

Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia

On Approval of the “Georgian National Youth Policy Concept for 2020 – 2030”

Pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 5 of Article 132 of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament of Georgia, the Parliament of Georgia hereby resolves to:

1. Approve the “Georgian National Youth Policy Concept for 2020 – 2030.”
2. The Government of Georgia shall be assigned to:
 - a) Develop an Action Plan (hereinafter - the Action Plan) for the implementation of the “Georgian National Youth Policy Concept for 2020 – 2030” (hereinafter - the Concept), formulating appropriate measures and identifying agencies responsible for the implementation of the measures, by April 1, 2021;
 - b) Coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the Concept and the Action Plan.
3. Municipalities shall be requested to facilitate the implementation of the strategic priorities set forth in the Concept and of the Action Plan, while acting within the scope of their authority.
4. This Resolution shall enter into force immediately upon its publication.

Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia

Mr Archil Talakvadze

Tbilisi,

17 July, 2020

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Georgian National Youth Policy Concept for 2020 – 2030

(For, With and By Young People)

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I. Introduction

Youth form a crucial segment of society, with a great potential to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. For the full realization of this potential, it is necessary for the state to create appropriate conditions, to respond immediately to the challenges facing young people, to implement a coherent, public and integrated national youth policy for young people and together with young people. The policy should be based on the principles of human rights, gender equality and environmental protection. It is important for young people, as full-fledged members of society, to be actively involved and participate in all spheres of public life in order to contribute to the development of the country.

In 2014, the Government of Georgia officially approved the “Georgian National Youth Policy Document”, the implementation of which contributed to the empowerment of the youth and laid the foundation for the state adopting a systemic approach to this field. Despite the progress made, young people still face a number of challenges related to their physical and mental health, education, employment, access to resources and opportunities, participation in public life and decision-making processes. The Youth Policy covers different sectors. Thus, the task of the state is to effectively manage and coordinate the Youth Policy at the central and municipal levels. Neglecting the challenges facing young people will not have a positive impact on the development of the country, in particular in terms of economic, security-related and demographic development. The Parliament of Georgia has developed and approved the “Georgian National Youth Policy Concept for 2020 – 2030” (hereinafter - the Concept) in order to find immediate solutions to related problems and fulfil these tasks, as well as to invest adequate public resources in the human capital of 14-29 year olds and young people.

The Concept serves the following purposes:

- a) Creation of favourable conditions for adequate health-care, socio-economic well-being, multifaceted development and self-realization of young people;
- b) Ensuring appropriate conditions for full participation of young people in public life and democratic processes;

- c) Improvement of the National Youth Policy management system at central and municipal levels.

In order to achieve the objectives set forth in the Concept, the Concept sets out 5 strategic priorities and 22 expected outcomes, the responsibility for implementing of which lies with the central government and local authorities of Georgia. Close cooperation with international and donor organizations, as well as with stakeholders in the civil and other sectors is of crucial importance for achieving these goals.

Prior to the development of the Concept, consultation meetings were held with 300 young people aged 19-29 in 12 municipalities of Georgia, as well as e-surveys of 1,400 young people aged 14-18. The results of the meetings and e-surveys are considered in the Concept. In addition, the Concept reflects the views of the civil society and other stakeholders.

The Concept has been developed by the Committee on Sports and Youth Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia, with the financial and technical support from the United Nations agencies (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNIDO, ILO), as well as with the active support of the State Youth Policy Monitoring and Development Working Group at the Committee on Sports and Youth Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia, the LEPL “Georgian Youth Agency”, and the USAID and UNAG Programme - PITA.

The Concept builds upon the following documents and relevant principles and approaches:

1. Documents defining international political and legal obligations and consistent with the Constitution of Georgia, including:
 - a) The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
 - b) The Convention on the Rights of the Child;
 - c) The Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part;
 - d) The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development);
 - e) The United Nations Youth Strategy (Youth 2030) “Working With and For Young People”;
 - f) Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes;
 - g) The Nairobi Statement adopted at the Nairobi Summit marking the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (Nairobi Summit on ICPD25);
 - h) The Council of Europe Youth Sector Strategy 2030;
 - i) The Council of Europe recommendations on the youth policy, such as: CM/Rec(2017)4, CM/Rec(2016)7, CM/Rec(2015)3, CM/Rec(2010)7, Rec(2006)14, Rec(2004)13, Rec(2003)8;
 - j) The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. National legal and political documents; including:
 - a) The Georgian National Youth Policy Document;
 - b) The Concept of Demographic Security of Georgia;

- c) The National Maternal and Newborn Health Strategy (2017-2030);
- d) The November 12, 2019 Decree of the Government of Georgia on the National Document for the Nationalization of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- e) The Parliament of Georgia Strategy for Facilitating and Monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

II. The Goal of the National Youth Policy

Under the Concept, the goal of the of the National Youth Policy is to create an environment that ensures the participation of young people as full-fledged members of society, decent employment, health care and well-being, and equal access to information, resources and opportunities for development.

