



Program of the Government of Georgia

For Building a European State

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Introduction

The foundation of a free, safe, and economically robust Georgian state rests upon democratic values, with the primary objective being the well-being of every citizen. Over recent years, a series of political and economic reforms have been implemented, resulting in the

establishment of peace, stability, social and economic development, equality, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights as core values. Consequently, significant progress has been achieved across various sectors including economy, society, foreign policy, democracy building, and other vital areas. Despite facing global or regional crises, Georgia has emerged as a leading entity among the region and several EU member states due to its trends of rapid economic growth.

On December 14th, 2023, the designation of Georgia as an EU Candidate Country marked a significant milestone in the process of European integration, signifying a new historic phase. This milestone is a logical continuation of The Georgian Dream's responsible and consistent policy, which led to the signing of an Association Agreement with the European Union in 2014, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Accompanied by initiatives such as visa-free travel arrangements with EU/Schengen countries, each step taken by the Government of Georgia towards integration with the European Union aligns with the unwavering will of the Georgian people, as reflected in the Constitution, to join European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Since regaining independence, Georgia's development has unfolded amidst the challenges posed by the occupation of its territories and serious global and regional crises. In recent years, these challenges have unfortunately intensified. However, amidst these circumstances, the stability and security of the nation, protection of families, reinforcement of sovereignty, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and restoration of territorial integrity remain steadfast priorities of the Georgian government.

Against the backdrop of global challenges, ensuring sustainable and inclusive development that reflects the welfare of citizens necessitates the continuity of reforms, maximization of resources and potential, and effective cooperation with international partners. Accordingly, the current Government Program aims to stimulate the economy, maintain a stable and secure environment, strengthen democratic institutions, and take effective steps towards Georgia's accession to the European Union.

Aligned with these objectives, the efforts of the Government of Georgia will focus on the following key areas:

1. Foreign policy, ensuring the irreversibility of integration into the European Union, peaceful resolution of conflicts, security, and stable development of the country. The primary task remains Georgia's accession to European Union and Euro-Atlantic structures, along with the peaceful restoration of territorial integrity, de-occupation, and further enhancement of Georgia's regional and global role to ensure rapid development.
2. Economic development, with main tasks including ensuring macroeconomic stability, structural improvement of the economy, development of foreign trade, and promotion of economic integration with the European Union. This encompasses the development of tourism, support for agriculture, local investments, and entrepreneurial activities to foster citizens' well-being and elevate Georgia's position as a key economic hub.

3. Development of social policy and human capital, aimed at improving the health status of the population, ensuring universal access to quality healthcare services, strengthening the social protection system, promoting employment, and fostering the development of a quality education system, science, technology, and innovation to build a stronger and knowledge-equipped society.
4. State governance, emphasizing the construction of democratic institutions and the development of the public service system, which remain unchanging priorities. This approach not only ensures Georgia's accelerated integration into the European Union but also entails delivering higher standards of services to citizens and implementing evidence-based policies.

The Government Program lays down solid foundations for the country's rapid development in the coming years, both nationally and globally, bringing Georgia closer to its historical goal of joining the European Union and promising a better future for every citizen.

The government expresses its full readiness to shape Georgia's European future in collaboration with the general public and with the support of international partners.

1. Foreign Policy, Security, Conflict Resolution and Human Rights

1.1 Foreign Policy

Recent developments in the world and the region have presented significant challenges and, concurrently, new opportunities. Amidst global and regional shifts in international politics, pursuing European integration stands out as a paramount priority. This endeavor not only bolsters Georgia's national security but also promotes sustainable, democratic development and ensures the well-being of its citizens, as enshrined in the constitution alongside other foreign policy objectives. Additionally, there is special emphasis on further enhancing cooperation with strategic partners, as well as with other international actors. Through active engagement with the international community, efforts are directed towards strengthening the country's sovereignty and achieving the peaceful restoration of territorial integrity.

Status of an EU Candidate Country granted to Georgia in 2023 has elevated its development agenda to a significantly higher level, while also presenting new opportunities for achieving foreign policy objectives. To progress towards opening accession negotiations, Georgia remains committed to collaborating closely with EU institutions and member states. Accordingly, concerted efforts are underway to fulfill the key steps outlined by the European Commission. Moreover, there is a strong emphasis on effectively implementing the Association Agreement and leveraging associated opportunities, including those stemming from the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area component. Additionally, prioritizing the integration of Georgia into the European Union's single market holds particular importance in terms of delivering tangible benefits for citizens.

In addition to making strides towards integration into the European Union, considering the geopolitical landscape globally, Georgia's role in facilitating transit and energy routes connecting Europe and Asia is gaining prominence. Therefore, alongside the European Union, it is imperative **to further bolster Georgia's transit function with the EU**, ensuring mutual benefits derived from membership in the European Energy Union and participation in the trans-European transport network. To this end, ongoing efforts will be directed towards realizing the flagship initiatives outlined in the economic and investment plan of the Eastern Partnership. Furthermore, within the realm of sectoral integration, significant emphasis will be placed on engaging with EU programs and collaborating with specialized agencies. These endeavors will actively support the country's legislative and institutional alignment with EU standards across various domains.

Continued active cooperation with the European Union in the realm of security and defense remains a top priority. This includes alignment with the priorities outlined in the European Union's strategic compass, which underscores the significance of maritime security in the Black Sea, among other strategic directions.

Within the context of European integration, the endeavors undertaken as part of the enlargement package will serve as a crucial political element. This includes fostering deeper

relations with countries included in the package regarding European integration and mutual exchange of experiences. Additionally, actively positioning Georgia as a candidate country in ongoing processes within the European Union, particularly in the realm of institutional reform within the bloc, will be of paramount importance.

All of the aforementioned activities, coupled with the utilization of emerging opportunities for integration, serve the overarching ambitious goal: to make substantial progress in the journey towards joining the European Union.

Alongside Georgia's European integration efforts, the primary focus remains on the peaceful restoration of the country's territorial integrity and the bolstering of its sovereignty. The Georgian authorities remain steadfast in their commitment to pursuing a policy of peaceful resolution of the Russian-Georgian conflict.

Simultaneously, Georgia maintains its proactive participation **in international negotiations in Geneva** aimed at addressing the security and humanitarian challenges arising from the Russian occupation. Efforts will persist in elevating the prominence of the **Geneva International Negotiations** on partners' agendas and securing robust international support, including ensuring the presence of high-level representatives from Georgia's strategic partners in these discussions.

Efforts will be vigorously sustained towards de-occupation with the aim of achieving concrete and tangible results. This involves taking practical measures for the **full implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, brokered by the European Union on August 12, 2008**. Ensuring the confirmation and fulfillment of the Russian Federation's obligation not to use force and facilitating the withdrawal of Russian armed forces from the occupied territories **is equally significant**. Additionally, there is a critical focus on establishing international security mechanisms in the occupied territories and enhancing international engagement in this endeavor.

It is of paramount importance to maintain collaborative efforts with partners aimed at reinforcing endeavors to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the **mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission** in the occupied territories of Georgia.

Special emphasis will be placed on consolidating international efforts to enhance security and address humanitarian concerns in the occupied territories, while ensuring the protection of human rights and effectively utilizing negotiation formats. Efforts will be made to garner support for the imposition of restrictive measures by various countries and international organizations on individuals listed in the **Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List**.

Intensifying efforts for the **safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugees** from the occupied territories of Georgia is a priority focus area.

The **consolidation of the policy of non-recognition** of the occupied territories remains a crucial objective. Mobilizing international efforts to mitigate existing risks and prevent illegal contacts with occupation regimes, as well as responding to individual cases, is a priority direction.

In the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the conflict, particular emphasis is placed on **effectively implementing a policy of reconciliation and engagement**. The **government's foremost priority** is to ensure that the benefits and opportunities attained through democratic and economic development, as well as European integration, are equally accessible to individuals residing on both sides of the occupation line.

In this context, the Government of Georgia will persist in the implementation of its peace initiative, "Step towards a better future." Alongside de-occupation efforts, particular focus will be placed on caring for the population residing in the occupied regions and the areas near the occupation lines. Initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue between divided societies, restoring trust, and cultivating cooperation grounded in shared interests will be actively pursued. Furthermore, continuous efforts will be made to mobilize international support for the peace policy.

The rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court concerning the 2008 Russia-Georgia war will be actively leveraged across all feasible legal and political channels to fortify state sovereignty and facilitate the repatriation of displaced individuals to their original residences. State interests will persist in being safeguarded in both the Strasbourg and Hague courts, as well as within the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH).

In line with Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia, further progress in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration remains one of the country's most vital foreign policy objectives. As an aspirant country, Georgia will persist in effectively utilizing key tools for integration into the alliance, such as the updated Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP), Annual National Program, and NATO-Georgia Commission. Efforts will continue to enhance NATO's presence in Georgia through activities such as exercises and training. Moreover, practical and political cooperation with the Alliance within the framework of the Individual Tailored Partnership Program (ITPP) will remain ongoing.

Georgia remains actively engaged in cooperation with NATO, particularly in enhancing security within the Black Sea region. As a steadfast partner, Georgia continues to support NATO's efforts on its eastern flank.

Intensive efforts will be sustained to ensure the **further deepening of strategic cooperation with the United States, Georgia's primary strategic partner**. This entails prioritizing key areas such as defense and security, European and Euro-Atlantic integration, peaceful conflict resolution, strengthening trade and economic ties, fostering economic development, and consolidating democratic institutions.

To achieve these goals, intensive collaboration between the countries will persist across all key areas outlined in the Charter of Strategic Partnership. Additionally, efforts will be focused on negotiating a new legal framework instrument to bolster defense-security and trade-economic ties further. Work on finalizing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the USA will be intensified, alongside endeavors to encourage US investments in Georgia. A dedicated focus will be kept on maintaining and strengthening the robust support of the US Congress towards Georgia.

Special attention will be devoted to fostering the growth of relations within the framework of the declaration of **strategic cooperation with China** across all priority areas outlined in the document. This encompasses the enhancement of ties in trade, economics, cultural exchange, education, sectoral collaboration, and various other fields. Additionally, there will be a concerted effort to sustain the constructive momentum of existing partnerships within international forums, while also engaging in active collaboration with Europe and Asia via Georgia to boost the volumes of cargo.

In the present context, it is crucial for Georgia to **further intensify its bilateral relations** with partner and friendly nations, elevating existing cooperation frameworks to a notably higher standard and exploring new avenues for collaboration.

Given Georgia's status as a candidate country for EU membership, it is paramount to elevate bilateral relations with European nations to a strategic level. It is equally imperative to sustain and further deepen partnership ties with allied countries.

Georgia remains committed to a policy rooted in balanced and mutually advantageous partnership cooperation within the region. By doing so, it seeks to make a meaningful contribution to the sustainable and stable development of the region.

In this context, priority will be given to ongoing efforts aimed at fostering peace, cooperation, and stability in the South Caucasus. To achieve this goal, Georgia will persist in strengthening its successful cooperation with neighboring partner states and further developing bilateral relations across all sectors. Additionally, the process of border delimitation and demarcation will continue in accordance with national interests, underpinned by strategic partnership and good neighborly relations. Of particular significance will be the maintenance and enhancement of the current robust bilateral strategic relations with Turkey, as well as with Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Georgia holds a significant position within the broader Black Sea region, and the attainment of candidate status, along with the expansion of the country's transit capacity, has underscored the pressing need to activate regional cooperation in both bilateral and multilateral formats. In this context, there is a crucial importance placed on further strengthening strategic-political ties with relevant countries, as well as deepening sectoral cooperation.

Recent global developments have underscored the heightened significance of diversifying transport and energy corridors. **The concept of linking Asia and Europe has gained particular prominence. In this context, the "Middle Corridor" assumes a crucial role** in facilitating the smooth and efficient transportation of goods and energy carriers between the East and the West. Georgia is committed to taking significant strides in advancing this initiative, contributing to the establishment of robust connectivity between Asia and Europe.

In this context, it is paramount to activate efforts towards enhancing energy, transport, and digital connectivity with the European Union, while also bolstering cooperation with nations in Asia and the Middle East. Special emphasis will be placed on strengthening existing cooperation formats with these countries and elevating relations to a high or strategic level,

primarily to deepen and expand trade and economic ties. Leveraging available opportunities, promoting and reinforcing Georgia's business and investment, transit, and tourism prospects in these regions will be essential. Given the rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, **active engagement in global and regional international organizations within multilateral frameworks** is of utmost importance for Georgia. Consequently, a pivotal aspect of the country's foreign policy will involve proactive participation in international organizations and the implementation of policies aligned with Georgia's national interests.

Given the current challenges and opportunities, it is imperative to provide special attention and support to the **Georgian diaspora** abroad. Establishing a systematic approach to diaspora relations is crucial to fostering strong connections with compatriots residing overseas. This entails encouraging diaspora initiatives through grant programs and various projects. Emphasis will be placed on implementing existing projects effectively, enhancing them where necessary, and devising new programs to better serve the diaspora community. Moreover, refining the legal framework concerning compatriots will be a priority. Efforts will persist in supporting the establishment and development of cultural and educational centers for compatriots living abroad. These initiatives aim to maintain a sense of cultural identity and strengthen ties between Georgia and its diaspora members across the globe.

Considerable focus will be placed on **active cultural diplomacy**, through which Georgia will persist in enhancing the country's international visibility and advancing its engagement in global cultural, educational, and scientific endeavors. This strategic approach aims to elevate Georgia's presence on the international stage and foster deeper connections with other nations through cultural exchange, educational collaborations, and scientific partnerships.

The **welfare of Georgian citizens** residing abroad and the effective protection of their rights and legal interests will continue to be a paramount priority.

