24; 2023 – 35 (SDG 3.3.2.1). It should be noted that the target rate of the above-mentioned indicator (2030) was to reach a mark lower than 55.

Another noteworthy area of progress for Georgia is the treatment of hepatitis C. The implementation of the hepatitis C elimination program has been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in an increase from 65 to 135 cases per 100,000 people between 2020 and 2022. (SDG 3.3.4.1). Also, in 2023, the number of inmates diagnosed with hepatitis C in the penitentiary system increased, and the number of inmates who received appropriate treatment remained almost unchanged. In 2020, 320 prisoners were diagnosed with hepatitis C, and in 2023 – 365. In 2020, 320 prisoners received appropriate treatment, and in 2023, the same figure decreased slightly to 313. (SDG 3.3.4.2). It should be noted that all patients who expressed a desire for treatment were given appropriate treatment with 100% coverage.

In addition, the “Hepatitis C Elimination Strategy for 2023-2025” was approved, outlining the necessary measures for the elimination of hepatitis C. There is also an improvement in the treatment of hepatitis B. Incidence per 100,000 people reduced from 38.5 people in 2020 to 30 by 2022 (SDG 3.3.4). The country has made significant progress in strengthening drug abuse prevention and treatment. The scope of treatment interventions has been significantly expanded to include pharmacological, psychological, rehabilitation and aftercare services for substance abusers. In particular, the percentage of patients receiving opioid substitution therapy increased to 27% in 2022 compared to 2020 (21%). However, by 2030, the country aims to increase this figure to 60% (SDG 3.5.1). It is important to note that, starting in 2021, a drug abuse prevention strategy was launched for the first time. This strategy covers four levels of target groups and includes universal, selective, targeted, and environment-oriented preventive interventions across the country.

The country has made significant progress in reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases. Deaths attributed to cardiovascular disease per 100,000 people fell by 20% (from 594.4 in 2020 to 475.2 in 2022) and deaths caused by cancer by 44% (from 217.3 in 2020 to 122 in 2022) decreased. Despite the decrease in the mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular diseases, it still falls short of the target indicators of sustainable development (the target indicator implies a reduction of the mortality rate by one third). Moreover, negative trends persist for diabetes mortality (from 26.2 in 2020 to 26.9 in 2022) and chronic respiratory diseases (from 9.9 in 2020 to 11.5 in 2022). However, in response to the challenges in this area, significant state programs have been initiated. Notably, the distribution of continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) systems to diabetics began in 2022 and is ongoing. The program’s budget was 5.4 million GEL in 2022 and increased to 6 million GEL in 2023. Currently, 737 children with diabetes benefit from one of the most accurate, high-quality, and officially authorized devices, which are successfully used in many countries worldwide. Also, important steps have been taken to increase geographic accessibility.

Georgia has made significant progress in drug abuse prevention and treatment. The scope of treatment interventions has been significantly expanded to include pharmacological, psychological, rehabilitation and aftercare services for substance abusers. In particular, the percentage of patients receiving opioid substitution therapy increased to 27% in 2022 compared to 2020 (21%). However, by 2030, the country aims to increase this figure to 60% (SDG 3.5.1). It is important to note that, starting in 2021, a drug abuse prevention strategy was launched for the first time. This strategy covers four levels of target groups and includes universal, selective, targeted, and environment-oriented preventive interventions across the country.

In 2020, the rate of traffic-related deaths per 100,000 people was 12.1, which decreased to 11.7 by 2022. However, the rate of road traffic injuries per 100,000 people increased from 178.6 in 2020 to 203.8 in 2022 (SDG3.6.1).
The Government of Georgia continues to strive towards the goals defined by the **National Road Safety Strategy for 2022-2025**, which aims to reverse negative trends. This strategic approach covers various aspects of road safety, focusing on reducing road accidents and minimizing their negative impact on public health and welfare.

### 5.2.4 Healthcare coverage and out of pocket expenditures

Following the implementation of the state-sponsored **Universal Healthcare Program**, citizens without private insurance gained access to a basic package of health care services.

The fourth phase of the universal health program began in 2022, expanding coverage to encompass the full range of services. As a result of this, in 2022, the percentage of the population with health insurance or included in the state health program amounted to 95%\(^2\). In 2023, this figure increased slightly to 96.4% (SDG 3.8.1.2).

It is worth noting that in 2022, the proportion of people who need and receive chronic disease management drugs provided by the universal health care program has increased to 72%. Under the universal healthcare program, the next step is to fully cover the cost of medicines needed to manage common chronic diseases for pensioners and socially vulnerable citizens.

In addition, from January 2022, the implementation of the **Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP)** and **Good Distribution Practice (GDP) standards** became mandatory in the pharmaceutical market in Georgia. The GMP system ensures the consistent production of products in accordance with the quality control standard and aims to minimize any risk in pharmaceutical production through final product testing.

In addition, since 2023, a **Drug Quality Control Laboratory** has been operating in the country. This initiative aims to protect the pharmaceutical market from falsified, expired, and unlicensed medicinal products.

From 2022, the **Electronic Health Record (EHR) System** is fully operational. According to the data of 2023, the number of cases registered on the portal amounted to 16.5 million.\(^3\) In addition, from 2022, a mandatory system of electronic prescriptions has been launched, which enables the collection of data on prescribed medications, the assessment of the appropriateness of prescribing medications, and the prevention of polypharmacy cases.

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\(^2\) Social Service Agency

\(^3\) Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
In 2023, reforms in the pharmaceutical sector played a significant role in increasing access to healthcare. These reforms aim to ensure equal availability of essential medicines for all members of society by establishing reference prices. The state has set maximum price limits for medicines, prohibiting their sale above these limits.

As a result of the reform, the average cost of pharmaceuticals decreased significantly, easing the financial burden on both individuals and healthcare systems. Specifically, the average price of a pharmaceutical product decreased by 40%.

Starting November 1, 2022, a new funding model for medical institutions, known as Diagnostic-related Groups (DRG), was launched. As a result of this system, patients no longer have to pay additional costs when receiving medical services; they only pay the amount included in the co-payment share within the universal healthcare program.

One year after the start of the reform, patient co-payments have significantly decreased from 27% to 10%.

The DRG system is currently used for emergency and planned inpatient care, management of infectious diseases, and treatment of high-risk pregnant women. The next stage involves expanding the system to include all types of healthcare services within the framework of the model.

Georgia has taken significant steps to raise the qualifications of medical personnel and improve the quality of healthcare services. Additionally, since 2023, a minimum hourly pay rule for doctors and nurses has been in effect. As a result, the salaries of up to 9,000 doctors and 8,000 nurses have increased. Additionally, starting in August 2022, the salary fund for personnel employed in medical institutions operating in the territory of occupied Abkhazia, under special state financing, has increased by 50%.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the possibilities for telemedicine have expanded, proving especially important for patients living in remote and mountainous regions of Georgia. The country’s digital transformation enables patients to consult healthcare providers and increase their awareness of health-related issues from the comfort of their homes. At this stage, telemedicine services have been implemented in 50 villages across Georgia and by the end of the year it will be implemented in 60 more villages.

5.3 EDUCATION

In recent years, Georgia has made noticeable progress in reforming the education and science system. Significant reforms have been implemented across early and general education, as well as in higher and vocational education sectors. One of the main priorities remains the development of human capital within the education system, a commitment clearly evidenced by the rise in budgetary allocations for education. In 2023, these allocations increased to 2.96 billion GEL, up from 1.9 billion GEL in 2020.

In 2022, the Government of Georgia approved the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030, along with its corresponding action plan. This strategic framework includes three primary priority areas: (1) enhancing the quality of education and fostering equity, (2) promoting inclusion and diversity, and (3) enhancing the system of governance, financing, and accountability.

Moreover, in 2023, a legal entity of public law was established: LEPL – National Center for Educational Research. This entity is dedicated to supporting ongoing research on crucial educational matters across various levels of education. It also facilitates the systematic dissemination of knowledge to educational institutions, ensuring an effective response to challenges and the modernization of the education system.
5.3.1 Preschool Education

The state’s investment in preschool education are directed not only towards securing the well-being of the next generation but also towards fostering sustainable and long-term economic growth for the country.