III. Strategic Priorities

1. Active Participation of Young People in Public Life and Democratic Processes

This strategic direction is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 16. The right of youth to participation is recognized by international and national documents. According to the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions.

The state should promote the development of young people for them to become active and responsible citizens.

In order to ensure the active participation of young people in public life and democratic processes, the state will take appropriate steps to achieve the following outcomes:

Expected Outcome 1.1. Increased participation of young people in the decision-making processes

90.4% of young people in Georgia are aware of their right to participation in the decision-making processes, although the actual level of their participation is very low and decreases every year (in 2014 the corresponding figure was 10.9%, whereas in 2016 the figure stood at 6%). At the consultation meetings, young people noted that their cooperation with state structures was sporadic and inconsistent. There is also a lack of trust, which is particularly problematic at the municipal level. Young people do not have real impact on decision-making processes even when these decisions are related to them. Therefore, their motivation to be actively involved in democratic processes at central and municipal levels is low.

To this end, state agencies at central and municipal levels should provide young people with more information about their civil rights and responsibilities, as well as about the ways and means of participating in these processes. Sustainable, systemic mechanisms (youth councils, co-management models, structural dialogue, etc.) need to be established to facilitate actual participation of young people, to ensure that their participation is continuous and consistent rather than spontaneous.

Expected Outcome 1.2. Increased engagement of young people in volunteering activities

One of the important indicators of young people's active participation in public life is their involvement in volunteering activities and related processes.

In 2014-2016, there was a growing trend of engagement of young people in volunteering activities in Georgia – the rate increased from 24.3% to 27%. An important achievement was the adoption of the Law of Georgia on Volunteering in 2015 and the implementation of state programme - “Volunteer of Georgia” - in 2015-2018 by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia.

Consultations with youth organizations revealed that the Law does not provide incentives for volunteers and host organizations, which significantly hinders formal volunteering. During the consultative meetings young people noted that the society is not properly aware of the importance of volunteering and its positive results. In this regard, the negative attitude and distrust of the generation of parents towards the involvement of young people in volunteer programmes is especially evident.

To this end, the Government of Georgia should develop mechanisms to strengthen factors affecting volunteering (youth, organizational structure) and volunteer programmes and ensure that they are reflected in the legislation of the country. It is important to provide more information to and raise public awareness on volunteering and its positive outcomes. The state needs to pay particular attention to the creation of an ecosystem facilitating the development of formal volunteering.

Expected Outcome 1.3. State support available for youth organizations and initiative groups throughout the country

One of the most important ways for young people to actively participate in public life is to implement their own projects and initiatives. By developing and realizing their ideas, young people not only contribute to the development of the society, but also enrich their personal experience and improve their competencies.

Nowadays, the projects of youth organizations and initiative groups are mainly implemented with the support of international foundations. In 2012-2017, the state funded the LEPL “Children and Youth Development Fund”, within the frames of which more than 100 projects were implemented.

Since 2019, the function of the above mentioned fund has been undertaken by the LEPL “Georgian Youth Agency”, which acts as a support mechanism for youth organizations and initiative groups at the central level. It is important to expand the area of thematic priorities within the framework of state support and to cover a wider range of interests of young people.

Support for and co-funding of youth initiatives and ideas at the municipal level is unsystematic. According to established practice, the municipality allocates material resources more on the basis of youth appeals than under regular grant programmes.

In order to increase access to state support for youth organizations and initiative groups, government agencies should facilitate the implementation of grant programmes and/or other funding programmes at both central and municipal levels.

2. Promoting Youth Development and Realization of their Potential

This strategic direction is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4. Experience shows that young people need special support when they start living independently. Research in the issues related to youth employment confirms that each subsequent generation of young people, after graduation, have to embark on a longer and more difficult road leading to integration into the labour market. In order to be able to walk this road, it is essential for them to master the skills needed to live independently.

In addition to formal education programmes, it is essential to have alternative mechanisms which will empower young people and enable them to develop key competencies and acquire practical skills, as well as help them build self-confidence and develop creative and critical thinking skills.