1.2 Bolstering the Defense Capability of the Country

Enhancing the country's defense capability stands as a fundamental pillar in safeguarding Georgia's independence and sovereignty. In line with this imperative, the Ministry of Defense will persist in actively pursuing the defense objectives outlined in long-term planning, both at the national and organizational levels.

Caring for every soldier, advancing the capabilities of the Defense Forces, bolstering the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Defense, revitalizing the military industry, deepening international cooperation, and enhancing inter-departmental collaboration are the focal points of the government's and the Ministry of Defense's sustained, long-term endeavors.

The effective provision of defense and security requires a coordinated, comprehensive approach involving all national stakeholders within a unified governmental and public framework. Embracing the Total Defense concept, particular emphasis will be placed on strengthening interagency cooperation and fostering coordinated actions among all relevant entities.

Efforts to enhance the effectiveness of medical services and rehabilitation for Defense Forces personnel, Ministry of Defense employees, their family members, and the families of deceased servicemen, as well as reintegration and resocialization measures for wounded or injured servicemen, will persist. This includes ongoing support for co-financing housing construction and social projects for military personnel, as well as further development of military-medical facilities.

In 2024, the Ministry of Defense will persist in enhancing defense capabilities by focusing on the development of anti-armor, air defense, artillery, intelligence, engineering, and cybersecurity capabilities. These efforts will be conducted in collaboration with international partners, leveraging expertise and resources for mutual benefit. Additionally, the process of updating and improving infrastructural facilities of the Defense Forces will continue in alignment with identified priorities, ensuring that necessary infrastructure supports the effective execution of defense operations.

The Government of Georgia places significant emphasis on the continuous development of the national military-industrial potential, recognizing its pivotal role in bolstering the strength and resilience of the state. Accordingly, the production of GI-4 type weapons will persist at the NATO standard automatic rifle factory, alongside the manufacture of unmanned aerial vehicles with various functionalities. Moreover, to foster the growth of local production and meet the demands of the domestic market, there will be an expansion of the production process for various products such as field equipment and uniforms by Delta Textile.

In 2024, significant strides will be made towards establishing and enhancing a sustainable reserve and mobilization system, along with the national military service of conscripts. The recruitment of conscripts for national military service, as well as the procedures for managing the mobilization reserve, will be implemented by a legal entity of public law (LEPL) - National Agency for Military Conscription and Recruitment. An electronic call-up system, based on the principle of annually randomly selecting conscripts, will be implemented to streamline the process. Additionally, collaboration with the National Guard will be intensified to refine procedures for managing the mobilization reserve.

The Ministry of Defense will prioritize the enhancement of cooperation with volunteer organizations, with a particular focus on supporting and capacity-building initiatives through a LEPL Defense Volunteer program. Engaging youth and public organizations in bolstering national defense efforts will play a pivotal role in cultivating national resilience and fostering greater awareness among the general public regarding defense and security matters. By fostering collaboration with volunteer groups, Georgia aims to harness the collective strength of its citizens and public awareness to further strengthen its defense capabilities and ensure the safety and security of the nation.

To foster a strong military-patriotic spirit, Georgia will continue implementing various projects, including the Army Camp and Our Army. The scope of the Army Camp initiative will expand, encompassing more participants and locations.

Efforts will be directed towards enhancing defense management mechanisms, which will play a crucial role in facilitating the successful implementation of significant institutional changes and planned reforms within the defense sector.

To reinforce cost-effective solutions and promote good governance principles, the implementation of a risk management system will persist. This system will facilitate the identification, assessment, and mitigation of risks within the defense sector.

To further enhance the resource management system, the Ministry will focus on retraining relevant personnel and updating resource management guidance documents.

Development of educational opportunities will be continued at the legal entity of public law (LEPL) Georgian National Defense Academy named after David Aghmashenebeli and cadets. This includes enhancing the academy's military and other professional educational programs, strengthening scientific research activities, and introducing two new bachelor's programs. Additionally, cyber security training modules will be integrated into the Ministry's educational programs. Efforts will be made to improve training and residential infrastructure at cadet military lyceums in both eastern and western Georgia. The number of exchange programs with similar educational institutions will be increased to facilitate international collaboration and knowledge exchange. Various educational events, including conferences, lectures, and thematic courses, will be organized at the legal entity of public law (LEPL) Institutional Building School of Defense.

The establishment of the Cyber Command as a military branch and the recruitment and training of military personnel with suitable qualifications will proceed. Efforts to modernize the infrastructure of the Cyber Security Bureau will include commencing the construction of a contemporary administrative building for the Bureau. Furthermore, in alignment with the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP), work on the cyber laboratory project will commence.

To enhance the training and education of military personnel, both national and multinational exercises will be conducted. Notably, the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC) will host the training planning course with NATO SELECTED status. This designation will aid the center in its pursuit of NATO institutional accreditation.

The Ministry of Defense will persist in leveraging the existing formats and mechanisms of NATO-Georgia cooperation to advance the goal of NATO membership. Concurrently, efforts will continue to fulfill obligations undertaken with the European Union and collaborate with its structural units in defense-related endeavors.

The implementation of initiatives outlined within the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) will be vigorously continued, contributing significantly to the enhancement of Georgia's defense and security capabilities. These efforts will serve to bolster the country's resilience and increase its compatibility with NATO standards.

The Ministry of Defense will prioritize the fulfillment of obligations outlined in the Annual National Program (ANP), Individually Tailored Partnership Program (ITPP), and the NATO Military Committee and Work Plan of Georgia.

Attention will be dedicated to further strengthening partnerships within the European Peace Facility (EPF) framework and deepening cooperation with the European Defense Agency (EDA) and the Cyber Security Agency.

By 2024, the Ministry of Defense of Georgia will receive over 50 million USD in financial support from the United States. As part of bilateral cooperation, particular emphasis will be placed on modernizing the equipment of the Georgian Defense Forces, and active collaboration with the USA in the defense sector will continue.

In 2024, Georgia will host the US European Command's multinational exercise - The Trojan Footprint - and the US-Georgia multinational exercise - The Noble Partner. Additionally, the Georgian military will participate in training exercises organized by the USA abroad.

As part of bilateral cooperation with the USA, the Georgian Defense and Deterrence Enhancement Initiative (GDDEI) has been actively implemented since 2023, with plans to continue until 2027. GDDEI is designed to bolster Georgia's deterrence, territorial defense, resistance, and resilience capabilities. It plays a crucial role in enhancing compatibility with NATO standards, implementing institutional reforms, and expediting the modernization process of the Georgian Defense Forces.

Deepening cooperation with NATO and EU members, as well as with countries in the Black Sea region and other partner nations, will be a priority. This concerted effort will contribute significantly to enhancing stability and security in the region while strengthening defense capabilities.

Within the framework of bilateral and trilateral cooperation with partner countries, ongoing efforts will include high-level visits, expert meetings, experience sharing, professional development programs, and multinational military exercises. These activities will serve to enhance the capabilities and readiness of the Defense Forces by fostering collaboration, sharing expertise, and promoting interoperability with allied and partner nations.

1.3 Ensuring Security and Public Order

1.3.1 Public Security and Order

The National Security Council and its apparatus will continue their active efforts in planning and coordinating national security policy at a strategic level. This deliberative body plays a key role in ensuring the security and well-being of the nation by assessing threats, formulating strategies, and coordinating responses across various government agencies.

The process of updating two fundamental conceptual documents in the field of national security—the National Security Concept and the Threat Assessment Document—currently in an active phase, will be continued and completed.

In pursuit of creating a robust institutional architecture in the field of cybersecurity and bolstering information security and cybersecurity standards, Georgia will develop an updated

"Georgian National Cyber Security Strategy and its Action Plan." This updated strategy will provide a comprehensive framework for addressing cybersecurity challenges, enhancing resilience against cyber threats, and promoting cybersecurity best practices. Additionally, efforts will continue to focus on the professional development of individuals working in the cybersecurity field, ensuring they possess the necessary skills and expertise to effectively protect Georgia's digital infrastructure and combat cyber threats.

The state will prioritize the fight against hybrid threats and continue to strengthen both the state's and society's resilience to such threats. Efforts will focus on developing relevant institutional mechanisms and capabilities to effectively identify, assess, and counter hybrid threats.

In the realm of prevention, preparedness, and effective response to natural disasters, Georgia will continue to focus on capacity building and the implementation of globally recognized best practices. As part of these efforts, Georgia will develop "Georgia's national disaster risk reduction strategy and its action plan" in 2024.

Continuing the reforms initiated in the field of security and law enforcement protection and implementing measures **to enhance the quality of activities** remain imperative. The further development of the Ministry of Internal Affairs will persist, encompassing both structural and functional changes, along with legislative initiatives.

The **reform of the criminal police** will persist, transitioning gradually from the district direction to the concept of community-oriented policing. As part of this reform, the law enforcement officer institute will be developed, focusing on enhancing the crime prevention component. Efforts will be made to align with international standards and enhance the effectiveness of police activities by improving the capabilities of law enforcement officers. This includes enhancing their qualifications in various areas.

The **investigative component will be further strengthened**, with a focus on **increasing the quality of investigations**. This effort will involve attracting new personnel, providing systematic training for active investigators, and implementing other measures aimed at enhancing the quality of investigations.

Effective steps will be taken to ensure the **effective investigation of crimes committed by and against minors**. Special approaches tailored to minors will be introduced, and efforts will be made to create an environment conducive to their well-being. Georgia will continue to implement infrastructure adapted to minors and carry out measures aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency.

The **reform of the border police will persist**, focusing on the development of human resources, border infrastructure, and the adoption of modern technical means for border monitoring. Active cooperation with NATO will continue to enhance border security measures. Efforts will also be made to establish a unified system of border management risk analysis and integrate it into the relevant analytical system. Cooperation between the Coast Guard and the North Atlantic Alliance will be further strengthened, and the development of the Joint Command Center for Naval Operations will continue.

The **reform of the patrol police will continue** with a focus on simplifying administrative processes, expanding access to police services, and integrating modern technologies. Efforts will be made to increase the coverage area of the **unified patrol police service center and service agency**, ensuring that citizens have easier access to police services.

The **development of an analysis-based policing model** will be further pursued, with a focus on enhancing the capabilities of analysts and corresponding software. Efforts will be made to improve the skills and training of analysts, as well as to upgrade analytical software to ensure more effective and efficient crime analysis.

The active **fight against organized crime and drug-related offenses** will continue to be a top priority. Plans include developing and approving the **2025-2028 national strategy for combating organized crime, along with the corresponding action plan for the years 2025-2026**.

Given the increasing trends of cybercrime globally, Georgia will prioritize issues related to **cybercrime investigation**. Efforts will focus on increasing the number of police officers with the appropriate qualifications to investigate cybercrimes effectively. Additionally, operational cooperation with relevant law enforcement services in Europe and the USA will be deepened to exchange information, share best practices, and coordinate efforts to combat cybercrime.

Cooperation with international police structures, including **Europol**, will be further deepened, reflecting Georgia's commitment to combating transnational crime and enhancing global security. Additionally, the network of police attachés will be expanded.

To ensure the acquisition of evidence to a high standard, Georgia will develop expert criminological capabilities by equipping laboratories with modern technical resources and expanding the scope of accreditation to cover additional expert areas. Relevant legislative amendments necessary for the establishment of a DNA bank will be presented to the Parliament of Georgia.

In response to challenges related to visa-free travel, the effective management of migration flows and borders, and the enforcement of the readmission agreement, Georgia will strengthen efforts to enforce the readmission agreement and improve border management. Additionally, **a draft law will be submitted to the Parliament of Georgia to enhance the asylum system in the country**. Plans also include the construction of **a new administrative building for the Migration Department** in 2024.

To attract young, qualified personnel and enhance the motivation of existing staff, Georgia will focus on developing **existing human resources management mechanisms**. This includes improving the internship system to attract motivated and qualified individuals to the Ministry. Additionally, the MIA Academy will prioritize professional training and retraining programs for police officers, with **educational programs tailored to address identified challenges**.

Within the implementation of the **road safety program**, there will be a significant increase in the use of new technologies. A **new unit created within the Ministry of Internal Affairs** will play a crucial role in improving road traffic safety by conducting detailed analyses of traffic accidents, identifying "black spots," and planning preventive measures accordingly.

Additionally, efforts will continue to **integrate the practical component of the driving license test into urban conditions** and develop the legislative framework to ensure effective preventive measures.

The Public Safety Management Center – a legal entity of public law (LEPL), also known as 112, will continue to expand and develop video-surveillance and speed control systems throughout the country to enhance public and road safety.

To enhance the effectiveness of **emergency management**, Georgia will focus on developing operational capabilities and resources, raising the level of preparedness, and improving the quality of response to emergencies. Plans include updating machinery and equipment, modernizing infrastructure, and significantly expanding international cooperation efforts.

The **renovation and rehabilitation of police buildings**, as well as the **construction of new facilities**, will continue in Georgia, ensuring that they are equipped with appropriate material and technical resources. Efforts will also be made to update the existing car park and fire-rescue special equipment. Additionally, the aviation park will be expanded with the acquisition of three new helicopters. Furthermore, to improve the social guarantees for employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the apartment construction project will be actively continued.

Legal Security

To bolster legal security, Georgia will continue leveraging modern technologies and introduce artificial intelligence in various aspects of law-making activities. This includes the legal examination of agreements concluded by the state and proceedings in international courts and arbitrations. The ongoing process of codification of legislative acts will also persist, aimed at organizing and systematizing laws for clarity and understanding.

Georgia aims to develop a unified legal framework to regulate land-related issues systematically and define rights and duties in relevant legal relations.

Georgia will advance the process of aligning its legislation with EU law through an electronic platform, moving to the next stage of development. This platform will serve as a centralized hub where state agencies can display information on legal harmonization efforts, facilitating the establishment of a uniform practice in this regard. Additionally, the translation of legal acts from the European Union into Georgian will continue.