As of October 1, 2023, \(84\) a total of 139,885 children, accounting for 71% of the total, are enrolled in public kindergartens. Among them, 136,387 children receive services in the Georgian language, 1,197 in Azerbaijani, 191 in Russian, and 2,094 in Armenian.

Since 2021, significant steps have been taken in retraining preschool teachers. A total of 2,156 educational personnel have completed the training program. From 2022 to the present, 1,819 people from 47 municipalities have been trained to implement the “Early Education Curriculum – Game.” Of these, 646 are administration representatives, and 1,173 are educational staff.

To improve the quality of early and preschool education, the Government of Georgia approved the “Temporary Rules for the Authorization of Early Education and/or Preschool Institutions, as well as the Suspension and Termination of Authorization.”

In 2023, the “State Standards for Early and Preschool Education” were revised and approved, with special emphasis placed on inclusiveness and enhancing the quality of the educational process.

To enhance access to quality preschool education, efforts are underway to develop diversified preschool education models. This includes creating services tailored to the needs of urban settlements with multiple groups, as well as municipalities with small populations and ethnic minorities in mountainous regions.

To strengthen ethnic minorities and provide them with quality education, state standards of preschool education with a bilingual approach have been introduced in kindergartens since 2020. Currently, 34 out of 56 non-Georgian-speaking kindergartens are implementing a dual-language, or “separate approach,” teaching method.

The construction and rehabilitation program for kindergartens is actively ongoing, structured across multiple phases to encompass the construction and renovation of 885 kindergartens nationwide. A total

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84 Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia
allocation of 1.3 billion GEL from the state budget is earmarked for this initiative. In 2023, 100 million GEL was allocated for the first phase of the project.

5.3.2 General Education

The number of people without primary education in Georgia is quite low. However, the percentage of students who drop out or have their education suspended varies over the years. In 2015, the mentioned indicator was 0.36%. By 2019, it had increased to 0.49%. In 2020 and 2021, the indicator decreased to 0.33% and 0.25%, respectively. However, in 2022, the downward trend reversed, and the indicator significantly increased to 0.62%.85

During this period, the proportion of students who dropped out of the basic level of secondary school or had suspended status also fluctuated. From 2015 to 2019, the rate decreased marginally from 0.9% to 0.8%. A more significant decrease was observed in 2020 and 2021, with the percentage dropping from 0.6% to 0.4%. However, it increased again to 0.8% in 2022 and remained at the same level in 202386 (SDG 4.1.3).87

Despite the significant progress, the quality of general education remains the main challenge of the Georgian school education system – in recent years, the international student assessment program “PISA” assessments have shown a changing trend of academic performance. A comparison of the 2022 results with the results of previous years reveals that after 2018, the data has not improved significantly. Average scores remain relatively stable in math, reading skills and science. In the 2022 PISA assessment, the majority of students, approximately 66.5%, fall into the low-achieving category, while only 1.2% are classified as high-achieving.

2022-2030 Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia, approved in 2022, aims to address the mentioned challenges. Within the framework of the “Better Education for a Better Future” project, which is part of the 2022-2030 strategy, the focus is on training professional staff based on modern teaching methodologies. This includes supporting professional development and teacher training programs at higher educational institutions, fostering the professional growth of school principals and teachers, and sharing international expertise.

To ensure quality education in both native and state languages for ethnic minorities, a bilingual education program is being introduced in non-Georgian language schools. Special programs were developed, and over 400 bilingual teaching specialists (bilingual teachers) were trained. In the academic year 2022-2023, 41 non-Georgian-speaking schools (14%) were included in the program. By the 2023-2024 academic year, the program had expanded to 184 schools (63%) serving non-Georgian-speaking students. Efforts are ongoing to incorporate all non-Georgian-speaking schools into the bilingual education program.

As part of the general education reform, significant legislative changes were made to the laws of Georgia on “General Education” and “Education Quality Improvement.” These changes aim to enhance the quality of the general education system by establishing new standards and procedures for authorization.

An important indicator of the quality of education is the level of teacher training. According to 2022 data, the vast majority of teachers, 98%, have completed the appropriate teacher training programs, and 88% meet the criteria set by legal regulations.88

In addition to popularizing the teaching profession, attracting qualified young professionals, and providing high-quality educational services, teachers’ salaries are gradually increasing in the country. Starting from July 1, 2024, with a full workload, the salaries of teachers, regardless of status, increase, affecting 70% of teachers on average.

85 Education Management Information System (EMIS)
86 Education Management Information System (EMIS)
87 It should be noted that the dropout rate does not account for students whose status was suspended due to family travel abroad or death.
88 National Statistics Office of Georgia
89 The Law of Georgia “On General Education,” “Teacher’s Professional Development and Career Advancement Scheme,” and “Teacher’s Professional Standard.”
Box 13. School Rehabilitation

In 2022, a large-scale school rehabilitation project was initiated with a budget of one billion GEL. This project aims to construct or rehabilitate 800 schools by the end of 2026. By the end of 2026, the project aims to provide infrastructural maintenance to all public general educational institutions, ensuring equal access to educational resources.

Between 2020 and 2023, there was a significant increase in the number of schools tailored to accommodate students with disabilities. In 2020, 11.2% of schools were fully equipped, while 54% were partially adapted with amenities like accessible bathrooms, ramps, or resource rooms. By 2023, the proportion of fully adapted schools is projected to rise to 25%, with partially adapted schools increasing to 59%.

This progress reflects a unified effort to create a more inclusive educational environment for all students, regardless of their physical abilities.

To promote the teaching and learning of students with special educational needs, new educational and methodological materials were developed. Additionally, changes were made to relevant laws and by-laws to support the special teacher profession and encourage the training of qualified personnel. An educational program for special teacher training was also created, which is planned to be implemented by the 2024-2025 school year. Special teachers are now included in the professional development and career advancement scheme for teachers (SDG 4.a.1). Various programs and curricula have been developed to support the education of students with special educational needs. Additionally, an electronic support program for Georgian Braille has been created.

Since 2013, Georgia has implemented a program providing free textbooks to schoolchildren, which is actively continuing. The guidelines established for the Georgian sector are also translated for ethnic minorities.

To mitigate the challenges of the pandemic on the general education system, the National Curriculum was amended in 2023, requiring schools to offer remedial programs to students as needed. The changes in the National Curriculum also emphasized strengthening socio-emotional competencies.

A new model for the inclusive education support system has been developed, aiming to centralize responsibility and support services within a single space – LEPL – Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions. This model will create conditions for more coordinated management of existing resources, ensuring their effective use and the focused strengthening of competencies. Additionally, the new system supporting inclusive education aims to strengthen the counseling component of public schools, reform resource schools, and formation of more effective operational teams. It also seeks to increase their competence in specific areas, such as supporting the education of children with hearing, vision, multiple, and learning disabilities.

5.3.3 Higher education and the relevance of skills to the labor market

According to the 2014 general census, 26.7% of the population of Georgia had attained higher education, while 17.4% had obtained professional education. In 2020, 57.5% of the total number of employees had higher education, a figure that rose to 58.9% in 2023. Additionally, in 2022, the percentage of employees with secondary education was 48%, while the proportion of self-employed individuals stood at 11.0%. (SDG 4.4.1.2)

To enhance access to higher education and improve its quality, Georgia is enacting substantial reforms. Budget allocations for higher education have notably surged (excluding infrastructure expenses). In 2022, the budget funding was set at 142.5 million GEL, and it increased to 147.5 million in 2023.

In addition to increased funding, significant changes have been implemented to ensure the quality of higher education. Among them, the implementation of cluster accreditation is noteworthy, aiming to harmonize higher education with the unified European system and evaluate higher education programs. This initiative encompasses defining accreditation procedures, standards, and fees, and grouping educational institutions into clusters.
Significant changes have been enacted at the university level to promote inclusive education, in accordance with the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB). Amendments to the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education” have laid the foundation for implementing a specialized teacher training educational program. It’s worth noting that between 2022 and 2024, approximately 4,000 students residing in the occupied territory of Georgia were financially supported to encourage their pursuit of higher education.

To foster a strong connection between the labor market and higher (as well as vocational) education institutions within the country, the Georgian government has undertaken several reforms. Initially, a survey of enterprise demand for skills was conducted, with the aim of identifying both current and future demands of enterprises for human capital. This effort seeks to mitigate imbalances between supply and demand within the workforce.