According to the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2020), one of such mechanisms is non-formal education. This tool helps to empower young people, integrate them into society and equip them with competencies relevant to the requirements of the modern labour market, as well as to promote their multifaceted development. Non-formal education makes a special contribution to the development of the individual and can never be substituted by formal education. Successful implementation of youth activities and active involvement of young people in the process of non-formal education has a number of positive outcomes: development of skills and competencies (human capital); establishing positive relationships (social capital); changing behaviours (e.g., health-threatening behaviours) (promoting health); capacity building in all areas (personal growth).

In order to promote the development of young people and the realization of their potential, the state will take appropriate steps to achieve the following outcomes:

Expected Outcome 2.1. The institute of youth workers is introduced and operationalized in Georgia

Youth activities, which occur outside the formal education settings, family and work contexts, can involve youth workers. Their involvement in the activities, apart from other tasks, serves to promote the development of key learning competencies of young people. The profession of youth worker is not acknowledged in Georgia, however, many people engaged in non-formal education actively work with young people through hobby centres, mass sports, art and culture clubs, and summer camps. At the consultation meetings, young people talked about the scarcity, monotonous nature and low quality of non-formal education opportunities at both regional and municipal levels. This problem is further exacerbated by the lack of the youth worker profession as well as the lack of relevant professional standards. There are no educational programmes available for training youth workers. Opportunities for training and improving qualifications of existing youth workers are also scarce. As a result, the quality of youth activities does not meet the needs and requirements of young people.

Under the Association Agreement, Georgia has undertaken to promote cooperation in the field of youth policy, non-formal education for young people and young employees, as well as youth activities and the development of the institute of youth workers.

To this end, the state should ensure the development of an appropriate legal framework, the introduction of quality standards for youth activities and best international practices, as well as the recognition of the profession of youth worker and the development of relevant professional standards. Opportunities for training, retraining, professional development and certification of youth workers should be developed. The employment of certified youth workers, especially within state-sponsored youth programmes, should be encouraged.

Expected Outcome 2.2. Quality non-formal education opportunities are available throughout the country

Experience in non-formal education and youth activities is sporadic in Georgia. They are mainly led by NGOs working on youth issues. Public services in the field of non-formal education are usually limited to youth events organized by municipalities and programmes offered by youth clubs, which need to be improved and brought closer to European standards.

It is important for the state to promote: the implementation and development of quality youth activities at the municipal level; the provision of more information to state agencies and the public on youth activities and non-formal education of young people, and raising their awareness on the matter; the establishment and improvement of mechanisms for recognizing non-formal education; the development of organizations providing services in the field of youth activities and non-formal

education; access to youth activities and non-formal education for disadvantaged young people, especially for young people with disabilities.

Expected Outcome 2.3. Increased involvement of young people in mobility activities

The process of globalization has a significant impact on lives of young people around the world. Employment-related, academic, healthcare, cultural and other types of mobility is increasing both inside and outside countries. Advanced communication technologies enable young people to stay in touch with friends and relatives abroad, to access information via the Internet and to take advantage of opportunities around the world. However, the process is hampered by the lack of access to information technologies.

Introduction of visa-free travel regime to EU member states has significantly increased mobility of young people living in Georgia. In addition, involvement of young people in academic mobility programmes has increased as a result of the EU programme - Erasmus Plus. However, the opportunity is not available to a large group of young people, especially those living in rural areas, due to financial constraints, language barriers, geographical remoteness and lack of access to information.

The lack of availability of information technologies and information, named by young people as part of the barriers to mobility, also negatively influences their general awareness and virtual mobility. Although 95% of young people aged 15-29 in Georgia have access to the Internet on a daily basis, access to the Internet remains a challenge. High cost of the Internet was cited as the main reason for the lack of access to it, during the consultative meetings, especially during the meetings conducted in mountainous regions. Access to information and virtual mobility is also hampered by the fact that the majority of young people use the Internet more for social networks (98.6%) or audio-video connections (89.4%) and less for getting news and other information (56.4%). Use of the Internet for education and personal development has not been studied.

In order to increase youth involvement in mobility activities inside and outside the country, the state should ensure that they have greater access to information and communication technologies, as well as take care of youth education in terms of the use of the Internet and cybersecurity, and develop youth information services. Financial support for young people is essential to reimburse the costs associated with mobility projects. It is important for young people to improve the quality of foreign language learning and to encourage their education in both formal and non-formal settings.

3. Health and Well-being of Young People

This strategic direction is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, 10 and 16, on one hand, and with the Strategies for Health Promotion developed by the World Health Organization, on the other. According to the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, health promotion is a process that allows people to strengthen control over their own health and improve their health conditions

Health promotion, at the individual level, involves an educational process that provides people with information and helps them develop healthy behaviour, whereas, at the community and societal levels, it involves the development of policies, structures and support systems that encourage safe behaviours in people.