Georgia will take necessary measures for the implementation of the Law on National Spatial Data Infrastructure, aiming to promote economic and tourism development, attract investments, integrate the national spatial data infrastructure into the European Union Spatial Information Infrastructure (INSPIRE), and effectively manage crisis situations.

Georgia will continue to prioritize the availability of notary services, ensuring continuous improvement and accessibility for citizens. Additionally, mechanisms will be introduced to prevent the risks of document falsification, particularly for documents with legal significance.

To increase public awareness of legal issues, Georgia's Justice Training Center will implement educational projects aimed at educating citizens on various legal topics. Additionally, an online platform called "Studio Justice" will be launched, providing accessible resources to help raise the population's awareness of legal matters.

Penitentiary System

The development of the penitentiary system and ensuring compliance with international standards remain key priorities for Georgia. Efforts will continue to upgrade the infrastructure of the penitentiary system to align more closely with international standards.

In light of the provisions outlined in the **newly adopted Penal Code**, Georgia will continue its efforts to further improve the living conditions of the accused and convicts within its penal system. This includes ongoing initiatives to enhance infrastructure, amenities, and services provided to inmates. Additionally, there will be a focus on harmonizing bylaws to ensure they align with the principles and regulations set forth in the Penal Code.

Alongside the gradual occupation of the newly inaugurated small penitentiary facility in Laituri hamlet, which adheres to the highest standards, Georgia will finalize **the construction of additional small penitentiary facilities in the city of Rustavi**.

In the current penitentiary institutions, Georgia will continue repair works and undertake efforts to improve and refurbish the sports infrastructure.

To enhance the legal status of convicts and employees of the penitentiary service and ensure unrestricted access to services, Georgia will continue to expand the number of houses of justice within the penitentiary system.

Georgia will continue its efforts to enhance the safety and working conditions of employees within penitentiary institutions. As part of this initiative, employees will receive bonuses based on their rank and years of service, aiming to recognize and reward their dedication and contributions.

To enhance the qualifications of employees within the penitentiary system, Georgia will conduct local and international training programs at the newly established Saakadze Base of the Justice Training Center.

Georgia will continue to equip penitentiary institutions and treatment penitentiary facilities with the latest medical equipment.

To ensure access to quality higher education in penitentiary institutions, Georgia will expand the scale of the Digital University project.

To promote a healthy lifestyle among the accused and convicts, Georgia will continue implementing the sports management strategy, facilitating various sports events within penitentiary institutions.

Georgia will enhance opportunities for employment, vocational training, education, and recreation for convicts and ex-prisoners by creating appropriate systems and infrastructure tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups.

Georgia will continue its efforts to enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitation and resocialization programs for convicts and ex-prisoners by introducing electronic data exchange systems and implementing employment programs tailored to their needs and interests.

Georgia will develop an increased number of targeted activities and projects aimed at promoting vocational training and employment opportunities for convicts.

Georgia will introduce effective methodologies for the individual assessment of convicts and ex-prisoners, encompassing classification, sentence planning, and case management.

To provide greater anonymity for probationers and expand the geographical coverage of their electronic monitoring and services, Georgia will increase the number of PROBBOXes.

Georgia will complete the development of an orientation course for probationers, providing low-risk individuals with a unique opportunity to participate in a new rehabilitation program.

To facilitate early crime prevention in schools, Georgia will implement a crime prevention course designed to equip school teachers and staff with the necessary skills to detect challenging behaviors in juveniles and respond effectively in coordination with the juvenile referral center. This course will provide educators with tools and techniques to identify early warning signs of potential issues, intervene proactively, and support students in need of assistance.

To enhance crime prevention, resocialization, and rehabilitation efforts, Georgia will continue to prioritize the maximum availability and widespread use of restorative justice programs. These programs aim to prevent the commission of crimes by individuals in contact with crime and reduce recidivism rates by promoting accountability, reconciliation, and rehabilitation. Additionally, Georgia will increase access to relevant services in the regions to support the resocialization and rehabilitation of the target group served by the Juvenile Referral Center.

1.3.2 Protection of Human Rights

Integrating approaches focused on the protection of human rights in the formation of state policy remains a priority of the government in Georgia.

For this purpose, Georgia approved the second national strategy on 23rd March 2023 for the protection of human rights for the years 2022-2030.

Due to the significant political and public importance of the national strategy for the protection of human rights, the document was developed and approved through a collaborative and multi-sectoral process involving the Georgian government and the Parliament of Georgia.

The state's pursuit of institutional democracy, ensuring the equal enjoyment of civil, political, social, cultural, and economic rights, strengthening the policy of equality, and caring for citizens affected by occupation are the foundational principles underpinning the state policy reflected in this document. These principles underscore Georgia's commitment to upholding fundamental human rights and promoting inclusive and equitable development for all its citizens.

On 28th December 2023, Georgia approved the action plan for the protection of human rights, which derives from the national strategy for the protection of human rights (2022-2030).

The implementation of the human rights action plan will involve the full participation of state agencies, civil society organizations, and local authorities. This collaborative approach ensures that the government's long-term priorities in the field of human rights protection are effectively addressed through coordinated efforts across various sectors and levels of governance.

Measures will be implemented to strengthen gender equality in all spheres of public life in Georgia. To achieve this goal, a quick and effective response to each case of gender-based violence will be ensured.

The government is committed to intensively continuing its work on realizing the rights of **persons with disabilities** in Georgia. This commitment includes addressing their individual needs, promoting their full integration into all spheres of public life, and supporting their ability to lead independent lives.

Coordinated efforts will continue **to protect children's rights** in Georgia, focusing on implementing the existing legal framework and ensuring its practical application. This includes measures to prevent, detect, and effectively respond to violence against children, as well as the establishment of relevant support services.

The government is committed to promoting active living, providing economic support, and ensuring access to health and social services for the **elderly** in Georgia. Special attention will be given to promoting their social inclusion across all areas of public life, preventing violence against elderly individuals, and ensuring an effective response to cases of abuse. To achieve these goals, new support services will be developed, and efforts will be made to improve the quality of existing services catering to the needs of older people. Additionally, the government will work on creating a unified legal framework for the protection of the rights of the elderly, aiming to enhance their legal status and ensure their rights are upheld and respected.

Corresponding measures will be implemented to fully implement the Law of Georgia **On Social Work**. This includes allocating additional resources to increase the number of social workers, enhancing their qualifications, and ensuring appropriate remuneration.

Special attention will continue to be given to the **effective implementation of the state policy of civil equality and integration**, primarily through the **State Strategy of Civil Equality and Integration for 2021-2030**. The overarching goal of this strategy is to ensure that all citizens of Georgia, regardless of their ethnic origin, have equal opportunities to fully participate and contribute to the country's economic, political, and public life, as well as its democratic development processes. Efforts will be made to provide access to legislation for ethnic

minorities, particularly for those who do not speak the state language fluently. Measures will be taken to ensure that legislative acts of Georgia are accessible in appropriate languages for ethnic minority representatives living in Georgia.

In order to further strengthen the culturally diverse society of the country and promote civil integration, special attention will be given to **enhancing proficiency in the state language**. Recognizing the diverse needs of different segments of the population, state language teaching programs will be expanded to be more diverse, comprehensive, and accessible on a large scale.

In response to current needs, efforts will be directed towards initiatives aimed at raising awareness among representatives of **ethnic minorities**. Measures will be implemented to improve access to state services and programs, thereby contributing to the preservation and protection of cultural identity within these communities. Special programs focused on empowering and engaging youth from ethnic minority backgrounds will be continued, fostering their active participation in societal and cultural initiatives.

Property rights will be safeguarded through the ongoing systematic land registration reform, ensuring legal clarity and security for landowners. To date, significant progress has been made, with 724 147 land plots surveyed, covering a total area of 269 661 hectares. Ownership rights have already been officially registered for 578 856 plots, spanning 246 670 hectares. The systematic land registration project is slated for completion by the end of 2024. This comprehensive registration effort will definitively delineate the status of each parcel of land—whether it is privately owned, state-owned, or under municipal jurisdiction. Upon completion, the Government of Georgia will be equipped to formulate and implement effective land administration and land use policies. Furthermore, this initiative will facilitate the efficient management and maintenance of state-owned irrigation and drainage infrastructure, thereby supporting continued growth in the agriculture and agribusiness sectors. Moreover, the finalization of land registration will play a pivotal role in conserving and protecting the country's natural resource base and designated protected areas, contributing to sustainable environmental management.

In the realm of **labor rights and workplace safety**, ongoing efforts will focus on enhancing the legal framework and ensuring its full enforcement. Priority will be given to the effective implementation of regulations pertaining to labor safety, alongside the robust execution of labor inspection mandates to safeguard the rights of employees.

The government will provide support for enhancing the capabilities of the Special Investigation Service and the Personal Data Protection Service, and will back the planned reforms aimed at their continued advancement.

In the realm of human rights protection, it is essential to highlight the role of the Public Defender, serving as a guardian of human rights realization and a fundamental component of a democratic state. Therefore, the Government of Georgia consistently backs the efforts of the Office of the Public Defender.

On 7th March 2023, the Public Defender of Georgia was elected with **multi-party support, securing 96 votes**, to oversee the protection of human rights and freedoms. Notably, **none of the members of the Parliament voted against** the nomination of the Public Defender, underscoring broad consensus on the appointment.

It is worth noting that funding for the institution **has been increasing annually**, reflecting a commitment to bolstering its capabilities. The allocation from the state budget **has nearly doubled**, exceeding 9 million GEL, compared to less than 5 million GEL in 2017.

Efforts will persist in fortifying the constitutional institution to safeguard human rights and freedoms within Georgia's borders.

Continued efforts will be made in international courts to advocate for the interests of Georgian citizens. Specifically, within the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, attention will be focused on addressing deportation and enforcement measures related to the 2008 war cases.

Rulings issued by the European Court of Human Rights against Georgia, along with other relevant precedents, are translated into Georgian to ensure accessibility and understanding for the Georgian public and legal community.

The Government of Georgia maintains close institutional cooperation with partner states and expands the legal framework to effectively protect the interests and rights of Georgian citizens abroad. Furthermore, it aims to enhance international standards in democracy, rule of law, and human rights protection within Georgia. To achieve this, the government focuses on deepening relations with partner states in the legal field and promoting the export of Georgian reforms in justice.

The Government of Georgia is actively expanding the list of bilateral and multilateral international agreements. This effort aims to provide Georgian citizens with effective and prompt mechanisms to protect their interests both within the country and abroad.

2. Economic Development

Since 2021, Georgia's economy has been on a rapid post-pandemic recovery trajectory, experiencing double-digit growth rates in 2021-2022. This momentum continued into 2023, with preliminary estimates indicating a growth rate of 7.0 percent. Over the span of three years, Georgia's economy successfully rebounded from the pandemic-induced downturn, with nominal gross domestic product (GDP) nearly doubling. Despite the ongoing economic challenges faced by many global economies due to the pandemic, Georgia's inflation remained relatively low, with an average annual rate of 2.5 percent in 2023, and staying below 1 percent for the last 8 months of the year. By the end of 2023, GDP per capita had exceeded 8000 USD. Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, it is anticipated that Georgia will sustain high levels of economic growth while keeping inflation within target rates.

Georgia has indeed made significant strides across all sectors of its economy, driven by economic sustainability, macroeconomic stability, and fundamental economic reforms. Notably, the structure of the economy has seen considerable improvement, leading to increased inclusiveness. These advancements reflect the government's commitment to fostering a more diverse and resilient economy that benefits all segments of society.

The government's economic policy is geared towards maintaining macroeconomic stability while enhancing the investment climate to foster business growth, job creation, and infrastructure development. By prioritizing these areas, the government aims to expand economic opportunities and ensure access to essential services, ultimately fostering inclusive economic growth and addressing poverty and income inequality.

The government's economic policy aims to leverage Georgia's strategic geographical location and its transit and energy potential to foster the country's development. This includes promoting domestic investments and attracting foreign investments to stimulate economic growth.

To ensure sustained and robust economic growth, the government will focus on structurally transforming the economy and maximizing the participation of economic factors and state-owned resources in economic activities.

Furthermore, the government will actively pursue the qualitative improvement of relevant state institutions, which will enhance the effective implementation of economic policies across the country.

The government's economic policy will be geared towards achieving rapid economic growth, deepening economic and political ties with the European Union, reducing poverty, and positioning the country as a regional logistics and investment hub, in line with its status as a candidate country for EU membership.

According to the forecast made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Georgia's per capita income in 2024 is projected to reach 44.8 percent of the median indicator of the European Union. Comparatively, at the time of accession, four of the thirteen countries that

joined the European Union since the 2000s - Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Bulgaria - had a lower rate than this. Thus, from an economic perspective, Georgia already meets the relevant standard for accession.

Indeed, recent macroeconomic indicators suggest that Georgia is not inferior to many EU member and candidate countries in several key aspects. Georgia has demonstrated a high rate of economic growth, a low inflation rate, and has maintained low levels of government debt and budget deficit. These positive economic trends position Georgia favorably in comparison to both EU member states and candidate countries.

2.1 Economic Policy Framework: Quick Economic Advancement

The significant increase in the rate of economic growth in recent years has indeed been a remarkable achievement for Georgia, allowing it to fully offset the adverse effects of the pandemic. Moreover, the heightened global interest in transit and energy diversification presents a unique opportunity for Georgia to capitalize on its strategic geographical location and energy potential. Effectively leveraging these advantages can make a substantial contribution to sustaining high economic growth in the years to come.

