



Long Profile
January 2025

GEORGIA

Cultural Policy Profile

Author: Nina Gunia-Kuznetcova

1.	Cultural policy system.....	5
1.1.	<i>Objectives and main features</i>	5
1.2.	<i>Domestic governance system.....</i>	9
1.2.1.	ORGANISATIONAL ORGANIGRAM.....	9
1.2.2.	NATIONAL AUTHORITIES	10
1.2.3.	REGIONAL AUTHORITIES	11
1.2.4.	LOCAL AUTHORITIES	11
1.2.5.	MAIN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS	12
1.2.6.	TRANSVERSAL CO-OPERATION.....	14
1.3.	<i>Cultural institutions.....</i>	15
1.3.1.	OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS	15
1.3.2.	DATA ON SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS.....	17
1.3.3.	PUBLIC CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: TRENDS AND STRATEGIES	18
1.4.	<i>International cooperation.....</i>	21
1.4.1.	PUBLIC ACTORS AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY	21
1.4.2.	EUROPEAN / INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND PROGRAMMES.....	24
1.4.3.	NGO'S AND DIRECT PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION.....	25
2.	Current cultural affairs	28
2.1.	<i>Key developments.....</i>	28
2.2.	<i>Cultural rights and ethics.....</i>	31
2.3.	<i>Role of artists and cultural professionals</i>	33
2.4.	<i>Digital policy and developments.....</i>	36
2.5.	<i>Cultural and social diversity.....</i>	39
2.5.1.	NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE	39
2.5.2.	EDUCATION DIVERSITY	42
2.5.3.	MEDIA PLURALISM AND CONTENT DIVERSITY	43
2.5.4.	LANGUAGE.....	48
2.5.5.	GENDER.....	49
2.5.6.	DISABILITY.....	51

2.6.	<i>Culture and social inclusion</i>	53
2.7.	<i>Societal impact of arts</i>	54
2.8.	<i>Cultural sustainability</i>	56
2.9.	<i>Other main cultural policy issues</i>	57
3.	Cultural and creative sectors	61
3.1.	<i>Heritage</i>	61
3.2.	<i>Archives and libraries</i>	64
3.3.	<i>Performing arts</i>	66
3.4.	<i>Visual arts and crafts</i>	68
3.5.	<i>Cultural arts and creative industries</i>	70
3.5.1.	GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS	70
3.5.2.	BOOKS AND PRESS	73
3.5.3.	AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA	76
3.5.4.	MUSIC	79
3.5.5.	DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES.....	80
3.5.6.	CULTURAL AND CREATIVE TOURISM	82
4.	Law and legislation	85
4.1.	<i>General legislation</i>	85
4.1.1.	CONSTITUTION	85
4.1.2.	ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS	85
4.1.3.	SOCIAL SECURITY FRAMEWORKS	86
4.1.4.	TAX LAWS	88
4.1.5.	LABOUR LAWS.....	89
4.1.6.	COPYRIGHT PROVISIONS.....	90
4.1.7.	DATA PROTECTION LAWS.....	92
4.1.8.	LANGUAGE LAWS.....	93
4.1.9.	OTHER AREAS OF GENERAL LEGISLATION	94
4.2.	<i>Legislation on culture</i>	95
4.2.1.	GENERAL LEGISLATION ON CULTURE	95

4.2.2.	LEGISLATION ON CULTURE AND NATURAL HERITAGE	100
4.2.3.	LEGISLATION ON PERFORMANCE AND CELEBRATION	101
4.2.4.	LEGISLATION ON VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS.....	102
4.2.5.	LEGISLATION ON BOOKS AND PRESS.....	102
4.2.6.	LEGISLATION ON AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA	104
4.2.7.	LEGISLATION ON DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES	105
5.	Arts and cultural education.....	107
5.1.	<i>Policy and institutional overview.....</i>	<i>107</i>
5.2.	<i>Arts in schools</i>	<i>108</i>
5.3.	<i>Higher arts and cultural education.....</i>	<i>109</i>
5.4.	<i>Out-of-school arts and cultural education</i>	<i>111</i>
5.5.	<i>Vocational and professional training</i>	<i>112</i>
6.	Cultural participation and consumption.....	113
6.1.	<i>Policies and programmes</i>	<i>113</i>
6.2.	<i>Trends and figures in cultural participation.....</i>	<i>114</i>
6.3.	<i>Trends and figures in household expenditure.....</i>	<i>116</i>
6.4.	<i>Culture and civil society</i>	<i>117</i>
7.	Financing and support	119
7.1.	<i>Public funding.....</i>	<i>119</i>
7.1.1.	INDICATORS.....	119
7.1.2.	EXPENDITURE ON GOVERNMENT LEVEL.....	120
7.1.3.	EXPENDITURE PER SECTOR	121
7.2.	<i>Support programmes.....</i>	<i>123</i>
7.2.1.	STRATEGIES, PROGRAMMES AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT	123
7.2.2.	ARTIST'S FUNDS	124
7.2.3.	GRANTS, AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS	124
7.2.4.	SUPPORT TO PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATIONS OR UNIONS.....	125
7.3.	<i>Private funding.....</i>	<i>127</i>

1. Cultural policy system

1.1. Objectives and main features

The principles of democratization and decentralization of culture, support for cultural diversity and preservation of the national identity, which forms the basis of contemporary cultural policy, trace back to the main objectives of the cultural sphere of the First Republic of Georgia (1918-1921).

In the process of regaining independence in the 1990s, Georgia declared the continuity of the ideas of the First Republic. The first attempts at a theoretical generalization of the cultural practices of 1991-2001 and the adoption of a homogenous cultural policy document were made in 2001.