The introduction of modern technology-based preventive interventions is important for the implementation of health promotion strategies. The use of computer, mobile and web technologies is both attractive and cost-effective for young people.

In order to ensure health and well-being of young people, the state will take appropriate steps to achieve the following outcomes:

Expected Outcome 3.1. Reduced rates of substance and behavioural addiction (addiction to psychoactive substances, gambling and modern technology) among young people

The process of transition from childhood to adulthood is usually problematic and marked by striving for exploring and experimentation, strong impressions and risk-taking behaviour, which may push adolescents to psychoactive substance use or gambling.

As of 2019¹, the rates of tobacco and alcohol consumption among adolescents are high, and the issue of consumption of illegal drugs, namely cannabis, remains.

In Georgia, in terms of substance and behavioural addiction, the consumption of new psychoactive substances (so-called Bio Drugs) and addiction to gambling remain problematic. The rate of misuse of sedatives and sleeping pills as well as of so-called Bio Drugs by young people is higher than the European average.

The problem of addiction to psychoactive substances, gambling and modern technology was clearly identifiable during the consultation meetings with young people. According to the participants of these meetings, the state should take effective steps to promote a healthy lifestyle among adolescents and young people, as measures to prevent substance and behavioural addiction are sporadic and limited to information campaigns. Young people also highlighted the lack of promoting a healthy lifestyle.

To this end, the Government of Georgia should take into account that healthy behaviour can only be adopted through consistent, complex prevention programmes and not through one-time, isolated campaigns and other actions. It is necessary to develop a national standard for prevention programmes and to integrate the issues related to the prevention of gambling and technological addiction in complex prevention programmes, as well as to provide appropriate services for the treatment and rehabilitation of young people with such addictions.

Expected Outcome 3.2. Increased awareness on reproductive health among young people

In Georgia, young people and adolescents do not have sufficient information neither on reproductive health nor sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, which not only increases the risk of contracting the infectious diseases, but also exacerbates stigmatization and discrimination against people living with the infection, which in turn hinders the effective state's response to HIV/AIDS.

Recently, issues related to reproductive health, healthy lifestyle, gender equality, etc. have been incorporated in the school curriculum through several subjects as part of the review of the standards for relevant curricula for primary, basic and secondary levels of general education.

Despite the progress made, the education system in Georgia still faces significant challenges. In order to better inform young people about these issues, it is necessary to provide them with evidence-based information through formal and non-formal education, to properly reflect relevant up-to-date subject standards in new textbooks, and to increase the number of well-trained and qualified teachers. Equally important is raising the awareness of parents and general public and mobilizing their support. It is also necessary to integrate a special function - providing young people with youth-friendly sexual and

¹ სირბილაძე თ., ჯავახიშვილი მ., კობაიძე მ., ჭიჭინაძე თ., ბენაშვილი მ. (2019). ნარკოტიკების მოხმარებისა და სხვა პრობლემური

ქცევების რისკ და დამცავი ფაქტორების კვლევა საქართველოს მოზარდებსა და ახალგაზრდებში.

თბილისი, საზოგადოებრივი

გაერთიანება ბემონი

reproductive health services - in the relevant areas at the level of primary health care, and to engage young people, especially young educators, in the process of development of these services.

It is important to ensure that young people have access to sexual and reproductive health services in accordance with the National Maternal and New Born Health Strategy for 2017-2030 adopted by the Government of Georgia, which ensures provision of these services to young people in a youth-friendly manner.

Expected Outcome 3.3. Decreased rates of child/early marriage and adolescent pregnancy

Child marriage remains one of the most common forms of gender discrimination. Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy rates in Georgia are higher than the average rates in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out in Georgia in 2018, 13.9% of 20-24 year old girls were married before the age of 18. This figure has not decreased since 2010.

Nowadays, in healthcare system, in the field of sexual and reproductive health in particular, there are no services tailored to the needs of adolescents and young people, which are essential for the prevention of child/early marriage and adolescent pregnancy.

During the consultation meetings, young people highlighted issues of early marriage and gender-based violence. The state needs to pay special attention to the elimination of harmful practice of child/early marriage, which is essential for achieving gender equality and ensuring equal opportunities for development for all human beings.

It is important to provide public with more information on the legal norms governing the minimum age for marriage and gender-based violence defined by the Georgian legislation, as well as with evidence-based information on the issues (principles) of sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and healthy living. It is necessary to promote the elimination of stigmatizing attitudes and practices, as well as to change the social norms that reinforce gender stereotypes in society.