The achievement of high economic growth over the past three years has facilitated rapid and efficient fiscal consolidation in Georgia. In response to the health, economic, and social crises triggered by the pandemic, it was necessary to increase the budget deficit to 9.3 percent and government debt to 60.2 percent in 2020. However, through effective consolidation efforts undertaken from 2021 to 2023, the budget deficit decreased to 2.5 percent of GDP, and government debt declined to 39.5 percent. Moving forward, fiscal consolidation will remain a priority, leading to further reduction in the budget deficit. This trajectory will contribute to macroeconomic stability and create a favorable environment for business development.

Georgia has swiftly managed to mitigate inflation and inflationary expectations and initiate a gradual departure from the tight monetary policy stance. This achievement is attributed to the coordinated and consistent economic policies implemented by both the Government of Georgia and the National Bank.

It is worth noting the significant improvement in Georgia's external economic stance, with the current account deficit estimated to have fallen below 5% in 2023, and further expected to decrease to 4.0% in the medium term. Over recent years, considerable progress has been made in reducing dollarization, evident in both the private and public sectors. The dollarization of loans has decreased to 45%, and ongoing measures are expected to drive this figure down further. Reducing external vulnerability is a critical component of macroeconomic stability, making measures to address the current account deficit and dollarization a priority for the government.

In the medium term, Georgia aims to sustain its trend of rapid economic growth. The government is committed to maintaining prudent and consistent macroeconomic policies while implementing structural reforms to support economic development.

In the medium term, the main priorities will include gradually implementing planned measures to ensure fiscal discipline, promote economic sectors, support the purchasing power of the population, enhance human capital development, and improve the effectiveness of the social protection system:

- Continuing to invest in infrastructure projects will remain a priority to enhance the country's regional and international competitiveness.
- The promotion of competitive local production and export will be sustained.
- Further promotion of domestic and foreign investments will continue to be a priority.

As a result, the government aims to achieve a low level of unemployment, leading to the eradication of extreme poverty and the reduction of overall poverty rates. Additionally, it seeks to decrease the current account deficit while promoting high economic activity and income growth.

In terms of public finance management and fiscal policy, the following measures will be implemented:

- We are committed to **maintaining strict fiscal discipline** by continuing the process of cost optimization. This involves financing only projects with high economic impact through the full implementation of the Public Investment Management (PIM) tool. Our efforts have already seen the budget deficit consistently drop below the 3% fiscal target, and we aim to further decrease it in the medium term.
- To foster a competitive environment and enhance the tax administration system, we are conducting an analysis of the tax benefits system.
- Efforts will persist in analyzing and evaluating the outcomes of **state programs** to gauge their effectiveness.
- Georgia will sustain **capital investments at an optimal volume** for the economy, aiming to maintain capital expenditures at 7-8% of the gross domestic product in the medium term.
- Capital projects will be prioritized strictly according to the economic needs of the country.
- The government aims to reduce the **current account deficit** to less than 5% by 2024 and to sustain a low deficit in the medium term.
- The government will maintain **government debt** at a stable level of 40% of GDP and ensure diversification of the portfolio through a healthy mix of domestic and foreign sources.
- In recent years, the dollarization of government debt has decreased from 80 percent to 72 percent, making the debt portfolio less vulnerable to exchange rate fluctuations. In 2024, there are plans to increase issuance on the domestic market by 1.5 billion GEL, aiming to diversify the portfolio and boost domestic market development. Furthermore, efforts will continue to develop benchmark securities in the domestic market, utilizing liability management operations. Strong and liquid government benchmark securities are crucial for the development of both money and capital markets.

- Active efforts will persist in enhancing budget transparency, with particular emphasis on increasing public participation and engagement from relevant organizations in the budgetary process. Georgia's commitment to transparency is underscored by its notable progress in the Open Budget Index, where it currently holds the top position globally.
- Due to its candidacy for EU membership, Georgia has participated in the formulation of a **medium-term economic reform program** for the first time, utilizing the European Commission's methodology tailored for candidate countries. The Program of Economic Reforms for 2024-2026 was submitted to the European Commission by the designated deadline of January 15, 2024. Efforts in this regard will persist, reflecting Georgia's commitment to further engagement in this process.

In promoting entrepreneurial and investment activities, the state will leverage all available tools, including:

- Property rights will be safeguarded without compromise.
- Continuous communication with businesses will be maintained, and new regulations will be adopted in consultation with them.
- The implementation of the regulatory impact assessment (RIA) tool will be expanded.
- A favorable tax environment will be maintained, and the introduction of electronic services will continue.
- **As part of the support for the enforcement of international sanctions**, Georgia's competent authorities will continue strict monitoring, recognized by partner countries. Activities aimed at preventing the use of Georgia's territory to evade sanctions will continue through the risk management modules of the Customs Department of the Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia. Constant coordination with partner countries and the exchange of information in operational mode will persist in this direction.
- **To align the country with the European Union market and leverage the potential of the Association Agreement, fulfilling obligations under this agreement** and advancing integration with the European Union, several customs projects are paramount. These include accession to conventions such as the Common Transit Procedures (CTC) and Simplification of Formalities in Goods Trade (SAD), along with the implementation of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) and the Institute of Authorized Economic Operator. These initiatives aim to streamline border crossing procedures for international trade participants, establish uniform transit procedures with the EU and other contracting parties, implement a new computerized transit system, foster cooperation between customs authorities and business representatives, and ensure the security of the supply chain.
- The government will persist in implementing structural economic reforms to accelerate the potential level of economic growth, establish a sustainable economic structure for long-term development, and position our country as a success story in implementing various economic reforms.
- Amidst improving economic stability, reduced external vulnerability, macroeconomic stability, and high-quality governance, the government aims to sustain the trend of

enhancing the country's sovereign rating. This will pave the way for attaining an investment-grade credit rating (BBB-/Baa3).

2.2 Employment

In terms of employment, the primary focus remains on supporting businesses as the primary job creators. Simultaneously, the state is committed to promoting the efficient operation of the labor market, including robust enforcement of employee rights and the promotion of decent employment opportunities. Furthermore, the government is dedicated to implementing effective vocational education policies to address any imbalances between labor market demand and supply. Looking ahead, the following initiatives will be prioritized:

- To safeguard the labor rights of Georgian citizens, there will be a concerted effort to enhance the existing supervisory mechanism, the Labor Inspection Service. This entails bolstering the capabilities of the institution and elevating the qualifications of labor inspectors.
- Special attention will be devoted to enhancing the legal framework and aligning it with international standards. The Government of Georgia is committed to transposing directives related to labor safety as outlined in Annex XXX of the Association Agreement.
- In order to raise public awareness, significant attention will be paid to implementing appropriate measures, including conducting information meetings with employers and employees, as well as preparing and distributing relevant information materials.
- In order to effectively enforce labor norms, the Labor Inspection Service will continue to implement appropriate measures. These include supervising labor safety and labor rights, as well as investigating cases of equality in the workplace.
- By providing access to relevant educational programs, emphasis will be placed on training personnel and developing their competence.
- The existing state programs for labor market services will be developed and improved, focusing on enhancing professional skills, offering training and retraining opportunities, facilitating internships, providing counseling, and supporting career planning. These services will be accessible continuously at both regional and municipal levels nationwide.
- The government will continue conducting detailed research on the labor market and providing informational assistance to job seekers. Efforts will also focus on closely coordinating job seekers with employers and implementing necessary measures to promote self-employment.
- Measures related to citizens' non-military, alternative labor service will be developed and improved.
- Active labor market policies for socially vulnerable persons will continue through the promotion of employment in public works.
- The regulation of international labor migration and the improvement of the relevant legal framework will continue.

For effective management and regulation of labor migration (both emigration and immigration), as well as better recording of relevant statistical data, ongoing amendments to the Law of Georgia "On Labor Migration" will be pursued. This includes the development of a specialized portal for labor migration, the implementation of mandatory certification for intermediary companies, and monitoring of their activities abroad. Strengthening regulation and management of the employment process for foreign citizens in Georgia will be a priority, alongside the collection and analysis of relevant statistical data about them. Efforts will also focus on developing interstate cooperation in labor migration, expanding opportunities for temporary legal employment abroad (circular labor migration), and signing bilateral and multilateral agreements to protect the rights of labor migrants. Additionally, active engagement in seeking relevant partner states and signing bilateral agreements will continue.

The government will continue implementing regular surveys of enterprise demand for skills and conducting annual analyses of the labor market. These efforts involve continuous monitoring of labor force demand, required skills, and challenges, along with the analysis of relevant information. This approach is internationally recognized as a best practice for evidence-based decision-making in the labor market and for addressing supply-demand mismatches effectively.

2.3 Improved Entrepreneurial and Investment Environment, Private Sector Competitiveness

Efforts to further improve the entrepreneurial and investment environment will persist, and relevant measures will continue to be implemented:

- The principle of property rights inviolability will be upheld.
- The principle of respecting property rights inviolability will be upheld.
- Active dialogue with the business community will persist to identify and address issues within the private sector. Efforts will be made to strengthen the institution of the business ombudsman.
- Georgia will uphold a favorable tax system characterized by low tax burden, while also introducing innovative approaches, including the following:
 - Automated system of tax return filing;
 - Automated VAT refunds will be continued, within the scope of which over 7.5 billion GEL has already been refunded in total to businesses since their engagement into the automated system in 2020-2023;
 - Introduction of international standards will be continued for the exchange of information and transparency of the taxation system.
- The government will actively continue the inclusion of state-owned resources in economic activity, which envisages the ongoing privatization of state-owned property. The systematic registration of land will also contribute to this effort. Moreover, to ensure a more customer-oriented, flexible, and transparent process, business processes will be automated and digitalized. This will simplify access to state

property disposal services and increase the efficiency of the state property disposal process. Additionally, the government will prepare and offer investment packages for potential investors in a flexible and comprehensive manner. Programs such as 100 Investment Offers for Businesses will be continued and expanded to promote increased investment in Georgia.

- In the process of effectively managing the utilization of natural resources, particular emphasis will be placed on considering technical, economic, and environmental aspects in mineral exploitation. Work will continue on developing the Mining Code to regulate the legal framework of the mining sector.
- In 2024, efforts will persist in ensuring the rational utilization of the country's mineral resources and their effective integration into economic activities. The ongoing increase in the issuance of mining licenses will be sustained, fostering job creation and bolstering revenue generation for the budget.
- The reform of state enterprises will persist, focusing on implementing the best international practices of corporate governance within these entities.
- Continued implementation of structural reforms will aim to enhance access to finance within the private sector.
 - In 2024, a series of measures will be implemented as part of the secured transactions reform, with the aim of facilitating real estate lending.
 - Furthermore, in 2024, a measure will be implemented to enhance the regulatory framework for the development of alternative financing mechanisms, including the establishment of a legal framework for factoring to address short-term working capital needs.
- In 2024, the structural reform of the capital market will persist, targeting the expansion of securities variety, quantity, and accessibility in the market, alongside cultivating the investor base in the local capital market. Moreover, other pertinent measures outlined in the capital market development strategy for 2023-2028 will be upheld.
- Several measures will be implemented to foster the development of alternative funding mechanisms:
 - From 2024 onwards, the Enterprise Georgia as an agency will undertake a new role to assist companies in issuing securities, facilitating co-financing of bond issuance. Throughout the year, the agency aims to support up to 15 beneficiaries, enabling them to attract up to 150 million in additional investment resources to the stock market.
 - The Enterprise Georgia as an agency, in collaboration with the World Bank, will persist in establishing private equity funds, with the state acting as a limited partner. Over the next three years, the aim is to support the establishment of 2-3 funds, with a total volume of up to 70 million GEL.

- In 2024, there are plans to establish an asset-based financing platform, enabling companies to leverage their assets to secure additional loan resources.
- The framework for real estate investment funds and the necessary streamlining regulations for trust recognition will be established.
- As part of the pension reform, the management structure of the pension agency will be enhanced, and new regulations for voluntary private pension schemes will be developed. Support for the development of the insurance market will also persist, which includes the advancement of insurance products, including mandatory offerings.
- To ensure informed and evidence-based decision-making, the utilization of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), including the RIA SME Test tool, will be expanded. Activities to bolster the institutionalization of the RIA system will continue in 2024. This involves conducting preliminary analyses of the impact of each decision on the economy, preventing possible negative consequences, and selecting the best policy options.
- The promotion of access to international markets for entrepreneurs will continue, leveraging the potential of existing free trade agreements. Entrepreneurs will receive support in developing production and systems that meet international standards within the framework of these agreements.
 - A free trade agreement (FTA) was signed and applicable regime will be launched with the United Arab Emirates this year.
 - Negotiations on the signing of a free trade agreement (FTA) will be opened with the Republic of South Korea.
 - In order to explore new markets, we will further expand the scope of free trade agreements. To this end, consultations will continue regarding the initiation of negotiations with Israel. Our priority will be to pursue negotiations for a free trade agreement with the USA.
- To ensure compliance with European Union regulations, we will deepen our integration with the EU based on the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) component. This involves continuing procedures related to standards, technical regulations, metrology, market surveillance, accreditation, and conformity assessment to strengthen quality infrastructure. We will also focus on further developing administrative reforms and infrastructure, supported by the European Union. Additionally, we aim to facilitate the adaptation of stakeholders, including economic operators, to the implementation of harmonized legislation.
- With our new status, we will intensify efforts beyond the obligations of the DCFTA to align legislation and institutions with the European Union. This will involve developing a bilateral action plan with the European Commission and commencing its implementation. Additionally, Georgia will strengthen its national institutional

framework to ensure the effective implementation, enforcement, and monitoring of new legislation adopted in each relevant area.