The Employment Support State Agency actively continues its work. With the support of this Agency 12,645 job seekers were employed in 2022 (including 8,811 socially vulnerable). In addition, it should be noted that in 2020-2023:

- 65,023 job seekers were registered in the Labor Market Information System;
- 33,264 job seekers were employed in the open labor market.
- 39,999 socially vulnerable job seekers were given the opportunity to be employed in public works.

5.3.4 Vocational Education

Vocational education serves as a crucial tool for facilitating the integration of young people into the labor market and mitigating poverty and inequality. Consequently, the modernization of vocational education remains a primary priority within Georgia’s sustainable development agenda, with budgetary funding in this domain increasing annually.

In 2023, compared to 2022, budgetary funding for professional education increased by 26.2 million GEL, reaching a total of 122.42 million GEL. Additionally, for 2024, an allocation of 133.5 million GEL has been earmarked.

The hourly salary of a vocational education teacher has tripled over the past few years, with increments of 20% in 2023 and 10% in 2024.

The number of students funded by the state program rose from 7,363 in 2020 to 12,100 in 2022. Additionally, the number of students with disabilities funded by the state increased from 53 to 156 between 2013 and 2022.

Since 2021, a unified enrollment rule has been implemented in the vocational education system, marking a significant change. Under this regulation, for the first time, beginning in 2021, students could be admitted to vocational education programs not only in public institutions but also in all private institutions, as part of a unified admission process.

Given the expansion of vocational education, to promote the growth of financial and human resources and ensure more effective budget management, it is planned to update/review the financing system of vocational education.

91 Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
Efforts are ongoing regarding the rule “On the identification of special educational needs of individuals and the implementation of inclusive professional education.” The aim of this initiative is to enhance the engagement of individuals with special educational needs and disabilities, as well as to embed the principle of inclusivity within the framework of vocational education. The rule also includes provisions for an orientation service, which will enable individuals with disabilities and special needs to access services throughout the year.

- By 2022, educational resources and aids were provided to 350 students with disabilities and special needs in vocational educational institutions.
- According to the data, as of April 2024, there are 353 disabled/student special educational needs with active student status,
- The concept of inclusive development at the vocational education level has been developed. This initiative will play a crucial role in the process of creating vocational education services tailored to people with diverse needs.

It should be emphasized that to foster a democratic society, the civic education program initiated at the general education level in Georgia now continues at the vocational education level as part of the mandatory competency.

It is also worth noting the dynamics of the development of dual programs during the reporting period. Currently, 61 dual programs are being offered across 21 educational institutions.

In 2023, 467 people were enrolled in dual programs, which is 14% less than the enrollment rate in 2022, but 15% higher than the rate in 2021.

As of April 18, 2024, 821 professional students are enrolled in the dual program. As of April 18, 2023, 896 people have completed dual programs, which is 178% more than the figure of 2021 (322 people).\(^2\)

Within the framework of public-private partnership and sector-level cooperation, special attention was given to the creation of a Sector Skills Organization (SSO). The SSO is a sector-level organization that unites the main associations and clusters within the economic sector. In 2022, a regulatory framework for work-based learning was launched, detailing the roles and functions of SSOs.

It should be noted that in 2023, work began on a new initiative for the development of professional education. This initiative involves distributing responsibilities between the public and private sectors and establishing an equal partnership. It aims to introduce participatory management models in professional educational institutions, thereby further enhancing business participation in the skills ecosystem. As part of the initiative, any interested company is provided with the opportunity to propose a vision for a public-private partnership. This could include co-funding or co-investing in a professional education provider, partially or fully transferring management, or conditionally transferring infrastructure. The implementation of the mentioned initiative will contribute to better aligning professional education with the interests of the private sector, enhancing the quality of the educational process, facilitating the employment of graduates, and increasing demand for professional education.

Various services are available to support the educational process of vocational education students with special educational needs and disabilities, including inclusive vocational education specialists, educational process assistants, individual assistants, sign language interpreters, and others. Additionally, adapted study materials, individual study plans, and transportation are provided. It should also be noted that enrollment procedures for professional educational programs are differentiated for socially disadvantaged individuals. Additionally, persons who received secondary education in the occupied territories of Georgia can enroll in professional educational programs without needing to pass testing.

A mechanism for cooperation among stakeholders focused on NEET youth has been developed, aiming to facilitate their transition into education or employment. This mechanism is being implemented at the municipal level to ensure the exchange of information between parties and the effective utilization of existing social and educational services to support young people classified as NEET.

The concept of digital transformation of professional educational institutions has been prepared,
aiming to enhance digital infrastructure development, management, and innovative pedagogy within Professional Education Institutions (PEIs).

The development of the “Skills 4 Georgia” project is ongoing. This project includes the establishment of an educational center, known as the Center of Excellence, which will function as a hub to support the development of existing professional educational institutions.

It should be noted that, according to a 2019 study of graduates of vocational education and training programs, only 49% of vocational education graduates were employed or self-employed. This situation worsened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The graduate employment rate increased to 74% in 2021, meeting the target of 60% by 2030 set under SDG 4.4.1.
- In 2022, the graduate employment rate increased to 81%. Additionally, the employment rate of graduates of vocational training and retraining programs was 86%.

It should be noted that by 2023, 8% of prisoners were involved in education (including higher education) and/or vocational training programs, with an annual increase approaching the target rate of 30% to be achieved by 2030. Progress was even more pronounced among female prisoners, with participation increasing from 53.7% in 2015 to 84% in 2022. In 2023, the rate decreased to 48% (SDG 4.3.c.1), as individuals accused or convicted were transferred to various rehabilitation programs.
For the sustainable development and well-being of society, a critical role is attributed to the establishment of a robust governance system. Within this framework, it is imperative to ensure accountability, transparency, and the delivery of high-quality services. Strong and democratic governance safeguards human rights and fundamental freedoms, fostering an environment conducive to economic growth, investment, and stability for all members of society.

During the reporting period, Georgia undertook significant measures to further develop democracy in the country and achieved substantial progress across various fronts.

Georgia has made significant strides in fulfilling its international obligations regarding the protection of human rights and aligning with the requirements of international conventions. To enhance the rights of vulnerable groups, several strategic documents have been developed in the country, with particular importance placed on the National Strategy for Human Rights Protection (2022-2030) and its implementation Action Plan.

To uphold good governance, Georgia has strengthened its justice system, as well as the police and penitentiary systems. In the penitentiary system, essential priority is given to rehabilitation and resocialization approaches, with individual programs adapted to the needs of convicts and accused persons. Additionally, to effectively manage the penitentiary system, the construction of new small prisons has begun. This is a progressive initiative in terms of introducing approaches tailored to individuals in closed institutions. In these new spaces, additional guarantees have been created to promote the full integration of vulnerable groups. Among these, rehabilitation programs for persons with disabilities have been adapted and introduced. Furthermore, the establishment of an independent Anti-corruption Bureau has enhanced the institutional framework for combating corruption in the country.

6.1 EQUALITY

In recent years, the Government of Georgia has developed several significant policy documents with the aim of promoting equality.

- During the reporting period, the government adopted the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights of Georgia for 2022-2030. This strategy aims to enhance the systemic guarantees for the protection of human rights and freedoms in Georgia, with a particular focus on promoting gender equality and safeguarding women’s rights.

- The Government of Georgia has adopted the 2021-2030 State Strategy for Civil Equality and Integration. This strategy is directed toward ethnic minorities residing in Georgia and aims to strengthen an equal and democratic society, where full participation in all spheres of public life will be ensured for all citizens of Georgia, regardless of their ethnic affiliation and to provide equal opportunities for personal and professional development.

6.1.1 Gender Equality

In its endeavor to localize the Sustainable Development Goals, Georgia has set the objective of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (SDG 5).