Expected Outcome 3.4. Improved mental health of young people

The mental health of young people today is a major concern. It requires the attention of relevant experts and policy makers.

In 2018, 326 cases of mental and behavioural disorders, in the age group of 15-19 years, were officially registered in Georgia, and the number of similar cases in the age group of 20-24 years was 432. One in five young people surveyed admitted to having and feelings of depression.

During the consultation meetings conducted prior to the launch of the Concept development process, young people often discussed restrictions imposed by their families, parental distrust, excessive control, and comments and instructions related to their behaviour. Young people also talked about the problem of feelings of hopelessness and depression and suicidal tendencies. They also noted that they did not have the skills to adapt to the environment and cope with life challenges.

Today, efforts and measures to promote the mental health of adolescents and young people are, in fact, non-existent.

In order to improve the mental health of young people, the state should make efforts to provide more information about the mentioned topic to the population and reduce stigma, as well as to help adolescents and young people to develop skills needed to cope with life challenges. There is also a need to introduce programmes aimed at enhancing positive parenting practices, as well as to create and improve accessible mental health services tailored to the needs of young people.

Expected Outcome 3.5. Reduced rates of all forms of violence and discrimination against adolescents and young people

Violence against adolescents has direct and long-lasting consequences on public health and is associated with economic costs that jeopardize investments in education, health and well-being and reduce the productivity of the generation of young people.

Many young people participating in the consultation meetings reported discrimination on a variety of grounds, including workplace discrimination based on age, work experience and the length of service in the workplace, sexual orientation, criminal conviction history, physical health problems and/or mental health disorders, disability and/or gender-based discrimination.

In Georgia, young people are most often discriminated against because of their lower level of education (24%) and economic status (31%). In this regard, young people in unfavourable socioeconomic conditions, whose access to resources and opportunities is more restricted than that of other population segments, requires a special approach.

Physical and psychological violence against adolescents in their families is widespread, the result of which is their lower self-esteem, lack of independence, and self-isolation. Rates of physical and psychological violence against adolescents and young people in schools are also very high. Psychological violence is not perceived to have the same consequences as physical violence. In recent years, online violence, in particular, the use of hate speech, oppression, humiliation, and various other forms of violence through the Internet – i.e. cyberbullying - has become common. Despite the measures taken to reduce violence and discrimination (improvement of the relevant legal framework, implementation of prevention programmes, etc.), violence and discrimination against adolescents and young people is still an urgent issue and requires significant attention of the state.

It is necessary to improve the mechanisms for the protection of adolescents and young people against violence and discrimination, to periodically review all relevant pieces of legislation and ensure their compliance with international standards. It is necessary to provide information to the general public about inadmissibility and harmful effects of using violence against adolescents as a means to enforce discipline. It is important to develop guidelines for identifying and responding to incidents of violence in accordance with the child protection referral system and procedures.

Expected Outcome 3.6. Increased access to recreational infrastructure and services for young people

Proper organization of free time is of great importance for physical, emotional and cognitive development of youth. Consultation meetings and the survey conducted with participation of young people revealed a lack of non-formal educational spaces, quality hobby centres and entertainment facilities in the centres and villages across the regions. In addition, lack of spaces where young people could gather for interaction and entertainment was also revealed. These issues are especially problematic for young people living in rural areas, as they face barriers in accessing municipal centres. The problem of adapting sports facilities and other infrastructure (hobby centres and youth clubs) to the needs of young people with disabilities remains and is related to problems in the fields of healthcare and healthy lifestyle.

In order to achieve these goals, the Government of Georgia should ensure the arrangement and renovation of recreation areas (gardens, squares, tourist trails, hiking and camping infrastructure), creation of entertainment and educational spaces, improve the quality and diversity of relevant programmes and services, create cultural and recreation facilities and improve their accessibility.

Expected Outcome 3.7. Increased levels of physical activity and decreased rate of obesity among young people

In Georgia, a large proportion (66%) of young people aged 18-34, are not engaged in physical activities and only 26% are able to exercise at least once a week. According to an international study, the annual cost of insufficient physical activity in Georgia is more than GEL 16.8 million. Out of this, the direct cost incurred by the healthcare system is about GEL 12.4 million, and the productivity loss equals GEL 4.4 million.

Unhealthy diet and low levels of physical activity contribute to higher rates of obesity. Most young people do not follow the principle of healthy eating.

The state should focus on providing information and training to young people on the essence and benefits of reasonable diet. There is also a need to better inform the public about the risks associated with obesity and the importance of obesity prevention.