- In supporting companies with export potential, we emphasize two key directions: enhancing competitiveness and expanding access to international markets. To achieve this:
 - A comprehensive support package will be provided to companies, incorporating various mechanisms such as training, technical assistance grants, co-financing for international events, and programs aimed at enhancing relationships with foreign buyers.
 - In 2024, the Enterprise Georgia as an agency will support over 100 Georgian companies to participate in global-scale export events. Additionally, 40 export managers will undergo training, and 20 Georgian companies will receive financial support from the Enterprise Georgia as an agency to cover expenses related to entering new export markets.
 - Furthermore, companies will be provided with tailored supporting mechanisms specific to their sectors and sub-sectors. This approach will facilitate the gradual development of participating companies in terms of exporting products and services.
- The platform for attracting and promoting foreign investments will be strengthened. The Government of Georgia will prioritize the attraction of high-quality investments, aiming to lay the groundwork for the development of new economic sectors, facilitate knowledge transfer, and generate high-quality employment opportunities. To achieve this goal:
 - In 2024, the development of a new investment attraction strategy by the Enterprise Georgia as an agency will be finalized. This strategy will outline priorities and activities for the next five years.
 - The program aimed at engaging representative companies abroad to attract investments in Georgia will be activated and expanded.
 - Activities to host investment consultants and scouts in the country will continue, along with cooperation initiatives with experts and influential individuals in the sector to enhance confidence in Georgia's investment offer at the international level.
- Additionally, negotiations are planned to be concluded on agreements for the mutual protection and encouragement of investments with partner countries such as Canada, Hungary, and the Republic of Korea, with the intention of signing the relevant agreements.
- Furthermore, there are plans to develop the Law of Georgia On the Protection and Promotion of Investments in Georgia.

- Investment projects for innovative and high-tech startups will continue to receive support, fostering the growth of entrepreneurial potential, including the following:
 - To bolster the startup ecosystem, the co-financing grant program will persist, providing funding for 40 startups in 2024, each receiving a grant of 150 000 GEL.
 - Additionally, to enhance access to finance in the regions, the regional grant program will persist, providing grants of 25 000 GEL to up to 40 startups.
 - As part of the 500 Global Acceleration Program, 30 local and international startups will undergo an intensive three-month acceleration course in 2024. This program aims to assist them in bringing a scalable product to the international market, providing startup mentoring, and sharing relevant knowledge.
- The expansion of Georgia's technopark network is planned, alongside active continuation of projects aimed at fostering the growth of innovative and technological entrepreneurship and education across all technoparks.
 - The development of Georgia's innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem in regional areas will persist with the provision of necessary infrastructure. This involves the planned establishment of Senaki and Kutaisi technoparks, aimed at offering innovative services and enhancing technological and entrepreneurial awareness among local communities.
 - Events of various kinds will be actively continued within the existing technoparks, aimed at providing interested individuals with unlimited access to technologies and enhancing their technological and entrepreneurial skills.
 - In 2024, a minimum of 300 events will be organized across all technopark locations in Georgia, with participation from at least 4500 beneficiaries.
 - The pre-acceleration program will also continue in 2024, covering all regions of Georgia. It will support local residents in refining their innovative business ideas and preparing for the regional grant program.
- Through the technology transfer program, the Georgia's Innovations and Technologies Agency (GITA) will continue to select scientific projects with technological readiness and commercialization potential. In 2024, intensive work will commence with successful applicants from the scientific project competition to facilitate the international commercialization of selected projects.
- In the pursuit of sustainable economic development, considerable focus is placed on spatial planning. In 2024, initiatives will commence to draft spatial and urban development plans for over 10 territorial units, alongside the ongoing efforts to advance plans initiated in 2023.
- To foster inclusive economic growth, enhance employment opportunities, and bolster the competitiveness of the private sector, supporting businesses, particularly

small and medium enterprises (SMEs), will be paramount. Additional measures will be undertaken in this regard:

- To further advance the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and integrate best international practices, the Government of Georgia will continue implementing the second "2021-2025 Strategy for the Development of Small and Medium-sized Entrepreneurship of Georgia." This strategy, formulated on the principles of the European Small Business Act, has been approved, and its accompanying action plan will be diligently executed.
- To enhance access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises, the government will extend and broaden state financial support programs under the Enterprise Georgia initiative, including the following:
 - The support will persist through the credit guarantee scheme, benefiting an additional 250 projects in 2024, with planned investments totaling up to 200 million GEL.
 - In 2024, the loan interest subsidy program aims to support over 400 new projects, facilitating loans totaling up to 500 million GEL and investments reaching 700 million GEL.
 - In 2024, a new program aimed at promoting the competitiveness of micro and small entrepreneurship will be launched. This initiative focuses on supporting microloans of up to 50 000 GEL for micro-businesses to facilitate their expansion or development of production. The program aims to support up to 500 entrepreneurs in 2024.
- In 2023, the Government of Georgia initiated the development of a network of regional consulting centers in response to the challenges encountered by small and medium-sized businesses in terms of knowledge, competences, and information. The first center has been successfully launched in Zugdidi, catering to entrepreneurs in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti. In 2024, plans are underway to open consulting centers in five additional regions. Modeled after the British Growth Hub, these centers aim to offer micro, small, and medium-sized entrepreneurs access to information, consulting services, as well as training and seminars.

2.4 Efficient Use of Economic Opportunities and Transit Hub Potential

Efforts to maximize economic opportunities entail a strategic focus on enhancing economic ties between Europe and Georgia. Central to this endeavor is augmenting Georgia's role in fostering dependable and secure supply chains across Europe and Asia while advancing energy security objectives.

The Government of Georgia aims to unlock the nation's untapped potential, thereby positioning it as a multifaceted economic and logistics hub within the region.

To harness Georgia's potential as a regional hub, it is imperative to develop the country's infrastructure, transportation, logistics, communication, energy, technology, education, and financial systems. This approach not only brings Georgia closer to the EU market but also enables the full utilization of the EU Association Agreement.

Hence, there is a dual focus on advancing the nation's core infrastructure and expanding transportation corridors. The Anaklia deep-sea port project holds particular significance in this endeavor. Throughout 2024, efforts will concentrate on selecting a private partner for this project and commencing the construction of marine infrastructure. Concurrently, steps will be taken to integrate the country's transportation systems into the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) by executing the TEN-T investment plan for Eastern Partnership countries. Additionally, initiatives to establish state-of-the-art logistics centers will persist, including updating the feasibility study for the Tbilisi logistics center project this year.

The modernization of railways and the completion of projects like the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway in 2024 will be pivotal. These developments are expected to significantly reduce cargo transportation time between Asia and Europe, thus making Georgia an attractive transit hub for additional cargo flows. Efforts to enhance the competitiveness of the transit corridor will persist, including integration into international transport systems and fostering deeper regional cooperation. Collaborative endeavors with partner nations will focus on digitizing the transit corridor passing through Georgia, aiming to establish a digital logistics platform. This platform is anticipated to boost the efficiency of cargo transportation within the country and ensure its long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, research is ongoing into the potential development of high-speed railway services. This entails assessing the current state of Georgia's railway system, conducting market analysis to gauge demand for both passenger and freight railway services, and formulating a comprehensive railway network plan for advancing high-speed railway traffic.

To ensure the sustainability and efficiency of transport corridors, Georgia will actively participate in various transit routes linking Europe and Asia, including TRACECA, the Middle Corridor, and the Black Sea-Caspian Sea Corridor.

Considering the technical and economic study conducted for the development of ferry and container traffic between Georgia and Black Sea countries, measures will be taken to promote and develop ferry/feeder traffic with European countries bordering the Black Sea.

In addition to the initiatives mentioned above, it is crucial to develop energy and communication corridors through Georgia, further enhancing connectivity with the European Union.

The Government of Georgia is committed to leveraging its increased role in promoting energy security and diversification of energy resources in the European Union. To achieve this, the government will continue to prioritize large-scale infrastructure projects and reforms aimed at enhancing the country's economic functions. Special attention will be given to the Black Sea submarine cable project, which will bolster Georgia's position as a dependable energy and transit partner for the European Union, while also facilitating the supply of green energy.

To fully capitalize on Georgia's transit potential, efforts will persist in developing the digital corridor (hub). This initiative entails establishing fiber optic connectivity across the Black Sea and establishing regional data centers in Georgia that adhere to international standards.

2.5. Development of Energy and Enhancing the Energy Security

The government's energy policy is geared towards enhancing energy independence and security, alongside maximizing the utilization of domestic resources. These objectives are anchored in the principles of sustainable development within the sector.

To optimally harness Georgia's energy potential and bolster energy security, a comprehensive reform of the energy sector will persist. Among these reforms:

- To enhance free market dynamics in the sector, there will be a separation of energy transmission and distribution operations from energy generation, trade, and supply activities.
- The Energy Exchange of Georgia will be established to enforce competitive and transparent market principles within the energy sector.
- Large consumers will be gradually transitioned to the market, based on their consumption levels and voltage requirements. Additionally, regulated stations will be progressively deregulated in accordance with their capacities.

Whole set of reforms will persist to foster the ongoing development of the energy sector, enhance its structural integrity, and harness the potential of renewable energies:

- In 2024, complementary regulations such as "On Energy Efficiency," "On Energy Efficiency of Buildings," and "On Encouraging the Production and Use of Energy from Renewable Sources" will be ratified in alignment with existing laws. These regulations will facilitate the implementation of energy efficiency standards, the establishment of an energy efficiency certification framework, the development of skilled professionals in the sector, the promotion of renewable energy associations and self-consumers, and the regulation of legislative frameworks concerning biofuels, among other initiatives.
- In 2024, with the assistance of the World Bank, a green growth strategy and action plan will be formulated.
- In 2024, a pilot project for green hydrogen will be initiated to explore its potential in Georgia.
- The support for the energy sector reforms planned by the Georgian government will persist in 2024 through a new program modeled after the European Green Deal, termed "PBL 2.0" or "Georgian Green Deal." This program will concentrate on policy reforms in energy, climate, and environmental sectors to accomplish sustainable objectives.

Furthermore, in the pursuit of optimizing Georgia's energy potential and bolstering energy security, the following steps will be undertaken in the forthcoming years:

- Efforts to promote the development of renewable energy sources and the adoption of new technologies will persist. The completion of the second capacity auction, targeting 800 MW capacity, is anticipated in February 2024, with plans for a subsequent third auction. Concurrently, ongoing renewable energy projects will be sustained. Additionally, 12 hydroelectric power stations, collectively boasting an installed capacity of 157 MW, are slated for completion in 2024.
- In Gardabani municipality, there are intentions to engage private investments and investors for the development of a combined cycle thermal power plant with a capacity ranging from 350 to 430 megawatts. This initiative aims to cover all ensuing phases, including design, construction, and operation of the plant.
- To bolster the security of electricity supply and enhance the transmission network, Georgia plans to construct over 1000 kilometers of power transmission lines. This initiative also includes reinforcing and fortifying connecting lines with neighboring countries.
- The Black Sea submarine power transmission cable project is progressing actively. Currently, efforts are focused on conducting the feasibility study, scheduled for completion by July 2024. Additionally, JSC Georgian State Electro System (GSE) is undertaking procurement activities for services to conduct an environmental and social impact assessment, as well as geotechnical and geophysical studies of the seabed necessary for the project.
- The gasification project for the regions remains a priority to ensure access to energy resources and reliable supply for the population. In 2024, the natural gas supply network will be extended to cover 134 settlements.

2.6. Transport and Logistics

To effectively leverage the country's transit potential, the continuation of appropriate transport policies will run parallel with the development of key infrastructure.

The development of the Tbilisi International Airport project is planned, aiming to establish it as a transit-logistics center featuring advanced passenger and cargo terminals. To realize this vision, the development plan for the capital's primary airport will be assessed, considering various technical studies and evaluations. This evaluation will inform the decision to either further develop Tbilisi International Airport or construct a new airport in Vaziani. Initial estimates suggest that with the construction of Vaziani airport, the capital could accommodate over 18 million passengers.

In 2024, the comprehensive development plan for Kutaisi airport will be finalized, and infrastructure enhancements will commence to expand the capacity of the runway and

aircraft platform. Additionally, a small cargo terminal will be constructed at Kutaisi International Airport to leverage the region's air cargo potential.

To foster increased mobility between regions and facilitate fast and affordable travel for local residents and domestic as well as international travelers, the government persists in incentivizing domestic flights and the construction and enhancement of domestic airports. Specifically, in 2024, plans include the construction and full modernization of Telavi Airport, as well as the design and construction of a new terminal at Mestia Airport.

Furthermore, in anticipation of the increasing tourist influx to the Adjara region, a thorough assessment of the capacity of Batumi International Airport will be conducted in 2024 to evaluate the feasibility of its expansion.

Considering the current projections, Georgian airports are anticipated to accommodate up to 6.8 million passengers in 2024, marking a 14% rise compared to the passenger volume recorded in 2023. This growth is attributed to the advancement of Georgia's tourism prospects and the expansion of current services facilitated by proactive collaboration with airlines, their entry into the Georgian aviation market, and the launch of operations to new destinations.

Improving road safety stands as a paramount priority for the Government of Georgia. In line with this objective, the national road safety strategy for 2022-2025 has been ratified, encompassing significant initiatives and actions aimed at curbing the incidence of fatalities and injuries on Georgian roads. Furthermore, the utilization of international assistance mechanisms in advancing road safety will be intensified, fostering collaborations with entities such as the European Union and the Eastern Partnership.

In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, several measures are planned to enhance the transport and logistics capabilities of the country:

- Efforts will persist in advancing a unified electronic/digital platform for land transport services, benefiting both cargo and passenger sectors engaged in international transportation. This program aims to streamline processes, saving users time and enhancing coordination within the sector.
- Following the legislative amendments enacted in late 2023, reforms are underway in Georgia's long-distance passenger transportation sector and bus station management. These reforms will be gradually implemented in phases.
- Georgia will persist in implementing International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards and recommended practices, along with European regulations outlined in the Single Sky Agreement with the European Union.
- The implementation and enhancement of the maritime one-stop-shop window system are currently underway in Georgia's ports, initially in a pilot mode, with various modules being constructed to finalize the system. Relevant normative acts governing the functioning of the "Maritime One Window" system have been drafted.