Article 11 of the Constitution of Georgia enshrines the principle of gender equality and eliminating gender discrimination. Moreover, Georgia is a signatory to numerous international and regional agreements about gender equality. The country has been a party to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) since 1994, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) since 1995, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms since 1999, and the Istanbul Convention on the Prevention of
Violence against Women and Domestic Violence since 2014. Fulfilling the obligations outlined in the conventions to which Georgia is a party is essential for developing gender equality policies aligned with global standards. In 2022, the Organic Law of Georgia on Normative Acts was amended. According to this amendment, the initiator of a normative act project is required to include an assessment of the expected impact of the draft law on gender equality in the project information.93

The Government of Georgia has developed two important policy documents:

- **The 2022-2024 Action Plan on the Measures to be Implemented for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims (VAWG/DV NAP)** outlines a comprehensive national framework for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and domestic violence. This document is in compliance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, aiming to protect victims and address these pressing issues effectively.

- **The 2022-2024 National Action Plan of Georgia for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security** is directed towards empowering women, facilitating their participation in the security sector, and empowering women, girls, and youth impacted by conflict.

Additionally, in 2022, the Parliamentary Council for Gender Equality endorsed the **State Concept of Gender Equality**. This document prioritizes areas such as women’s participation in political and public spheres, women’s economic empowerment and labor rights protection, addressing gender-based violence including violence against women and domestic violence, and eliminating practices like child marriage, among others.94 In 2022, the LEPL Civil Service Bureau developed a gender equality strategy and action plan. This development was positively acknowledged by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/GEO/CO/6). The Committee commends the State’s initiatives aimed at enhancing its institutional and policy framework to expedite the eradication of discrimination against women and foster gender equality. In 2023, the Parliament of Georgia ratified the **State Concept of Economic Empowerment of Women**. The priorities outlined by the concept encompass various topics, including ensuring equal access to economic resources, fortifying the gender-sensitive legal framework, enhancing employment practices within both the public and private sectors, among others.95

During the reporting period, Georgia submitted two significant reports: the first report detailing measures taken was submitted to the Group of Experts for Monitoring the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), and the periodic report was submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Georgia received favorable assessments in both reports.

An important advancement in strengthening coordination was the establishment of two working groups within the interagency commission dedicated to addressing issues of gender equality, violence against women, and domestic violence. The first working group is specifically tasked with implementing the recommendations devised by the CEDAW Committee and the GREVIO Committee by 2025. The second working group is developing the unified action plan for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence for 2024-2025.

An essential stride in the realization of Goal 5.1 is the establishment of a sexual harassment prevention mechanism encompassing both the public and private sectors. This instrument was introduced in response to amendments made in the anti-discrimination law within the public sector, where sexual harassment was defined as a form of discrimination and an administrative offense.

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94 State Concept of Gender Equality. Available at [Legislative Herald website](https://www.law.ge)
95 State Concept of Economic Empowerment of Women. Available at [Legislative Herald website](https://www.law.ge)
96 Statute of the Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Available at [Legislative Herald website](https://www.law.ge)
The second target involves the eradication of all forms of violence against women and girls in both public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual, and other forms of exploitation (SDG 5.2). In pursuit of this goal, Georgia has made noteworthy advancements by aligning with international legislation and strengthening enforcement mechanisms.

In 2023, to align more closely with the Istanbul Convention, the Parliament of Georgia amended the Law of Georgia “On Prevention of Violence Against Women and/or Domestic Violence, Protection and Support of Victims of Violence.” As a result of this legislative initiative, the requirement for the existence of a so-called “victim status” for accessing asylum was abolished, thereby simplifying the process for victims of violence to seek state asylum.

Additionally, the Government of Georgia enacted a resolution on national referral procedures for identifying, protecting, assisting, and rehabilitating victims of violence against women and/or domestic violence. The objective of this resolution is to enhance communication and establish mutually agreed-upon activity formats among relevant agencies, facilitating prompt and effective protection for victims of violence. Despite the progress mentioned, there remains a need in the country to enhance protection measures for victims of violence, as well as their support services and mechanisms for assistance after leaving shelters. These improvements are planned to be implemented on an ongoing basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 14. Compensation for victims of violence against women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After ratifying the Istanbul Convention, Georgia expedited the process of enhancing its legal framework to fulfill the obligations outlined in the Convention.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In November 2022, the Government of Georgia endorsed regulations for determining and granting compensation to victims of violence against women and/or domestic violence. According to the new provisions, victims of violence have the right to receive compensation from the state if the harm inflicted upon their health is not adequately compensated by the perpetrator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since the implementation of the regulation on December 1, 2022, until now, the State Care Agency has registered 11 applications for compensation. In 8 cases, compensation was awarded to the minor children of women who were victims of femicide. In 1 case, compensation was provided for the harm inflicted on the health of a woman who was a victim of domestic violence, and 2 cases are currently under processing.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

During the reporting period, significant strides were made to ensure the effective combatting of crime and crime prevention in the country (Goal 16.1). Crucially, to prevent recurring instances of domestic violence and violence against women, Parliament approved legislative amendments establishing the legal framework for electronic monitoring of individuals subject to restraining orders.

It should be noted that the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia introduced an effective mechanism of electronic surveillance of the abuser using electronic bracelets. As of 2020, an electronic monitoring center has been operating in “112”, which carries out 24-hour electronic supervision of perpetrators. The number of conducted monitoring is increasing: in 2020, monitoring was carried out on 6 persons, in 2021 – on 11, in 2022 – on 15, and in 2023 – on 104 persons.

The third national goal for gender equality is to eliminate all harmful practices of child, early childhood, and forced marriage (SDG 5.3). According to the 2022 National Survey on Violence Against Women in Georgia, 22% of women aged 20-24 were married or cohabiting with a partner before the age of 18.

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97 Decree №14 of the Government of Georgia (22.01.2024). Available at Legislative Herald website
98 Decree №14 of the Government of Georgia (22.01.2024). Available at Legislative Herald website
99 On the approval of the rule of electronic supervision. Available at Legislative Herald website
100 112 (2023) Annual Report Available at Public Safety Command Center 112 website
101 National survey of violence against women in Georgia 2022. Available here
Since the mentioned situation derives from social and cultural norms, together with legal mechanisms, it is necessary to use a multifaceted approach, with educational, social and economic directions.\(^{102}\)

It is noteworthy that in 2024, changes were made to the order “on approving the rules and conditions for ensuring safety and public order in general educational institutions,” under which a procedure for managing and responding to cases of unregistered unions or risks of unions (early marriages) involving students under the age of 18 with the intention of forming a family has been explicitly segregated.

It is noteworthy that the participation of women in political life is increasing. Following the 2020 elections, the number of female Members of Parliament increased by 4% compared to the baseline year of 2016. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in the representation of women in municipal bodies. From 2016 to 2023, the proportion of seats held by women in local government rose from 11.6% to 24.2%.

In addition, the share of women in leadership positions increased to 38.8% in 2020-2022. In the baseline year (2017), women held 32% of managerial positions. However, it should be noted that the International Labor Organization (ILO) standard was changed after 2017, therefore the data for 2020-2022 are calculated according to the new standard and do not correspond to the 2017 data.

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\(^{102}\) Harmful Practice of Early/Childhood Marriage in Georgia – Current Challenges and Solutions Available here
A positive trend can be seen in the proportion of women employed in the positions of first and second-rank civil servants (SDG 5.5.2.1). This figure increased from 22% of women in 2016 to 46% by 2023. However, based on the evaluation of the data segregated by ranks, a relatively low rate of women in rank I positions was revealed. According to the 2023 report of the Civil Service Bureau, in 2023, 1,514 people (excluding the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia) were employed in I-rank positions, including 589 women, which is 39% of the total number. As for rank II civil servants, a total of 2,321 people were employed, including 1,178 women, which is 51% of the total number.

Unlike the distribution of employees in the public sector, the representation of women in managerial positions in the private sector is quite low. According to the World Bank Enterprise Survey, the share of women employed in top management in 2023 was 21%.

In order to promote the participation of women in Georgia’s financial sector, the National Bank of Georgia approved the “Code of Corporate Governance for Commercial Banks” in 2018. This code mandates that at least 20% of the Supervisory Board members of commercial banks should be women. After the adoption of this Code:

- Between 2018 and 2022, the representation of women on the Supervisory Board increased by 21%.
- In 2022, an amendment to the Code was made, stipulating that, starting June 1, 2023, the mandatory share of the opposite sex on the Supervisory Board will increase to 33%, and starting June 1, 2025, it will increase to 40%.
- Additionally, the Code recommended that at least 33% of the Boards of Directors of commercial banks should be composed of representatives of the opposite sex (minority).
- As of December 2023, the number of female members on supervisory boards reached 35%, exceeding the requirement set by the National Bank.