According to the Regulatory Impact Assessment of the Georgian Law on Physical Education and Sports, the state programmes for the development of mass sports are largely devoid of consistency and systematicity. According to the established practice, these programmes include sports events, the results of which are evaluated by the number of participants. In the programmes implemented by public institutions sport is not considered as a means of preventing non-communicable diseases and improving health.

The above mentioned indicates the need for the state to take effective steps to increase the level of physical activity among young people and increase their involvement in sports. There is a need to encourage youth sports activities – including involvement in both professional and amateur sports. To this end, the state should take care of improving the sports infrastructure, as well as develop multi-sectoral approaches that encourage walking, cycling, and other forms of physical activity (exercise) and ensure a safe environment for these activities.

4. Economic Empowerment of Young People

This strategic direction is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10.

For the purpose of ensuring economic empowerment of young people, the state will take appropriate steps to achieve the following outcomes:

Expected Outcome 4.1. Significantly reduced rate of unemployment in youth age group

Despite the economic reforms implemented in Georgia in recent years, unemployment is still one of the most acute problems in the country. High unemployment rate, especially among young people, threaten the future of the country. As of 2018, the unemployment rate in Georgia was 12.7%. In the age group of 15-19 year olds and 20-24 year olds, the figure was 26.6% and 30.8%, respectively.

During the consultation meetings, young people complained that there were too few jobs tailored to their needs that would allow them to continue learning and take care of their self-development. Participants of these meetings particularly highlighted the lack of internship programmes tailored to their needs, which would ensure their involvement in the desired profession. According to young people, the demands of employers are often unrealistic - they require experience, whereas the opportunities for acquiring work experience are extremely limited.

The mismatch between the required and acquired skills is one of the main reasons for high unemployment rate. In this regard, it is necessary to improve the system of job anticipation and career counselling. It is also necessary to improve the quality of both formal and non-formal and vocational education, which will significantly reduce the existing imbalance in the labour market. The education system should properly respond to the key requirements of employers in relation to specific professions and skills. The reputation and importance of vocational education should be improved among young people and their parents. In addition, it is necessary to raise the qualification of teachers

working in vocational education institutions and equip these institutions both technically and technologically. The private sector should be actively involved in the development of relevant programmes. It is important to integrate vocational education (teaching) at the school level. It is also recommended to implement an innovation-based industrial policy, which will help increase the employment opportunities for young people.

In order to better integrate young people into the labour market, it is essential to support them in managing the transition from school to work. Effective steps in this direction include: the refinement of internship programmes, the improvement of wage subsidy programmes, as well as facilitating implementation of alternative, innovative initiatives for young people, especially for vulnerable groups of young people.

Expected Outcome 4.2. Significantly reduced proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

As of 2017, the share of young people aged 15-29 not in education, employment, or training (NEET) stood at 30% (women - 35.9%, men - 24.7%). For comparison, the average rate of OECD member countries in this age group is 6.5%.

It is important to offer employment opportunities to young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET), in a timely manner, or ensure their engagement in education, which will enable them to find desirable and dignified jobs in the future.

To this end, it is necessary to strengthen coordination in the field of youth employment and entrepreneurship. A high level of coordination should provide support to young people at the stages of receiving education, transition from school to work, first work experience and early work experience.

Alternative programmes should be developed in close cooperation with the private sector for those young people who need special attention. It is especially important to raise the awareness of these young people and give them more access to modern technologies in order to enable them to maximize their capabilities and find the desired job.

According to international practice, the institution of the youth workers plays a particularly important role in reducing the share of NEET youth.

Expected Outcome 4.3. Reduced inequalities in youth employment and labour force participation

Inequality is one of the main factors characterizing employment. In particular, there is a significant gender gap in labour force participation and employment rates. In Georgia, the share of young men (aged 15-29) in the labour force is 65.4%, whereas the share of young women in the labour force is 34.9%. The gender disparity in the proportion of employed men and women by both sectoral and professional groups is striking.

There is considerable inequality between the regions, as well. 60% of the economically active population live in rural areas, however, only 30% of the rural population are employed. It is also noteworthy that the unemployment rate among IDPs is higher compared to other groups.

To reduce inequality with respect to youth labour force participation rate, youth policy documents need to be updated and targeted assistance programmes should be developed to encourage young women, IDPs and other vulnerable groups to participate in the labour force, to increase their mobility and gain access to new technologies.

Expected Outcome 4.4. Reduced improper youth hiring and employment practices

Improper practices related to youth employment remain a challenge. This is substantiated by the fact that a large proportion of young people do not have written contracts with their employers and their employment relationship is not formalized. Many young people work part-time or are temporarily employed. In addition, internships do not often entitle the individual to any remuneration.