Full operation of the system is scheduled to commence by the last quarter of 2024. Simultaneously, efforts are ongoing to implement the Port Community System (PCS).

- The ratification of the International Labor Organization's Maritime Labor Convention 2006 on February 23, 2006 and the approval of accompanying normative acts have been completed. Consequently, the implementation of these regulations will now be carried out.
- The approved concept of strategic development for maritime transport outlines key priorities. These include promoting the development of higher and professional education in the maritime sector, advancing research in marine and related fields, and attracting investments in maritime transport and infrastructure.
- Continued efforts will be made to enhance the safety and efficiency of rail transport by reforming the sector and aligning it with EU legislation and practices. Technical assistance from the EU will be utilized to support these endeavors.
- Efforts will persist in increasing the share of rail transport for shipments, aiming to alleviate the strain on road infrastructure and reduce overloading. A feasibility study will be conducted in 2024 to explore the development of cross-railway transportation, specifically the transportation of trucks and trailers using specialized railway platforms, between Georgia and Azerbaijan.

2.7. Communication and Information Technologies

In recent years, Georgia's government has made significant strides in advancing the digital economy and information society. This commitment will persist, with ongoing efforts to implement the following measures:

- The state internetization project will persist, aiming to construct approximately 5000 km of fiber optic infrastructure. Additionally, it will provide high-quality, high-speed broadband internet services to as many as 1000 villages.
- To ensure maximum utilization of internet access provided under the state internetization project, development activities for the "last mile" connection will be undertaken as part of the EU4Digital II phase of the EU project. This involves identifying specific policy, legal, regulatory, and other measures.
- Efforts to simplify permits for the development and construction of broadband Internet infrastructure, including 5G networks, will be undertaken.
- Nationwide training and capacity-building programs will persist to ensure digital inclusion, encompassing women, ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities.
- The national strategy for developing the digital economy and information society will be ratified, outlining future directions and coordination mechanisms within Georgia's digital economy and information society.

- The training platform "Do IT in Georgia" will persist in offering courses for individuals and personnel training in advanced IT fields through a private-public partnership. In 2024, around 2000 applicants will be enrolled in programming, design, and management courses, receiving study grants.
- Georgia will continue its integration efforts with the digital single market of the European Union, focusing on harmonizing digital market regulations.
- The Government of Georgia is actively pursuing integration into the single roaming space of the European Union, aiming to provide the population with affordable roaming rates while traveling within the EU territory.

2.8. Advancement of Tourism

Thanks to the implementation of a robust and targeted tourism development strategy and action plan, focusing on diversifying tourism products and markets, along with effective marketing campaigns and steadfast industry support, Georgia is experiencing significant growth in the tourism sector. This comprehensive approach has yielded impressive results for the country, namely:

In 2023, Georgia achieved an unprecedented milestone in tourism proceeds, with a record-high of 4.1 billion USD. This marked a remarkable 26.2% increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. The government of Georgia anticipates even more significant advancements in 2024, projecting further growth in tourism proceeds.

To bolster the aforementioned positive momentum, efforts to develop the tourism sector will persist. This entails creating competitive tourism products and packages, alongside executing targeted marketing campaigns in key markets. These initiatives are tailored not only to promote Georgia as a tourist destination but also to cater to specific target audiences, offering them personalized, competitive, and authentic tourism experiences.

To harness Georgia's tourism potential, the following activities will be undertaken:

- In 2024, Georgia will make history by hosting the World Tourism Day for the first time. Additionally, the country will be showcased as a host for the international business tourism forum, m&i Tbilisi 2024. Furthermore, Georgia will host the General Assembly of the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA), a certified association of the Council of Europe and a UNWTO affiliated member, in Tskaltubo, marking another milestone event.
- To enhance Georgia's tourism appeal and support the private sector, the country will actively engage in prominent international tourism fairs, collaborate with renowned global platforms, conduct targeted campaigns, and participate in various activities with leading international media outlets. These efforts will extend beyond traditional markets to include emerging ones like India, China, the USA, and other countries, fostering broader global recognition of Georgia's tourism potential.

- The successful hosting of the championship in 2023 resulted in Gudauri and Bakuriani being included in the permanent calendar of the International Ski Federation. Georgia will now host stages of the World Cup annually, with the freeride world tour set to take place at the Tetnuldi resort in 2024.
- In 2024, there are plans to enhance the development of mountain resorts in Georgia. This includes the construction of entirely new 6 km ski tracks on Mount Hatsvali in Mestia, which will link Mount Zuruldi with Mestia. Additionally, there are plans to install a new 3 km-long artificial snowmaking system in the Gudauri mountain and ski resort.
- Feasibility studies will be conducted to assess the viability of sustainable development initiatives for resorts. These studies will focus on attracting investments, positioning the resorts effectively in the international market, and identifying projects that bring economic and social benefits to the country.
- In 2024, efforts will be made to establish a regulatory legal framework for the resort industry to enhance service standards and align with international legislation.

2.8 Infrastructure Development

To fulfill its role as a regional hub, Georgia considers the development of highways and related infrastructure of both international and domestic significance as critically important. Therefore:

- Continued construction on vital highways such as the East-West Highway (EWH) and the Kakheti Highway will proceed. These efforts will open up approximately 90 km of new roads, significantly improving travel times. Upon completion, the journey from Tbilisi to Batumi is estimated to take around 3.5 hours.
- The East-West Highway (EWH) project will see completion of remaining sections, including Ricoti, along with the construction of the Batumi bypass road and other crucial segments. These developments will greatly enhance the safety and convenience of passenger travel.
- In 2024, the Kvesheti-Kobi project, an unprecedented engineering and technological endeavor, will continue. A 9 km long tunnel, featuring a 15-meter diameter continuous road tunnel carved into bedrock, will be fully excavated. Specifically designed tunnel boring machines (TBMs) are minimizing vibration, ensuring a safe construction process with minimal environmental impact. This project holds historical significance and presents a comprehensive solution to longstanding challenges. Additionally, preparatory measures for the Tbilisi-Sadakhlo and Tbilisi-Red Bridge projects will commence.

- Construction of high-speed highways in the direction of Kakheti will proceed, with a focus on completing key sections such as the 31 km Tbilisi-Sagarejo, 16.6 km Bakurtsikhe-Tsnori, and 17 km Sagarejo-Badiauri segments.
- Construction works on several domestically important highways, including the Khulo-Zarzma road, will be continued and completed in 2024. So far, 17 km of the Khulo-Zarzma road have been completed, and efforts will continue to finish the remaining sections.
- Construction work on the remaining 25 km section of the Kharagauli-Fona-Chumateleti highway, which is a total of 50 km long, commenced in 2024 and will be ongoing.
- In 2024, efforts will persist to finalize the 17 km segment of the Tbilisi-Rustavi project, with 13.5 km of the road already open to traffic.
- Construction will continue on road projects such as Baghdati-Abastumani and the 33-km section towards Gombori and Omalo, with gradual completion anticipated starting in 2024.
- In total, at least 400 km of international and domestic highways are scheduled for rehabilitation in 2024.
- Construction efforts on the new joint customs checkpoint between Georgia and the Republic of Azerbaijan will persist. This collaborative checkpoint is poised to enhance the transit and logistic capabilities of both nations, fortifying regional transport and trade connections.

Ensuring a 24-hour supply of quality drinking water to the population stands as a key priority for the Government of Georgia. By the culmination of ongoing projects by the end of 2025, all cities across Georgia will enjoy uninterrupted water supply. To realize this objective, projects in various stages will be executed in 20 cities throughout 2024.

By the conclusion of the projects slated for implementation, an estimated 365 thousand beneficiaries are expected to benefit from enhanced water supply infrastructure by the end of 2024. Notably, among these beneficiaries, around 130 thousand individuals will gain access to centralized water supply for the first time.

Water supply projects are set to be initiated in numerous hamlets and villages, fostering their development and enhancing their tourism appeal. Progress is expected across over 100 locations in 2024, with completion slated for 30 of these areas during the same year. Among the cities set to benefit from these initiatives are Vale, Kvareli, and Marneuli.

Furthermore, efforts will persist in the forthcoming years to extend water supply to rural areas, aiming to ensure that by the close of 2030, every corner of the country will have access to water that complies with established standards, utilizing a variety of solutions.

To align with European standards, waste management practices in the country will be upheld. Efforts will persist in constructing non-hazardous waste disposal facilities for municipalities in

the Kvemo Kartli region, with plans to commence construction for the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. Similar initiatives will continue in other regions across the country.

To bolster the management system of the new regional non-hazardous waste disposal facilities, the construction of two waste transfer stations will kick off in 2024. Additionally, one landfill will be shuttered to mitigate environmental harm from greenhouse gas emissions. Consequently, a total of 26 landfills will be closed by the end of 2024. Simultaneously, efforts to construct new regional non-hazardous waste disposal facilities will progress, alongside ongoing closures of landfills.

Continued support for municipalities in infrastructure enhancement will persist through projects slated for implementation in various regions of Georgia and funds dedicated to the development of highland areas. These initiatives encompass a spectrum of projects and rural support programs aimed at bolstering local communities.

The initial phase of the "Renewed Regions" program has seen the completion of projects across all municipalities. Moving forward, 2024 will witness the conclusion of ongoing projects within the program's second phase. Furthermore, the cities and resorts development program will persist, encompassing 10 designated locations in its inaugural stage. Depending on the scope, this project will be executed in successive stages.

In 2024, investments totaling up to 4 billion GEL will be allocated for the development of the aforementioned infrastructure projects.

2.9 Regional Development

Over the coming years, there is a plan to formulate and execute an efficient regional development policy. This policy will primarily target socio-economic-territorial equalization, often referred to as cohesion, and provide support for territorial development. It will draw from best practices of the European Union and utilize appropriate planning and development policy instruments.

Following the successful execution of the Pilot of Integrated Regional Development Program (PIRDP) from 2020 to 2022, plans are underway to adopt and implement the subsequent 2024-2026 Integrated Territorial Development Program. This new program will adhere to EU cohesion principles, emphasizing equalization, and will introduce tailored approaches suited to the territory. In addition to the socio-economic aspect, a key objective of the program's implementation will be to enhance the skill set of Georgia's public authorities and bolster administrative capacity to kickstart the practical implementation of EU regional policy within the country.

Implementing regional policy using suitable planning and development tools serves dual purposes. Firstly, it facilitates access to the financial resources of the EU structural funds. Secondly, it enhances the competitiveness of both the country and its regions, fostering

balanced socio-economic development and ultimately improving the standard of living nationwide.

In 2024, the utilization of European Union best practices will persist in the planning and execution of regional policies, including the following:

- Step-by-step planning and further implementation of one of the EU policy development platforms - "Smart Specialization/S3" in Imereti as a pilot region;
- Gradual approximation to the European Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) classification system.

In the forthcoming years, a focus will be maintained on fostering the sustainable development of highland settlements. This entails ongoing social support and enhancement of state services for residents residing in high-altitude regions. Plans include establishing or enhancing conditions conducive to economic activities in mountainous areas and developing fundamental infrastructure tailored to the requirements of these regions.

2.10 Rural Development and Agriculture

Over the next few years, the rural and agricultural development policy will aim to harness the potential within the sector effectively. This will involve enhancing the value chain in the agri-food sector, bolstering competitiveness, adopting modern production technologies and standards, establishing robust systems for food and animal feed safety, veterinary and plant protection, as well as enhancing irrigation and drainage systems. Additionally, there will be a focus on the sustainable management of agricultural land.

To align with European standards in agriculture and rural development, ongoing institutional changes will be pursued in Georgia. These changes aim to introduce a unified, result-oriented management approach, in line with European rural development principles. This reform will expand support mechanisms available to farmers and agribusiness entrepreneurs, with a focus on diversification, inclusivity, and efficiency.

Under the unified policy of rural and agricultural development, all significant ongoing programs will be sustained, alongside the implementation of measures supporting priority areas and namely:

- To enhance access to financial instruments and promote primary production, processing, and storage-sale processes in agriculture, the provision of affordable credit to individuals and legal entities will be prioritized.
- The government will promote the production of both annual and perennial agricultural crops, provide co-financing for processing and storage enterprises, agricultural machinery, and support the development of organic production. Additionally, efforts will be made to encourage the sustainable development of aquaculture in marine and inland waters.

- The updated state program for the development of cattle breeding will focus on establishing modern standard cattle breeding farms across the country. This initiative targets farms of all sizes, including large, medium, and small-scale operations, and will encompass breeding, meat, and dairy production areas.
- The revised state program for advancing cattle breeding aims to establish modern, standardized cattle farms nationwide. It targets farms of all sizes, including large, medium, and small operations, and encompasses various aspects of cattle production, including breeding, meat, and dairy sectors.
- Encouraging and supporting the production of nuts as a key export commodity;
- Development and promotional programs for agricultural cooperatives.
- Implementing the agro-insurance program for individuals involved in agricultural activities to mitigate risks.
- Implementation of new programs aimed at fostering agricultural and entrepreneurial activities in highland settlements.
- Promotion of agricultural crop sales as needed, along with efforts to raise awareness of Georgian agro-food products. Active marketing campaigns will be implemented to diversify markets, including showcasing Georgian wine at key international exhibitions in target markets such as the USA, Europe, and South-East Asian countries.
- Monitoring the quality of wine and alcoholic beverages, organizing harvest activities, and ensuring proper storage of the harvest will be key priorities.
- To enhance the competitiveness of Georgian agro-food products both domestically and internationally, technical assistance will be provided to implement international food safety standards. Additionally, co-financing will be available for equipment necessary for branding and packaging products to meet market requirements. Moreover, efforts will focus on educating and raising awareness among farmers and entrepreneurs.
- To safeguard animal health, prevent the spread of diseases, and mitigate economic losses for farmers, various measures will be implemented, including free vaccination of animals.
- Guaranteeing the quality and accessibility of agricultural inputs;
- Initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality and productivity of Georgian agro-food products, such as pest control measures;
- To bolster food safety, efforts will be made to enhance state oversight and laboratory capacities, along with adopting new international research methodologies.
- The Community-Based Local Support Program will be implemented in line with the LEADER/CLLD approach outlined by the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union.