Another key issue of women’s economic empowerment is the gender wage gap (SDG 5.5.2.3). According to 2022 data, the gender pay gap in Georgia amounted to 31.7%. As a result of the changes implemented in the Labor Code of Georgia in 2020, the principles of gender equality in pay were established at the legislative level. According to the developed amendments, employers are obligated to provide equal remuneration to male and female employees for equal work performed. In addition, in 2021, Georgia joined the “Equal Pay International Coalition” (EPIC), which aims to reduce the pay gap worldwide and ensure equal pay for men and women for work of equal value.

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103 The 2023 statistics from the Civil Service Bureau are available on the Public Service website
104 World Bank (2023), Enterprise Surveys – Georgia. Available here
105 National Statistics Office of Georgia
106 Parliament of Georgia (2023), Key Achievements and Challenges for the Decade of Women’s Empowerment 2012-2022. Available here
6.1.2 Reduced inequality

The Law of Georgia “On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination” is the main regulatory framework for reducing inequality and eliminating discrimination (SDG 10.3) in Georgia. The purpose of the law is to eliminate all forms of discrimination and ensure equal enjoyment of the rights established by Georgian legislation for any individual and legal entity.

The importance of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities is confirmed by the Constitution of Georgia. Article 11 of the Constitution outlines a specific obligation for the state to enhance the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. In particular, the Constitution stipulates that “the state creates special conditions for the realization of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities.”


To coordinate the fulfillment of obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Inter-agency Coordination Committee for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its regulations were approved by the Resolution No. 551 of the Government of Georgia dated November 29, 2021. To ensure the involvement of persons with disabilities, organizations working on disability rights, and representative organizations of persons with disabilities in the committee’s activities, an advisory council was established in 2022. This council also upholds the principle of “No One is Left Behind.”

To eliminate inequality, it is important to promote orderly, safe, legal, and responsible migration and mobility of people through the implementation of well-managed migration policies (SDG 10.7). It should be noted that Georgia’s migration policy developed significantly during the reporting period.

On December 30, 2020, the Government of Georgia approved the Migration Strategy for 2021-2030. The long-term vision of the strategy is based on the principle of “migration and development,” which is considered a progressive approach in the modern world and aims to minimize the negative consequences of migration while maximizing the positive effects for the country’s development. Each sectoral direction of the strategy is closely related to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals, contributing to their comprehensive implementation.

In 2023, Georgia implemented legislative changes in the Georgian Law “On Labor Migration” to develop the regulatory framework for legal migration. These changes aim to protect Georgian citizens seeking work abroad and ensure the systematic registra-
tion of foreign citizens employed in Georgia, as well as to safeguard their rights. With these legislative changes, new regulatory mechanisms for legal immigration and emigration have been developed.

One of the key changes implemented in 2023 is the introduction of mechanisms for the certification of intermediary companies. This instrument aims to support the employment of Georgian citizens abroad or citizens of foreign countries with a permanent residence permit in Georgia.

It is important to note that the legislative changes also impact immigration issues. Prior to the adoption of the updated legal framework (Georgian Law “On Labor Migration” and its by-laws), immigration issues were regulated by government decrees.

According to the legislative amendment introduced on May 17, 2023, in the Law of Georgia “On the Legal Status of Foreigners and Stateless Persons,” a new regulation for labor immigrants came into effect on September 1, 2023. According to the new regulation employer companies are required to register a labor immigrant in the special electronic system of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the occupied territories of Georgia, Labor, Health, and Social Protection before applying to the agency for a work residence permit. Alongside the legislative and institutional changes in the direction of labor migration, significant progress is being made in the development of legal employment initiatives. Within this framework, agreements are formed with specific countries to facilitate the employment of citizens. The purpose of developing these schemes is to promote legal employment abroad, ensure fair conditions, protect rights, and provide decent remuneration.

6.2 PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

In the period of 2020-2023, Georgia made significant strides in enhancing the transparency of state institutions, accountability, and the level of engagement of diverse groups in the decision-making process. A range of mechanisms were developed and refined to ensure equal access for citizens to justice and public services. Reforms were undertaken in the penitentiary system, the institutional framework to combat corruption was strengthened, and the supportive environment for the protection of children were enhanced.

In the period of 2020-2023, significant strides were taken to further entrench the principles of “open government partnership” within Georgia’s public administration system. In 2023, the approval of the Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2024-2025 marked a pivotal moment. This plan, among other objectives, addresses the SDG 16. 107

During the reporting period, Georgia has been a member of the elective or governing bodies of the following organizations. (SDG 16.8):

- Member of the Governing Council of the Community of Democracies since 2019;
- Chair of the Community of Democracies’ - Working Group on Democracy and Technology, since 2020;
- Member of the UN Statistics Commission for the term 2020-2023;
- Member of the Executive Board of the World Tourism Organization for the period 2021-2025;
- Vice-President of the Executive Council of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) for the term 2021-2023;
- Member of the Council of Administration of the Universal Postal Union (UPU CA) for the term 2021-2024;
- Member of the Postal Operations Council of the Universal Postal Union (UPU POC) for the period 2021-2024;
- Member of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the period 2021-2025;
- Member of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the period 2023-2025;
- Member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2023-2025;
- Member of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the United Nations for the period 2023-2026.

107 Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2024-2025; Available at Open Government Georgia website
Candidates nominated by Georgia have been elected to the following positions in international organizations:

- UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), for the period of 2019-2022;
- Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for the term 2021-2025;
- Judge of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for the term 2021-2030;
- Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) for the period of 2021-2025;
- Member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) for the period 2022-2025;
- Member of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Combating Human Trafficking (GRETA) for the period 2023-2026;
- Member of the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT) for the period 2023-2026;
- Member of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), for the period of 2023-2027;
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), for the period of 2025-2029;
- Member of the Expert Group of the Committee on Human Rights (CCPR HRC), for the period of 2025-2028.

During the reporting period, the Government of Georgia significantly enhanced the quality of governance, as evidenced by Georgia’s leading position in the World Bank’s “Global Governance Indicators Project”. According to the results of the latest assessment in 2022, the country’s degree of regulation was rated at 91.04 points out of 100, reflecting substantial progress. (SDG 16.6.2.4).

Additionally, concerning other components of the “Global Governance Indicators” – freedom of choice and accountability (SDG 16.6.2.2), government effectiveness (SDG 16.6.2.3), and corruption control (SDG 16.6.2.6) – Georgia’s results in 2022 surpass the baseline set in 2015.108

Diagram 19. Georgia’s Positions in Global Governance Indicators

![Diagram showing Georgia's positions in Global Governance Indicators]

An indicator of the strength of the country’s institutions is Georgia’s position in the 2023 “Open Budget Index” by the “International Budget Partnership,” where the country received 87 out of 100 points.

108 Global Governance Indicators, World Bank. Available at World Bank website
ranking first in the world in terms of budget transparency. The “International Budget Partnership” also evaluates the effectiveness of budget oversight and citizen involvement in budget processes.

It should be noted that in the 2023 “Rule of Law Index” of the World Justice Project, Georgia ranks first in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Georgia ranks 48th among 142 countries globally. In the “Corruption Perception Index” published by the global civil society organization Transparency International in 2023, Georgia ranks 49rd among 180 countries worldwide, highlighting its leadership position in the region.

In the Heritage Foundation’s 2024 Index of Economic Freedom, which measures, among other things, government integrity and government spending, Georgia ranks 32nd, ahead of many EU and NATO member states.

Georgia continued its public administration reform to align more closely with EU standards and strengthen state institutions. As part of the second phase in 2023, the 2023-2026 strategy for public administration reform and its implementation action plan were approved. This policy document focuses on four main directions: 1) policy planning and coordination; 2) public service and human resources management; 3) accountability; and 4) provision of state services.

Within the framework of the above-mentioned reform, important steps were taken in several directions. Notably, to ensure the delivery of customer-oriented, simple, and high-quality public services (SDG 16.6.2.1), the country approved the “2022-2025 State Services Development Strategy” for the first time, aligning with EU standards. This strategy is accompanied by corresponding action plans for 2022-2023 and 2024-2025.