With regard to youth employment practices, it is noteworthy that the main way for them to get a job is through informal channels. According to a survey conducted in 2017, the main source of new staff recruitment (44.9%) for employers in Georgia is mainly relatives, friends and acquaintances.

Structural improvements in employment are needed to ensure decent working conditions for young people, in particular by promoting the sectors which tend not to hire young people through informal channels and which offer them decent jobs tailored to their needs.

Expected Outcome 4.5. Strengthened youth entrepreneurship

Promoting entrepreneurship is an announced priority of the Government of Georgia. In recent years, several strategic documents have been approved and the state has implemented a number of programmes in this area. However, with only few exceptions (for example, “Young Entrepreneur”), these programmes have not been tailored to the needs of young people. Such an undifferentiated approach often leaves young people behind the state support and hinders their economic empowerment.

Although 17% of the Georgian population have tried to start their own business, at least once, the success rate of Georgian enterprises is significantly lower than that of Eastern European countries.

Formal entrepreneurial education is virtually non-existent or very ineffective. Entrepreneurship is not part of the national curriculum at the secondary level of general education. Recently, a number of measures have been taken to introduce entrepreneurial education (training) in vocational educational institutions, but challenges remain. There are gaps in non-formal education as well. According to research, there are few non-formal education programmes that focus on entrepreneurial education. Overall, there is a shortage of problem-solving, responsibility-taking and leadership-oriented programmes.

Among the problems, mentioned by the participants of the consultative meetings conducted in the regions, were the lack of start-up capital, low level of awareness of relevant programmes, lack of knowledge and motivation. Although most of the young people living in the regions have their own land, many of them still prefer to live in the capital and have a paid job, which often does not even cover their rent. Low popularity of agriculture, lack of economic opportunities and means of entertainment in the regions, as well as lack of a long-term perspective, are among the main reasons.

The level of awareness of relevant programmes among young people is low. According to the survey, more than half of the surveyed young people had heard of the programme “Produce in Georgia”, while only 14.7% had heard of the programme “Young Entrepreneur”.

State priorities for economic empowerment of young people should be in line with the United Nations Youth Strategy (Youth 2030), especially with the third priority of the Strategy (economic empowerment through decent work).

In order to promote and boost youth entrepreneurship, it is necessary to make entrepreneurship support programmes more youth-oriented and to mainstream youth issues within the programmes.

In addition, there is a need to develop new, youth-oriented, integrated approaches and programmes promoting entrepreneurship. To this end, it is important to develop a vision of a unified ecosystem that promotes self-employment and entrepreneurship.

There is also a need to strengthen the promotion of entrepreneurial education. It is essential to enable young people to gain early entrepreneurial education and experience and to assist them in the implementation of innovative business ideas. To this end, it is recommended to develop an integrated strategy for entrepreneurship education, to introduce entrepreneurship skills at the school level, to improve the quality of entrepreneurship education in both vocational and higher education, to promote implementation of formal and non-formal entrepreneurship education programmes, and to implement other measures facilitating entrepreneurial activities.

In the field of social entrepreneurship, it is necessary to improve the relevant legal framework, initiate and strengthen support projects, increase public awareness and implement other measures to promote the development of social entrepreneurship.

5. Improving the Management of the National Youth Policy at Central and Municipal Levels

This strategic direction is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17. Youth policy is specific - unlike sectoral policy, it is cross-sectoral. Youth issues cover all sectors (healthcare, social protection, employment, education, agriculture, etc.), and, consequently, all government agencies, which makes the coordination and intensive cooperation between these sectors and agencies in the process of the implementation of activities necessary. Therefore, it is important for the Government of Georgia to develop an integrated Youth Policy based on the principles of youth involvement and cross-sectoral cooperation.

In 2014, the Government of Georgia officially approved the Georgian National Youth Policy Document, and a year later it adopted the Georgian National Youth Policy Development Action Plan (2015-2020), which identifies the programmes, projects and activities to be implemented by the Government of Georgia in accordance with the strategic directions provided by the Georgian National Youth Policy Document.

Studies in the Youth Policy management and implementation of the relevant Action Plan have identified gaps in the management and implementation of the Policy. Studies show that weak inter-agency coordination in the course of implementation of the Youth Policy has had a negative impact on the implementation of the Georgian National Youth Policy Development Action Plan.