- Georgian legislation in agriculture and rural development will continue to converge with European Union standards, including alignment with relevant EU legislation on food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary measures as outlined in the association agreement plan with the EU. Institutional reforms will persist to enhance the planning and implementation of agriculture and rural development policies, ensuring compatibility with EU requirements. This includes establishing and accrediting a European-style payment agency and managing body.
- Under new agreements inked with international financial institutions, comprehensive modernization of several reclamation systems will be undertaken. This initiative aims to enhance water supply across an area exceeding 50 000 hectares, benefiting over 70 000 beneficiaries. The total funding secured for this endeavor surpasses 300 million USD.
- The inaugural unified balance sheet of Georgian land will be compiled, incorporating the accounting of agricultural land resources and the establishment of a unified database.
- Making digital soil maps accessible to the public, achieving full compliance of the seed and planting material certification system with international and European standards, and conducting research on new species and varieties of agricultural and agroforestry crops aligned with the needs of climate change and the green economy.

2.11 Environmental Protection

As the country experiences rapid economic growth, safeguarding the environment, ensuring its sustainability, and responsibly managing natural resources become increasingly critical challenges.

To enhance environmental conditions within the country, the Government of Georgia is implementing the following reforms:

- **To align with European environmental standards, the following actions are planned in the country:**
 - The approval of ambient air quality management plans for Tbilisi and the Black Sea area is aimed at identifying and executing the essential measures to enhance air quality.
 - Maps depicting various types of natural hazards will be prepared for the entire territory of Georgia.
 - Given the backdrop of global climate change, the rise in frequency and severity of such events is evident globally and in Georgia. Hence, having an effective early notification system is crucial for the state and public. **Ongoing enhancements to early warning systems for various threats will persist nationwide.** Namely:

- By year-end, a total of 245 observational hydro-meteorological stations will be operational across the country, enhancing the early warning system.
- Early warning systems will be established in communities especially susceptible to floods.
- An information system will be implemented to enhance weather forecasting and improve the early warning system.
- Modern monitoring systems will be installed at 11 landslide locations to enhance the monitoring of geological processes.
- Assessments of existing threats in glacial valleys will be conducted, and appropriate recommendations and decisions will be prepared accordingly.
- **Efforts to expand monitoring and evaluation systems for ambient air and water quality will continue.**
 - Continuous monitoring of ambient air quality will be conducted in 8 cities of Georgia through 15 automatic stations, and in 30 settlements through indicator measurements. Additionally, monitoring of vehicle emissions on the roads will continue in 4 cities of Georgia.
- **Efforts will be made to enhance the effectiveness of environmental assessment procedures, and regulations on industrial emissions will be aligned with EU legislation, specifically:**
 - Following the recommendations put forth by European Union experts, a draft amendment to the Environmental Assessment Code will be developed to enhance and refine the effectiveness of environmental impact assessment procedures. This draft will then be submitted to the Parliament of Georgia for consideration.
 - The Industrial Emissions Directive will be fully harmonized, and preparations for the implementation of the integrated permit system will be carried out.
- The government will continue meeting the population's demand for wood resources while developing the practice of multi-purpose forest use to generate additional ecological, economic, and social benefits. Additionally, efforts to restore forests will be significantly scaled up.
- **Several new protected areas will be established, and existing ones expanded.** This includes the establishment of Guria National Park, conducting foundational studies for **protected areas** in Racha, Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti, and preparing relevant legislation. Additionally, **new ecotourism infrastructure** will be developed in at least 10 locations to promote ecotourism in protected areas.
- **Efforts to promote environmental education and increase environmental awareness will persist,** with a focus on integrating environmental topics into the curriculum of schools and higher education institutions.

- Efforts to promote the principles of green and circular economy will continue, including the expansion of a separate waste collection system nationwide and the addition of more types of waste to be collected separately.

3. Social Security Policy and Human Capital Development

3.1. Healthcare

Ensuring universal access to quality healthcare and improving the health status of Georgia's population remain top priorities for the country. The government aims to maintain and strengthen the citizen-centered healthcare system, focusing on principles of social justice.

The universal healthcare program will persist in providing **comprehensive medical services for all Georgian citizens**. Funding for state healthcare programs will gradually rise to expand the scope of services, ranging from early disease detection to rehabilitation. Additionally, targeted groups such as the socially vulnerable, pensioners, and veterans will continue to receive support for chronic diseases and essential medications.

Managing and treating oncological diseases remains a top priority for the state. The program for treating children diagnosed with cancer abroad will persist. Additionally, by fostering collaboration between Georgian doctors and top foreign clinics, the latest methods for managing oncological diseases will be introduced in the country.

The **construction, rehabilitation, and equipping of state-owned priority stationary institutions and outpatient clinics in rural areas** will continue. Updates to the material-technical base and vehicle fleet of the emergency service are planned. Additionally, the training of paramedics and their integration into the healthcare system will persist.

Special emphasis will be placed on bolstering the primary healthcare system. Efforts to implement telemedicine in rural outpatient clinics will persist, enhancing accessibility to a broad array of medical services for the population. Strengthening disease prevention, particularly for those with the highest morbidity and mortality rates, will be prioritized, alongside early disease diagnosis to forestall complications.

The objectives outlined in the National Mental Health Strategy of Georgia will be pursued. Efforts to enhance the legal and social standing of individuals with **mental health** conditions will persist, including the establishment of family-oriented residences and mental health facilities adhering to updated standards.

To enhance the effectiveness of the healthcare sector, the adoption of the diagnosis-related groups (DRG) system for reimbursing medical services will be ongoing. International standards of practice will be integrated into the healthcare system to uphold patient safety and achieve optimal clinical outcomes.

Efforts to implement the international accreditation mechanism for medical institutions participating in state programs will persist. Collaborating with industry associations, the postgraduate training system for doctors and nurses will be revamped to ensure ongoing professional development. **Harmonization of the pharmaceutical regulatory framework** with EU legislation will advance, expanding the reference price system and procurement mechanisms for innovative medicines. Strengthening the National Drug Quality Control Laboratory and ongoing monitoring of medication usage for optimal outcomes will remain priorities.

In **public health**, we will enhance epidemic surveillance services to prevent and eradicate HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C, and other infectious diseases. We'll also broaden regional and international cooperation. To detect health risks and enhance timely response mechanisms, we'll create a national multi-sectoral health security action plan.

3.2. Social Security

Establishing a sustainable social protection system for the population ranks among the country's top priorities. The government commits to maintaining social protection programs for specific groups such as the elderly, disabled individuals, and children. Additionally, efforts will be made to mitigate poverty-related risks through a fair, transparent, and efficient social protection framework.

Following legislation guidelines, the country will persist in granting pensions to retirees, including periodic adjustments based on economic indicators. This approach, coupled with low taxes, aims to uphold social assurances for the elderly. Similarly, the indexing of social benefits will persist, ensuring an annual guaranteed rise for individuals with disabilities. Efforts to enhance the provision of state compensation for certain groups will also be undertaken. Furthermore, monthly social aid to children in financially disadvantaged families will be sustained as part of the strategy to alleviate or prevent child poverty.

At the regional level, we will implement the one-stop-shop principle for delivering social services. This means citizens will receive swift and high-quality assistance for health care, child care, social, and internally displaced persons (IDP) matters, all within a single location.

We will develop and implement effective mechanisms to encourage and promote the employment of able-bodied individuals.

The process of transitioning disabled individuals and children from large institutional settings to family environments will persist as part of the ongoing deinstitutionalization effort.

The primary objective for fully realizing the rights of persons with disabilities is to shift from the medical model of categorizing disability to embracing the biopsychosocial model. The government will vigorously pursue efforts in this direction to effect meaningful change.

Enhancing the accessibility and quality of social services is crucial for fostering the independent living and societal integration of disabled individuals. This effort is paramount in preventing both deinstitutionalization and institutionalization.

Efforts will be made to facilitate effective communication, coordination, and decentralization processes between the guardianship authority and municipalities.

Efforts will be intensified to safeguard children from all forms of violence, ensuring adherence to the provisions outlined in the Law of Georgia On Social Work and in a Code on the Rights of the Child.

Efforts to address housing issues will persist. As per the plan, starting from 2024, housing will be provided for 1000 socially vulnerable families with three or more children who are currently homeless. Legislative initiatives will also be pursued to support this endeavor.

The effective policy of allocating residential areas to internally displaced persons (IDPs) will be sustained. The program aimed at enhancing the living conditions of 13 000 displaced families and 1200 eco-migrant families will continue uninterrupted from 2023 to 2025.

3.3 Education

A high-quality education and science system are indispensable for the sustainable development of the state. Such a system should bolster Georgia's prominence and significance on the international stage while enhancing the global competitiveness of its citizens across pertinent domains.

Ensuring universal access to education and elevating its quality stand as paramount priorities for the Government of Georgia. Consequently, the ongoing effort to augment the budget of the education system will persist.

Education reform necessitates a systematic and steadfast approach, which entails the development of a unified strategy spanning early and preschool education, higher education, and scientific directions. This comprehensive strategy aims to ensure the reform yields the most effective and tangible results possible.

Since 2024, youth policy has been integrated systematically into the realm of education. This integration ensures the execution of a variety of programs, projects, and activities customized to meet the needs and interests of young people, aligning with internationally recognized standards.

Efforts will persist in engaging intensively with the European Union to achieve sectoral integration in the areas of education, science, research, and youth initiatives.

Early and Pre-School Education

We will uphold the significant progress made in preschool education, ensuring universal access by continuing to offer free early and preschool education in public institutions. Additionally, measures will be taken to provide tailored educational services for children with special needs.

Efforts to enhance access to quality preschool education will persist through the continuation of diversified preschool education models. This entails developing services tailored to the needs of various urban settlements, as well as municipalities inhabited by small households and ethnic minorities in mountainous regions.

We will keep implementing measures to boost employee wages and enhance qualifications in pre-schools. Additionally, we aim to attract young, skilled professionals to these institutions. State support and full financing will be provided for higher educational programs on pre-school education.

The ongoing reform in early and preschool education will persist, including the self-assessment and gradual authorization of both public and private kindergartens nationwide. Support for the self-assessment process will be provided free of charge and equally accessible to all public and private kindergartens.

To enhance transparency and quality assurance in early and preschool education, we will establish an electronic system to display data on educational institutions. Additionally, an authorization process will be initiated for the accreditation of these institutions.

To bolster ethnic minority communities and ensure quality education, a bilingual teaching model will be implemented in all kindergartens located in densely populated regions with non-Georgian speaking populations. Simultaneously, efforts will be made to actively develop quality educational resources tailored for ethnic minority groups. By providing preschool education adapted to their needs, we aim to enhance school readiness and improve the overall quality of education in the general education system.

Efforts to enhance infrastructure, including the ongoing construction and rehabilitation program of kindergartens across various municipalities nationwide, will persist. This program encompasses the rehabilitation and construction of a total of 885 kindergartens. A budget of 1.3 billion GEL has been allocated for this initiative, aiming to align the facilities with international standards. In 2024, activities related to 245 kindergartens will continue as part of the program's first stage.

General Education

In the upcoming years, the government aims to enhance the quality of general education by leveraging research and evidence, aligning the system with international standards, and drawing in both young talents and seasoned professionals. To achieve these goals, in the upcoming years:

- The system will undergo significant decentralization, expanding the autonomy of schools and bolstering the role of resource centers. Additionally, robust mechanisms will be established to support schools effectively.
- Budgetary financing for general education has seen an unprecedented increase and is set to further rise in the future. With a focus on fairness, the salary policy for teachers will be revised, resulting in substantial increases in remuneration for both teachers and school administrative staff.
- The regulation of the teaching profession will be modernized, and measures for continuous professional development tailored to teachers' specific needs will be implemented.
- Various models of school management and financing will be developed and implemented, tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of each school.
- Public schools will remain authorized in accordance with updated standards and procedures for ensuring the quality of general education.
- Efforts will persist in creating and enhancing a new national curriculum focused on high standards, along with the corresponding educational materials. Additionally, a fresh concept for the secondary level will be formulated. A comprehensive school evaluation system will be implemented on a large scale, while the expansion of electronic resources will continue.
- The process of updating existing manuals and developing new ones will continue unabated.
- Diagnostic assessments of academic results will commence, marking a pivotal step towards holding schools accountable for achieving learning outcomes outlined in the National Curriculum.
- Efforts will commence to develop a new model facilitating the transition from secondary school to higher education institutions.
- The integration of inclusive education components will persist across Georgia, aiming to enhance access to education for individuals with disabilities and tailor the educational process to meet their needs.
- A dedicated structural unit will be established within educational institutions to coordinate support services for inclusive education. Additionally, the inclusive education multidisciplinary team will undergo transformation into a psycho-educational needs assessment and counseling team.
- To support ethnic minorities, bilingual education will be implemented in all public schools where Georgian is not the primary language. This initiative aims to strengthen the teaching and learning of both the students' native language and the state language.
- Existing mechanisms for identifying individuals who have been left behind in education will be enhanced. To integrate them into the educational process, alternative curricula will be updated to align with the new national curriculum.