It became mandatory for state service-providing agencies to introduce new approaches and principles outlined by the strategy in four key directions: service creation, service provision, quality assurance (including a unified evaluation system and surveys of state service users’ satisfaction), and evaluation.

As part of the quality management component outlined by the strategy, the implementation of the international quality management model, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), tested in the European Union, began in the Public Service Hall in 2019-2020. Notably, the Public Service Hall was the first public service provider in the region to use these evaluation standards.

Beyond the introduction of an internationally recognized evaluation system, during the reporting period, the Public Service Hall expanded its service coverage throughout Georgia. As part of the structural change, existing public centers in the country began operating under the Public Service Hall. Through these infrastructure measures, the total number of Public Service Halls (including community centers) in the country reached 118 by 2023, and this figure is expected to increase to 130 in 2024.

Box 15. Mobile Public Service Hall

Since 2021, to maximize access to Public Service Hall, the project of “Mobile Public Service Hall” service was started. This initiative provides approximately 500 services directly to residents of villages situated far from district centers and Public Service Hall, operating on the basis of a single window approach.

It’s noteworthy that the project commenced in September 2021 and swiftly expanded to cover the entire territory of Georgia.

At present, the desired services are consistently provided to the populations of 90 villages across Georgia.

On June 12, 2023, the first branch of the Public Service Hall was established within a penitentiary facility. The primary concept of this innovative Geor-

109 State Services Development Strategy. Available at Legislative Herald website
110 The Public Service Hall is a public law legal entity under the Ministry of Justice, encompassing the majority of state services. It provides citizens with up to 500 services from Legal Entities of Public Law, various public agencies, and private sector entities operating under the Ministry of Justice. Its goal is to deliver high-quality state and private services to users on a one-stop basis.
111 Through community centers, local residents have the opportunity to access more than 200 public and private services without leaving their villages. These centers are equipped with modern infrastructure and modern equipment, providing free internet, computers, video conferencing equipment, and a modern electronic library.
gian project is to facilitate the rehabilitation and resocialization of prisoners. The Public Service Hall offers prison inmates unrestricted access to over 50 public and private services. By 2023, Public Service Hall was operational in 5 penitentiary institutions, providing a total of 664 services. 112

It’s important to note that the Public Service Development Agency offers permanent telephone consultation and remote service delivery for individuals with disabilities, both within Georgia and beyond:

- People with disabilities have the option to electronically submit applications for up to 50 services offered by the Public Service Development Agency.
- Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals ability are provided with the opportunity to receive consultations in sign language on any matter within the jurisdiction of the Public Service Development Agency.

In line with the principle of “leaving no one behind,” the patrol police department introduced a video call function specifically tailored for hearing-impaired and deaf individuals in 2023. This initiative has made over 50 services of the patrol police remotely accessible to individuals with hearing impairments.

During the reporting period, efforts were made to develop customized services for people with disabilities through updates to the mobile application of the Public Safety Comand Center (112) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and several enhancements were implemented, including the addition of a video call function for the hearing impaired, with each video call managed by an operator proficient in sign language; Translation of the application into two additional languages, making it available in Georgian, English, Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani; inclusion of information about the risks of child marriage and early marriage in the “advise” section of the application; adaptation of the application to meet the needs of blind users.

It’s worth noting that the level of customer satisfaction with “112” reached 95% by the end of 2023. 113

In 2019, the Office of the Witness and Victim Coordinator was established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia to support witnesses and victims in the litigation process, with defined functions and duties for the coordinator. In 2021, the Parliament of Georgia approved a package of legislative amendments. These amendments granted investigators, similar to prosecutors, the authority to involve the witness and victim coordinator in criminal cases during the investigation stage. As a result of the mentioned change, the witness and victim coordinators of the Ministry of Internal Affairs officially became participants in the criminal process. From 2020 to 2023, Ministry of Internal Affairs coordinators provided support to 8,918 individuals.

From 2020 to 2023, Georgia continued its reform of the penitentiary system. As part of this effort, additional guarantees were established to protect the rights of convicted and accused individuals, as well as persons deprived of liberty representing different groups. Since 2020, the “case management” method has been implemented, aiding social workers and psychologists in identifying the special needs and individual risks of inmates (SDG 16.3.2.1).
**Box 16. PROBBOX**

**PROBBOX** – It’s an innovative electronic device for monitoring and delivering services to probationers. For the first time in Europe, this device allows for electronic monitoring and service provision to probationers, enabling them to report to the probation bureau and access services in alternative locations equipped with fingerprint and face recognition technologies.

In 2023, 8,339 probationers (38.79% of the total active average number – 21,500) utilized PROBBOX 127,060 times.

For comparison, in 2022, 4,509 probationers (23.63% of the total active average number of 19,082) used PROBBOX 37,178 times.

In the penitentiary system of Georgia, several resocialization and rehabilitation programs are available for convicts and accused individuals. It’s noteworthy that in 2022, the “2022-2030 Sports Management Strategy” of the penitentiary system was approved, emphasizing the importance of sports in the rehabilitation process.\(^\text{114}\)

To safeguard the rights of various groups deprived of their freedom, the “Special Penitentiary Service” of Georgia consistently publishes diverse brochures in six languages outlining the rights of convicts and accused individuals. These brochures are also provided in audio format. Additionally, the penitentiary system offers a training program on the rights of convicts and accused individuals, with hundreds of convicts attending this program annually. (SDG16.3.2.2).

From 2020 to 2023, the share of defendants among persons placed in penitentiary institutions ranged from 18% to 20.2% (SDG 16.3.2), which is higher than the 2015 baseline of 13.5%. Despite this increase, significant steps were taken during the reporting period to ensure the legal equality of the convicted and the accused.\(^\text{115}\)

**Box 17. New Penitentiary Code of Georgia**

In 2023, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a **new Penitentiary Code** aimed at enhancing the rights of convicts and accused individuals, as well as improving the working conditions and access to benefits for penitentiary service employees.

Under the new code, defendants, like convicts, were given the option of extended appointments. Additionally, in special cases, both accused and convicted persons will be able to make an additional phone call. In addition, the living conditions of convicted and accused persons are now equal, and all types of appointments became free for all individuals deprived of their liberty. Convicts placed in high-risk penitentiary institutions were given the opportunity to make video calls. Additionally, all individuals deprived of liberty, except for high-risk convicts, were **granted the right to pursue higher education online or by correspondence**.

It is essential to note that the possibility of receiving education online, known as the “Digital University,” is an initiative introduced in the Georgian penitentiary system. This initiative aims to simplify the reintegration process of individuals deprived of their liberty into society. Prior to this change, individuals could only pursue higher education through correspondence courses.

Finally, the new Penitentiary Code enhances the human-centered environment within the Georgian penitentiary system.

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\(^{114}\) 2022-2030 Sports Management Strategy; Available [here](#).

\(^{115}\) Law of Georgia Penitentiary Code Available at Legislative Herald [website](#).
It should be noted that during the reporting period, structural reform was carried out in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Investigative, operational, and district departments were separated. As part of this reform, the responsibilities of investigators were confined solely to the investigation of criminal cases, completely separating them from other police duties. One of the main goals of the reform is to improve the quality of investigations.

To further develop community-oriented policing activities, the Ministry of Internal Affairs began implementing the Community Officer in 2018. The main goals of this initiative are to prevent crime, enhance the effectiveness of policing activities, and strengthen public trust in the police. As of 2023, the Community Officer has been introduced in 3 territorial bodies. There are plans to expand the initiative to cover other major cities across the country.

In parallel with the mentioned efforts, the number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 people decreased during the reporting period. As of 2023, the figure stood at 2.16 victims, marking a 29% reduction compared to the baseline and surpassing the reduction target of 10-15% by 14-19 percentage points. (SDG 16.1.1).

Diagram 20. The number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 people (SDG 16.1.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015 (Baseline)</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

In order to increase institutional credibility, during the reporting period, the country took important steps in the fight against corruption.

According to the Global Corruption Index, Georgia is a country with a low level of corruption and leading in the region in this regard, ranking 43rd out of 196 countries worldwide. 116

According to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, as assessed by businessmen and corruption experts, the country ranks 49th out of 180 countries worldwide. 117 Between 2020 and 2023, Georgia’s performance in several indicators of the fight against corruption and bribery showed significant improvement. (SDG16.5).