For the purpose of improving the management of the National Youth Policy, the state will take appropriate steps to achieve the following outcomes:

Expected Outcome 5.1. Youth policy at the central and municipal levels is built on an evidence- and rights-based approach

As a result of the evaluation of the Georgian National Youth Policy Development Action Plan, it was revealed that the needs of young people were not properly studied and taken into account during the Policy development. According to the results of the evaluation, most of the programmes, projects and activities identified in the Georgian National Youth Policy Development Action Plan are not evidence-based and therefore do not meet the actual needs of young people.

At the municipal level, the development of evidence-based youth policy remains fragmentary. In 2017-2018, with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, a municipal programme - the Youth Policy Development Programme - was implemented, within the frames of which evidence-based youth policy documents were created in 8 municipalities. However, the practice has not been introduced in other municipalities. Empowering municipalities is crucial for planning and implementation of effective youth policy at the municipal level.

In order to introduce evidence-based youth policy development practices, the state should promote the development of an interdisciplinary field of science - youth research - as well as regular research

in youth-related issues. The results and impact of state-administered or state-supported youth programmes should be systematically evaluated. The priorities and programmes envisaged by the youth policy documents (strategy, action plan) should be consistent with the results of the research and the relevant data.

Expected Outcome 5.2. Improved agency-level coordination of the implementation of National Youth Policy

In order to achieve the goals of the Youth Policy, it is necessary to establish management and coordination mechanisms, which ensure the effective involvement of all stakeholders both at the central level and at the regional and municipal levels. According to research, ensuring coordination is problematic in Georgia not only at the level of government agencies, but also at the levels of central and local governments.

For the effective implementation of the Youth Policy, the Government of Georgia should improve the coordination mechanism and ensure regular participation of government agencies in relevant processes.

Expected Outcome 5.3. Youth participation in the development, implementation and monitoring of the Youth Policy and relevant programmes is ensured at the central and municipal levels

Youth participation in the decision-making process related to young people is spontaneous and unsystematic. Consultation meetings with young people at the central level are held only during the development of a specific youth policy document, while at the municipal level, young people are actually left behind this process.

Youth participation in decision-making is an essential element of youth policy management. To ensure youth participation, the Government of Georgia should promote a culture of participatory governance, as well as the establishment of sustainable platforms for conducting structural dialogue with young people and youth organizations, at both central and municipal levels.

Expected Outcome 5.4. Improved implementation and monitoring system of the National Youth Policy

As a result of the evaluation of the Georgian National Youth Policy Development Action Plan, the shortcomings of the policy monitoring system were identified, which had a negative impact on the implementation of the Action Plan. These shortcomings are: the weakness of the monitoring system, which is due to the gaps in the field of research and information (data) collection; a lack of measurable indicators in the Georgian National Youth Policy Document and the Action Plan; low level of involvement of civil society and young people in the monitoring process.

In order to improve the Policy monitoring system, the state should facilitate the development of a unified monitoring framework, through introducing the so-called Youth Index, which will incorporate indicators relevant to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and it should also ensure the involvement of youth and non-governmental organizations in the Policy monitoring process. The Legislative Authority of Georgia should exercise proper oversight of the processes.

IV. Implementation and Monitoring of the Concept

Implementation of the strategic priorities outlined in the Concept will be entrusted to the Central Government of Georgia and local governments will be requested to participate in the process of implementation of the priorities. Achieving the goals set forth in the Concept requires close

coordination and cooperation between the executive authorities of Georgia and other stakeholders engaged in the field of Youth Policy.

The Government of Georgia shall ensure the proper functioning of the relevant mechanism for coordination with stakeholders at the political (inter-agency) and technical (working group) levels. This involves both vertical and horizontal coordination. The LEPL “Georgian Youth Agency” will assist in the development and operation of the coordination mechanism as well as in relevant reporting.

To achieve the outcomes envisaged by the Concept, the LEPL “Georgian Youth Agency” will ensure the development of youth policy documents (strategy, action plan) and submission of these documents to the Government of Georgia for approval.

The LEPL “Georgian Youth Agency” will develop appropriate programmes on issues within its competence, provide stakeholder capacity building and facilitate the development of Youth Policy at the municipal level.

Local governments, within the scope of their authority, shall promote the implementation of the strategic priorities outlined in the Concept, as well as the implementation of the Youth Policy at the municipal level.

The Committee on Sports and Youth Affairs of the Parliament of Georgia is responsible for the annual monitoring of the implementation of the Concept. To this end, the Committee shall hear, at least once a year, the report prepared by the LEPL “Georgian Youth Agency” on the achievement of the objectives set forth in the Concept. After hearing the report, the Committee will prepare and publish relevant conclusions.

The goals set forth in the Concept are expected to be achieved by 2030.