- Continued provision of various distance learning courses in the Georgian language will be extended to members of the Georgian diaspora residing abroad.
- Efforts will focus on enhancing safety and maintaining public order in schools through the refinement of flexible, outcome-driven mechanisms for planning and executing preventive measures. Moreover, access to psycho-social services will be expanded, and more public schools will utilize the services of law enforcement officers. The implementation of restorative relationship approaches in schools will advance the development of the process-oriented safe school model, with an emphasis on school mediation. Training programs will be rolled out for bailiffs, psychologists, social workers, and authorized security personnel to support these initiatives.
- Awareness-raising activities in the field of cybersecurity will persist to guarantee a secure learning environment in both formal and non-formal education settings.
- The government's foremost priority is to establish uniformly accessible learning environments in schools by providing modern educational infrastructure nationwide. To achieve this goal, a large-scale construction and rehabilitation project for schools has been initiated. Presently, work is underway to construct and rehabilitate 250 public schools.
- The collaborative initiative between the European Commission and the Government of Georgia, known as the European School of the Eastern Partnership in Georgia, will remain ongoing. The school is scheduled to officially open in the fall of 2024.
- Building upon international best practices and local requirements, efforts will persist in developing the concept of a school feeding program.

Vocational Education

The Government of Georgia will maintain its focus on developing professional education as a crucial mechanism for addressing imbalances between labor market demand and supply. Ensuring accessibility to vocational education for all and aligning it with the needs of both local and international labor markets will be paramount. To achieve this goal:

- Construction of four new professional educational institutions and two training workshops will continue, with the completion of construction work for two professional educational institutions and two training workshops anticipated by the end of 2024.
- Sector-specific expertise centers, focusing on construction, logistics, tourism, and wine sectors, will be established and developed.
- Public schools will be engaged in delivering vocational education, thereby making vocational education more accessible to secondary school students.

- The quantity of work-based and market-demanded professional training and retraining programs will expand, aimed at boosting the employment rate of vocational education graduates. Additionally, the range of integrated programs will be broadened.
- Budgetary funding for vocational education has seen a substantial increase and will continue to rise gradually in the future. Additionally, a results-based model for financing vocational education will be implemented.
- Participatory management models for educational institutions will be introduced with the involvement of the private sector. This engagement will integrate the private sector into the skills ecosystem and enhance the provision of professional education.
- Industry associations and the private sector will play a key role in revising professional standards. By the end of 2025, all professional standards will be developed or updated in line with a new methodology. Moreover, new qualifications developed with the involvement of the private sector will be introduced to meet the demands of the labor market.
- The professional standard for vocational education teachers will be established, along with a new model for their training, entry into the profession, and continuous professional development. Additionally, a new remuneration model for vocational education teachers will be put into effect. Training programs for vocational education teachers will be aligned with international standards.
- To enhance the effectiveness of college management, the qualifications of college principals will be elevated. Additionally, the structure of institutions will be reassessed to align with the priorities of the vocational education system.
- To internationalize the professional education system, initiatives will be launched to provide international certification opportunities and facilitate international exchange programs.
- Several electronic systems will be implemented to streamline the management processes of professional education, enhancing flexibility and automation.

Degree Education

To enhance the higher education system, the following measures are planned to be carried out in the country:

- Budgetary funding for higher education has seen a significant increase and will continue to rise gradually in the future.
- Efforts to develop a new model of financing the higher education system will persist. This model aims to promote the sustainable growth of educational institutions and align the educational process with learning outcomes.

- The higher education quality assurance mechanisms in Georgia will be fully aligned with the standards and guidelines set by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).
- A unified concept for evaluating scientific research activities and doctoral programs will be developed.
- This initiative will facilitate the internationalization of higher education, encompassing efforts such as obtaining international accreditation for higher education programs and establishing joint and double-degree programs in collaboration with foreign higher education institutions.
- The number of beneficiaries of scholarship programs for studying abroad will be expanded.
- To enhance support for teachers nationwide, funding for individuals enrolled in teacher training programs will be maintained, and new specialized teacher training programs will be introduced.
- To improve accessibility, programs promoting education for residents in occupied territories and villages near the dividing line will persist.
- Specific programs targeting ethnic minority representatives will be introduced. Efforts to support education for convicts pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees will be sustained.
- A legal framework for regulating distance education will be established.
- Efforts will persist in preparing for Georgia's associate membership in the Erasmus+ program.
- Funding for higher education institutions will be ongoing to enhance infrastructure and the learning environment.

3.4 Science

Annually, there will be incremental increases in state funding for scientific research and the compensation for scientific personnel, alongside the implementation of a results-based funding model.

The initiative to augment financing for engineering, natural sciences, technology (STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics), humanities, and geosciences research grant competitions has commenced, leading to an expansion in the scale of fundamental research.

Efforts will be made to enhance support for collaboration between Georgian academic and scientific personnel working abroad and the scientific community in Georgia.

Efforts to bolster the commercialization of applied scientific research will be intensified.

Additionally, the implementation of ongoing reforms will persist, aimed at fully integrating higher education and science, enhancing the management system for scientific endeavors, refining the funding model for research, and establishing rankings for scientific research units. The state will set mandatory minimum standards for scientific and research institutions and will prioritize improving the quality of their operations in Georgia.

The initiative will facilitate the active engagement of scientific institutions and research groups in international framework programs and scientific projects. It will also support the implementation of bilateral and multilateral scientific research and technological projects.

Efforts to reinforce supporting measures for enabling the participation of Georgian researchers in grant competitions under the European Commission's research and innovation program "Horizon Europe" will be intensified.

The process of upgrading scientific infrastructure will persist to align it more closely with international standards.

3.5 Youth Policy

Throughout the implementation of the state's youth strategy, considerable focus will be directed towards actively engaging young people in the decision-making process concerning matters that are pertinent to them. This involvement will extend to the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of youth policies and programs.

Young people will gain access to quality non-formal education and youth activity programs aimed at fostering the development of essential competencies. These offerings will encompass student festivals, camps, volunteering opportunities, as well as information and consulting services, alongside grant projects. Furthermore, international cooperation in the realm of youth policy and activities will be broadened.

3.6 Arts and Culture

In the context of the country's sustainable development, it is imperative to prioritize the preservation of cultural heritage, ensuring access to public culture, bolstering creative industries, and facilitating the self-realization of artists' creative potential.

Legislation governing the cultural sphere, including existing laws concerning cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible, as well as natural heritage), will undergo enhancements.

To modernize and enhance the management of the cultural sphere, there will be **recruitment of new staff and mobilization of resources**. New initiatives will be introduced to advance priority areas, while the material, technical base, and infrastructure will be gradually upgraded to support these endeavors.

Modern technologies such as scanning and the creation of 3D models will be implemented in cultural heritage research and rehabilitation efforts. To safeguard cultural heritage monuments and objects, comprehensive steps will be taken including identification, study, research, inventorying, and the ongoing conservation/rehabilitation of cultural heritage monuments.

Cultural resources will be actively leveraged for the advancement of tourism and creative entrepreneurship. Targeted projects aligning with new challenges will be implemented to integrate the best international practices into local initiatives.

Efforts to establish modern cultural infrastructure, utilize new technologies, and **integrate the culture sector into the digital realm** will be actively pursued. This will create additional avenues for employment and enable artists and cultural organizations to creatively realize themselves within the sector.

Special emphasis will be placed on developing programs aimed at enhancing academic and scientific human resources in **artistic education**. This includes supporting the utilization of innovative methods and technologies in modern art and promoting initiatives from young artists.

The **integration process with Europe** will persist, accompanied by initiatives to enhance awareness of Georgia and its culture within the international community. Efforts will be made to increase participation in international programs and events, fostering deeper international cultural relations through both bilateral and multilateral channels. Regional artistic institutions and collectives will be actively engaged in the nation's cultural landscape and presented on the global stage.

Accessibility to culture will be enhanced for the general public, with a particular focus on improving access for populations residing in regions, ethnic minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. This initiative aims to support the preservation of cultural identity among ethnic minorities and foster the development of creative skills among people with disabilities.

3.7 Sports

State **funding** for both mass and high-achieving sports has seen a significant increase and will continue to rise gradually in the future.

To foster the development of **professional sports**, the country's national teams will persist in preparation and participation in international sports events. Additionally, there will be organization of educational and training sessions, Georgian championships, and competitions to popularize sports and facilitate the growth of national sports.

Georgia will continue to actively support the **hosting of international championships and tournaments** across various sports. Notably, in 2024, Georgia will host significant events such as the European Karate Championship for cadets, juniors, and under-21s, as well as the Women's World Chess Championship - Grand Prix stage. In 2025, Georgia will host the

European Youth Winter Olympic Festival - Bakuriani 2025 and the Fencing World Championship, along with the Women's World Chess Cup.

Social support programs for esteemed sports professionals, including honored sports workers, veteran athletes, coaches in highland settlements, Olympic champions, prospective athletes, and international winners, along with coaching and medical staff, will be sustained.

Furthermore, support for both mass and high-achieving sports in the country will persist, which includes furnishing national sports organizations and regions with suitable inventory and equipment.

The construction and rehabilitation of significant sports facilities will remain ongoing.

4. Public Administration

The effective execution of government policy is largely dependent on the presence of sustainable state institutions that promptly address needs and the conscientious and efficient operation of the professional civil service. In the coming years, as Georgia progresses towards accession to the European Union, considerable emphasis will be placed on bolstering democratic institutions and aligning the public administration model with European Union standards as closely as possible.

A top priority for the government is the steadfast and ongoing execution of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2026. Developed with active engagement from both local and international organizations, this strategy aims to ensure that state institutions are dependable and robust, decision-making is evidence-based and responsive to citizens' needs, and activities are transparent, accountable, and inclusive.

Public administration reform is pivotal in Georgia's integration into the European Union. It's worth noting that, following the revised methodology for EU enlargement approved in 2020, the "fundamental issues group" plays a central role in the EU accession negotiations process, with public administration reform being one of the key focal points. Consequently, the government's agenda prioritizes the establishment of a robust public administration system.

To ensure good governance:

- The institutional capacities of the public sector will be further developed to ensure that policies formulated by state agencies are grounded in concrete evidence, address existing challenges, and meet the needs of citizens.
- A public service development strategy will be formulated, with particular emphasis on enhancing the coordination system for public service management and ensuring the involvement of each agency in this process. The continuous development of human capital within the public sector remains a steadfast priority for the Government of Georgia.
- The government is committed to further reinforcing and enhancing the effectiveness of the anti-corruption mechanisms available. Following Georgia's prospect of EU integration in 2022, both the government and parliament diligently worked towards implementing the 12 recommendations issued by the European Commission. As part of these efforts to strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms, an independent agency called the Anti-Corruption Bureau was established as a legal entity of public law (LEPL). This bureau is tasked with coordinating anti-corruption policies and consolidating important anti-corruption functions under its mandate.
- The institutional sustainability of each public agency is heavily dependent on its internal control system, which encompasses managerial, financial, and other types of control mechanisms, as well as organizational structures, management methods, and procedures. Consequently, efforts will persist in effectively implementing accountability systems within state structures, ensuring that these structures can

successfully accomplish their goals and conduct their activities in a legal, transparent, economical, efficient, and productive manner.

- Efforts to enhance public services in the country will persist through the implementation of unified approaches and principles outlined in the "2022-2025 Strategy for the Development of Public Services." This strategy will also contribute to the advancement of e-governance. Consequently, equal development across public agencies will be ensured, user engagement in processes will increase, and services will become even more qualitative and accessible. Harmonization of the unified standard for creating state services with international regulations will also be undertaken.
- Strengthening the security of critical infrastructure and advancing e-governance, including enhancing the availability of e-services, remains a top government priority. To achieve this goal, the government will develop the country's second digital governance strategy along with a corresponding action plan. The objective is to digitize internal processes within public agencies for improved efficiency, expand access to remote services, and offer simplified, customer-centric, and high-quality electronic government services to citizens and businesses, all in accordance with international standards of information security and personal data protection. The importance of these initiatives has been underscored by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, efforts will continue to introduce additional tools for qualified electronic signatures and stamps, enabling faster service delivery and allowing citizens and organizations to securely access government services remotely.
- To advance remote services, a program for electronic services tailored to researchers of the National Archives, along with new catalogs, will be developed. Efforts will persist in electronic archiving to ensure the reliable storage of electronic documents.
- The large-scale construction of the Houses of Justice will continue, with ongoing projects including the construction of 13 Houses of Justice across various municipalities. Furthermore, plans are in place to deploy 20 mobile Houses of Justice to cover the entire territory of the country.
- The Georgian government's top priority is the successful implementation of the approved decentralization policy. This involves significantly strengthening the local self-government system and increasing the degree of independence for municipalities. To achieve this, the government will continue expanding the powers of municipalities, guided by the principles of subsidiarity. Innovative systems for delivering quality services at the local level will be introduced, alongside efforts to boost the role of municipalities in local economic development and provide them with adequate material and financial resources. As a result, the trend of gradually increasing the share of municipal revenues in relation to GDP will be sustained, with the aim of reaching a share of at least 7% of the gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of 2025.

The Government of Georgia upholds the principles of openness, transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement as fundamental values for a democratic society. It steadfastly

continues to integrate the principles of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) into the Georgian public administration system. Through collaboration with civil society and open governance initiatives, the government has established the first high-ranking inter-agency coordination council in Georgia. As part of this effort, the government has approved the Open Governance of Georgia 2024-2025 Action Plan. The goal of this action plan is to enhance access to information and transparency, strengthen mechanisms of accountability of state agencies to the public, and increase opportunities for citizen engagement. The government is committed to fulfilling its obligations under the action plan within the specified timeframe.

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