According to the “Integrity Index” of the European Research Center for Anti-Corruption and State-Building (ERCAS), Georgia has significantly improved its results compared to previous years and currently ranks 29th among 114 countries worldwide (2023). Moreover, Georgia holds the top position in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region.

In the “Bribery Risk Matrix” (2023) published by the non-profit international business association “Trace International”, Georgia ranks 35th among 194 countries.

The number of public officials and/or individuals prosecuted for bribery has decreased. As of 2023, a total of 12 public officials have faced prosecution for bribery, representing an 85% decrease compared to the baseline (SDG 16.5.1). The number of civil
servants and/or individuals of equal standing prosecuted for exceeding their official authority has also declined (SDG 16.5.1.3). Additionally, the number of public officials prosecuted for influence peddling remained close to zero. (SDG 16.5.1.5).\footnote{Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia}

In 2023, in accordance with the EU Association Agreement, Georgia adopted a new law on procurement.\footnote{Law of Georgia on Public Procurement. Available at Legislative Herald website} This step marked further progress in enhancing the institutional framework to combat corruption. The new law on Public Procurement aims to effectively manage procurement-related finances and increase the accountability of state institutions. Experts believe the proposed changes within the framework of the law will enhance the existing institutional environment for combating corruption in the country, thereby reducing corrupt practices in Georgia. According to the amendments, the law will be implemented gradually.

**Box 18. Anti-Corruption Bureau**

In accordance with the European Commission’s recommendation, amendments to the Law of Georgia “On Combating Corruption” led to the creation of the Legal Entity of Public Law Anti-Corruption Bureau (hereinafter referred to as Bureau) in 2022. This Bureau is the first independent institution to consolidate various anti-corruption functions under its jurisdiction.

The Bureau operates independently and is accountable only to the Parliament of Georgia and the Interagency Anti-Corruption Council.

The Bureau’s mandate includes the following functions:
- The development of Georgia’s national anti-corruption strategy and action plan, as well as the supervision of its implementation.
- Ensuring the declaration of assets of officials and monitoring these declarations.
- Whistleblowing, conflict of interest, and corruption risk assessment.
- Monitoring of political funding.

To empower young people, Georgia developed the State Youth Strategy 2023-2026 and its corresponding action plan, starting in 2023.\footnote{State Youth Strategy 2023-2026. Available at Legislative Herald website} The strategy aims to unlock the full potential of youth in the country as a renewable source of human capital. It encompasses five main objectives. The fourth objective focuses on “promoting youth participation in public and democratic processes,” directly aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 16.7.

By funding youth organizations at both regional and national levels, the Youth Agency promotes diversity in youth services, activates youth in the region, and strengthens youth organizations. The Agency collaborates with local municipalities to encourage the implementation of youth services at the local level. As a result of co-financing youth centers, spaces, initiatives, and providing technical and expert support, youth policy documents have been developed in municipalities. Youth organizations and initiative groups have become active, youth workers are engaged, youth advisory bodies/councils have been established, and youth spaces have been opened, among other achievements. As of 2023, 31 youth deliberative bodies are operating throughout Georgia.

During the reporting period, the Advisory Council of the Youth Agency was established, comprising representatives from 22 youth organizations, selected to ensure gender, ethnic, inclusion, and geographical balance. The council’s primary goal is to develop recommendations for the activities of the Youth Agency and to advocate for the voices of young people during decision-making processes. Council members are elected for a one-year term through open competition.

International studies demonstrate that over the past decade, Georgia has achieved substantial...
advancements in youth development. According to the Global Youth Development Index, Georgia has significantly improved its youth development ranking. Compared to 2016 (ranked 104), Georgia’s youth development index has improved, and as of 2023\(^{121}\), the country now ranks 52nd among 183 countries, achieving a “High Youth Development” status.

In parallel with the development of rights and institutional inclusion of women and youth, Georgia established additional institutional guarantees for the protection of children’s rights during the reporting period, in line with goal 16.2. However, domestic violence against children remains a significant issue in the country. Between 2020 and 2024, the number of children (1-17 years old) who were victims of domestic violence fluctuated, consistently surpassing the baseline data from 2015 each year. While this suggests the implementation of effective practices in investigating cases of domestic violence against children, it also highlights a challenge that necessitates further action.

| Table 1. The number of individuals against whom a criminal case has been initiated for domestic violence and the corresponding number of victims aged 1-17. (SDG 16.2.1.1) |
|-------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of persons prosecuted under Article 126 of the Criminal Code of Georgia | 2015 (Baseline) | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Number of persons affected by Article 126 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (1-17 years old) | 48 | 735 | 734 | 754 | 640 |

Source: Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia

A permanent parliamentary council was established in Georgia to enhance the protection of children’s rights.\(^{122}\) The resolution for the establishment of the Council was issued in 2019, with its official functioning commencing in 2021. The primary responsibility of the Council is to continually monitor the prevailing situation in the country regarding children’s legal protection.

Box 19. Barnahus

Since 2020, “Barnahus,” an innovative facility for the care of children, has been operational in Tbilisi and is planned in Kutaisi, Georgia. Modeled after the Scandinavian “Barnahus,” it serves as a center for psycho-social rehabilitation of children who are victims of violence. The center offers a range of rehabilitation services tailored to the unique needs of children who are victims of violence. The concept acknowledges the necessity for a distinct approach towards the children victims of violence compared to adults. The Georgian “Barnahus” model has garnered positive evaluations from children’s rights protection experts, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and Georgia’s international development partners.

During the reporting period, Georgia made significant efforts to ensure legal status for all individuals, including birth registration (SDG 16.9). As of 2023, the proportion of children under the age of 5 whose births were registered with the relevant authority stands at 99.9% and exceeds the target rate of 99.6% for 2030 (SDG 16.9.1).

\(^{121}\) Global Youth Development Index, Updated Report 2023. [commonwealth-global-youth-development-index-update-report-2023_d19495_0.pdf](https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com)

\(^{122}\) Amendments to the Rules and Procedures of the Parliament of Georgia; Available at Legislative Herald website
Table 2. The proportion of children under the age of 5 whose births were registered with the relevant authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>96.99%</td>
<td>99.98%</td>
<td>99.98%</td>
<td>99.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Justice of Georgia

The Public Service Development Agency issues identity documents upon request, including temporary identification documents for homeless children (SDG 16.9.1.1). Additionally, between 2020 and 2023, the issuance process for temporary identification cards to asylum seekers, individuals with humanitarian status, and refugees was activated.

Between 2020 and 2023, Georgia persisted in its efforts to combat trafficking, particularly child trafficking (SDG 16.2.2). In 2023, a total of 16 trafficking victims were identified, with 6 of them being children.

The Interagency Coordination Council dedicated to combating trafficking operates in Georgia. The country periodically approves an action plan for this purpose, typically on a biennial basis. The most recent action plan covers the years 2023-2024. The mentioned document underlines several priorities for combating trafficking and protecting victims, including children. In 2021 to ensure these objectives amendments were made to Georgian law on the fight against human trafficking and the rules for issuing state compensation approved by the Council.

Prior to the changes, victims and survivors of human trafficking were eligible for a one-time state compensation of 1000 GEL only after filing a civil lawsuit to receive compensation from the perpetrator. The requirement to apply to the court has been eliminated, and the state will now provide compensation to victims and survivors upon obtaining official victim status. Additionally, in 2023, the number of shelters and crisis centers for victim protection was further expanded. As of today, there are 3 shelters and 7 crisis centers for victims and victims of trafficking.

It’s worth noting that according to the 2023 report of the US State Department, Georgia continues to maintain its position in the first tier, indicating that the state meets anti-trafficking standards and systematically implements measures against human trafficking. Georgia has consistently remained in this top tier since 2016.

Furthermore, the international organization “Walk Free Foundation” which assesses the Global Slavery Index, ranked Georgia 14th out of 160 countries in its 2023 report.

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123 Georgian legislation on human trafficking distinguishes between two statuses: “victim of trafficking” and “survivor of trafficking.” The designation of “victim of trafficking” is conferred by the permanent group within the Interagency Coordination Council responsible for implementing measures against human trafficking, while the status of “survivor” is granted by the prosecutor through a resolution, in accordance with criminal procedural legislation. Both victims and survivors of trafficking are entitled to the same legal status and services.


125 Rules for providing one-time compensation to victims and survivors of human trafficking. Available here

126 Global Slavery Index. is available at Walk Free Foundation website
During the reporting period, as part of the “Partnership for Global Goals,” Georgia strengthened its efforts to enhance access to quality Internet services and promote digitization nationwide. Furthermore, efforts were made to reinforce the legal and strategic framework governing the operations of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

By 2023, 82.7% of the country’s population aged 6 or older had accessed the Internet within the past three months (SDG 17.8.1), marking an increase from the baseline data. It is particularly noteworthy that during the reporting period, the rate of women’s access to the Internet surpassed that of men, indicating a positive trend and suggesting that gender disparities in Internet access have been minimized.

Diagram 21. The proportion of the population aged 6 or older who used the Internet in the last 3 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016 (baseline)</td>
<td>58,50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74,9%</td>
<td>73,2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>77,40%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>76,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>79,80%</td>
<td>80,2%</td>
<td>79,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>82,7%</td>
<td>82,3%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

To facilitate digitization within the country, in 2020 Georgia approved the “2020-2025 the Broadband Infrastructure Development Strategy and Implementation Plan.” The objective of the strategy is to enhance the coverage of broadband networks across the nation and to increase the accessibility of high-speed, high-quality Internet services for Georgia’s population by 2025.

To ensure access to high-speed internet services, the state program of Inernetization implemented by JSC “Open Net”. The program is actively working to create a single, neutral fiber optic network across Georgia. This program focuses on developing wholesale broadband services in targeted geographic areas and establishing connections between access points within the network. Through these initiatives, Georgia aims to enhance access to digital services throughout the country.

To ensure the availability of reliable data, Georgia enforces the “Law on Official Statistics,” which aligns with international standards (SDG 17.18.2). This law provides a legal foundation for the consistent publication of impartial and reliable statistics in the country. It fully adheres to the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the European Statistics Code of Practice.

In this direction, during the reporting period, the government adopted the “National Strategy for the

127 2020-2025 The Broadband Infrastructure Development Strategy and Implementation Plan available [here](#)
Development of Statistics in Georgia 2020-2023 along with corresponding Action Plans. The primary goal of this strategy was to establish a comprehensive vision for the development of the national system of official statistics in Georgia, addressing both domestic and international needs. In 2024, the government approved the 2024-2027 strategy for the continued development of official statistics.

Regarding the population census, Georgia will conduct its population and agricultural census in November-December 2024. The results of the census will be published in June 2026. (SDG 17.9.2).

The role of libraries, which significantly contribute to the introduction and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are involved in various projects, should be emphasized. Notably, the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia has established the “SDG Open Zone,” where meetings and discussions are held on various sustainable development goals (e.g., SDG4, SDG5). Additionally, the library conducts various webinars to promote SDG initiatives, including in the mountainous regions of the country. Libraries create an inclusive space for achieving the SDGs through collaborative efforts.

As part of the global partnership, during the reporting period, the Government of Georgia allocated educational scholarships to students from 28 countries across Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Oceania, the Middle East, and Europe.

In addition, Georgia shared its successful experiences and best practices achieved at the national level in various fields (state service delivery, public administration, and elections) with representatives from countries in different regions.

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129 National Strategy for the Development of Statistics in Georgia. Available at Legislative Herald website
Since the Voluntary National Review submitted in 2020, Georgia has made significant progress in several areas. Despite the crisis situations characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in the region, the country managed to maintain high economic growth and macroeconomic stability. The years 2021-2022 were characterized by economic growth exceeding 10%. This growth not only helped mitigate the post-pandemic effects but also significantly boosted the economy compared to the pre-pandemic period. One of the key factors contributing to economic growth in 2022 was the increase in foreign direct investment, which doubled compared to 2021.

It is also worth noting the macroeconomic stability that the country has maintained despite the regional crisis and global inflationary trends. According to 2023 data, inflation in Georgia has already fallen within the target index. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has assessed Georgia as the leader among Eastern Partnership countries in the SME Policy Index evaluation.

At the end of 2023, Georgia became a candidate country for the European Union, marking a crucial step toward the country’s sustainable development. In terms of implementing 2030 Agenda, Georgia is making significant strides. This progress is reflected in the state's promotion of sustainable economic development and the implementation of programs aimed at fostering an industry and innovation-based economy.

Georgia has achieved notable progress across various aspects of socio-economic development, healthcare, education, and vocational training. The government’s measures to reduce poverty, strengthen social protection systems, and eliminate inequality underscore its dedication to inclusive growth. The healthcare system has also made significant strides, evidenced by increased insurance coverage and improvements in maternal and child health.

Reforms in Georgia’s education sector aimed at enhancing access to and quality of education. However, addressing skills mismatch in the labor market remains a significant challenge. It is important to highlight that vocational education plays a pivotal role in sustainable development by empowering youth, reducing poverty, and fostering economic growth.

Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Georgia has taken significant steps to enhance public welfare. These efforts include introducing initiatives to promote entrepreneurship, enhance financial literacy, and ensure the protection of labor rights.

Investing in the development of human capital and promoting entrepreneurship serves as a lever for Georgia to overcome the challenges of socio-economic development.

During the reporting period, democratic governance in Georgia was strengthened significantly. The legal framework to ensure equality, prevent discrimination, and address violence has been enhanced. Institutional guarantees to promote equality have also been strengthened. Georgia has taken substantial strides in fulfilling its obligations under international conventions and agreements. The institutionalization of internationally proven mechanisms supporting equality has been successfully implemented in the country.

To enhance democratic governance, Georgia continued structural reforms that were already underway before the reporting period. As part of these efforts, the standard of public service delivery in the country was improved, and the geographical coverage of these services was expanded. Furthermore, Georgia has promoted the provision of public services and ensured access to justice for all, including persons with disabilities and individuals from diverse groups. In 2022, the establishment of an independent Anti-corruption Bureau marked a significant milestone in creating an effective institutional framework for combating corruption in the country. Additionally, further steps were taken to enhance the production of official statistics, ensuring access to reliable data in Georgia.
The Voluntary National Review Report serves as a critical tool for comprehensively evaluating the outcomes of efforts towards each goal, identifying current challenges, planning future steps and interventions, and accelerating the implementation of objectives. The report presented encompasses a broad spectrum of actions undertaken by Georgia across various fronts in pursuit of sustainable development goals in recent years. Despite facing numerous challenges and recent global crises, Georgia remains steadfast in its commitments and continues to successfully implement its objectives.

In the upcoming years, there will be a notable emphasis on enhancing the data collection and management system. This component is crucial to ensure equality and uphold the key principle of the 2030 Agenda, which is “no one is left behind”.

A unified approach by the government will ensure a balanced integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions in the policies developed.

Support for the relevant ecosystem that contributes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals will persist. This includes further strengthening efforts to support the localization of SDGs and focusing on implementing innovative policies tailored to the rapidly evolving environment.

Georgia, like the rest of the world, is confronting challenges associated with climate change. Consequently, there will be increased efforts aimed at enhancing policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate change impacts, and prioritizing investments in the renewable energy sector. Alongside current economic growth, efforts will be directed towards developing innovation and sustainable industries, as well as diversifying the economy. Special priority will be placed on reducing inequality, including promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Cooperation, partnership, and participatory public policy development will be key priorities for the government, enhancing the implementation process of the Agenda 2030. The Government of Georgia remains committed to active cooperation with local authorities, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, and academia. This collaborative effort will facilitate the sharing of best practices and experiences toward achieving common aspirations and implementing sustainable development goals.

The Government of Georgia continues to utilize all available means to achieve tangible outcomes with active involvement of the international community, towards the de-occupation of Georgian territories, the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes, reconciliation and confidence building among people divided by the occupation lines, and the establishment of sustainable peace and security.

Georgia remains steadfast in implementing necessary reforms on its path toward integration with the European Union. The country’s objective is to foster long-term peace, security, stability, sustainable economic growth, and the well-being of its citizens to the fullest extent possible.