After a strongly centralized cultural management system (2003-2011), with local interventionist and entrepreneurial experiments, the expert methods used in 2013 marked a turning point in the development of cultural policy: the Commission for Cultural Policy Development produced a cultural policy concept based on the 2005 UNESCO Convention (although the concept has not been formally adopted).

With this background, under the Decree N 303 of the Government of Georgia, a modern and long-term document stating the Georgian national cultural policy, "Culture Strategy 2025", was approved on July 1, 2016 and provided such a strategic document for the first time in Georgian state history.

The strategy is an attempt to select a cultural policy model that will aid its systematic and sustainable development. It consists of the following elements:

- Strategic long-term planning
- Integrated approaches
- Mobilizing resources
- Monitoring
- Vision based on the balance of the global and local

The strategy development process was implemented in close cooperation with the European Union and was assessed positively by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

The Culture Strategy aims to define a long-term vision on the development of culture and the creative sector in order to underline their value for and importance to national identity, social unity and sustainable development of the country.

Based on the consultation, 8 main Strategic Goals were identified:

1. Awareness Raising and Education
2. Access to Culture and Cultural Diversity
3. Culture and Other Key Areas
4. Funding of Culture
5. Cultural Infrastructure and New Technologies
6. Creative Industries
7. Internationalization of Culture
8. Principles of the Governance of Culture

Achieving these goals will create an environment in which:

- The value of culture and creativity is recognized by society, and they are integrated into every level of education;
- Culture is accessible to every member of society, regardless of location, and cultural diversity is protected and maintained;
- Culture and creativity are seen as an integral part of the country's development, which creates additional innovative opportunities to strengthen other sectors and contributes to the sustainability and well-being of Georgia;
- Cultural employment is attractive and adequately valued;
- Cultural infrastructure meets people's needs and provides them with modern, high-quality products and services;
- Funding for culture is stable, and funding mechanisms are diverse and transparent;
- Cultural policy is research-based; an open and transparent political process involves professionals and a broad cross-section of society;
- Culture and creativity are important sources of jobs, economic growth, and innovation; contribute to a successful environment for individual creative expression.

2021-2024

In 2021, the Georgian Dream government reorganized the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and in 2022, the Ministry declared the following goals in the State Budget:

- Public policy development and programme management in the culture, sport and youth field
- Infrastructure development
- Protection of cultural heritage and enhancement of the museum system
- Promotion of culture

During 2021 and 2022, the personnel policy of the new Ministry underwent significant changes, especially in the reorganization of the museum management system, which led to many lawsuits from the professional staff who had been dismissed. Since 2021, the Ministry is, in practice, pursuing a selective paternalistic policy and re-centralizing a system that has been relatively decentralized since 2012. No longer relevant are:

- Decentralization of cultural funding, creation of an independent Culture Fund;
- Transparency and “expert method” policies practiced in the years 2013-2018.

In 2023, the Youth Department was separated from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and as of today it is the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

The sharply undemocratic working methods of the Ministry have caused protests by artists of different disciplines. The Ministry has been called the most hushed department.

Background

1950-1960 - Georgia is one of the republics of the Soviet Union, which was formed after the Soviet Russia occupied and annexed the First Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921).

1964 – 1981 – the so-called stagnation of the Brezhnev period is characterized by the development of cultural infrastructure and the building of professional human resources. While the grip of Stalin's totalitarian system (1929-1953) was loosening, conflict was brewing in Georgia between the communist system and supporters of Georgian national culture.

1974-1990 – the formation of a national liberation movement, which culminated in the violent suppression of anti-Soviet demonstrations by the Soviet army on April 9, 1989. During this period the national culture was redefined as the basis of national identity.

April 9, 1991 - the adoption of the Declaration of Independence of Georgia.

The post-Soviet period in the history and cultural development of Georgia is extremely complex:

The first stage (1991-1994) - A period of rebuilding an independent Georgian state characterized by contradictions and dramatic events. Changes were initiated in the framework of the persisting Soviet style system. The model of cultural policy chosen by the first national government was aimed at creating a separate Georgian policy for culture.

1991 -1992- the control lost over the South-Ossetian Autonomous Territory; the Tbilisi War; overthrow of the government of Gamsakhurdia.

1992-1994 - Edward Shevardnadze came to power (March 1992). A period of war in Abkhazia and devastation when the entire state policy was aimed at struggling against centrifugal trends and could not pursue a target-oriented cultural policy;

After the fall of Sukhumi (27.09.1993) 300 000 Georgian refugees were expelled from Abkhazia, where even today the Georgian cultural heritage is being systematically destroyed and the right of the Georgian population to receive education in their native language is being violated.

The second stage (1994-2003):

1994 -99 - a period of formation of state structures in the territory controlled by the state with a neutrally homogenous policy; formation of a presidential republic, adoption of the Constitution (1995), cooperation with the Council of Europe, UNESCO and other international organizations,

2000-2003 - a period anticipating the foundation of a decentralization policy. Support for the arts was the extent of the reach of state policies.

The third period (2003-2012):

23.11.2003 - Rose Revolution.

The third "revolutionary and post-revolutionary" (2003-2007) phase saw the recentralization of cultural policy development supported by legislative / constitutional changes and the extension and unification of the cultural infrastructure.

The period from 2008-2012 is marked by an intensification of centralized power, a weakening of self-governing institutions, self-censorship of the mass media and, consequently, a growth in the role of the state structures (Ministry of Culture and Cultural Heritage) in financing and administration of cultural policy.

August 2008 - The Russia-Georgia five-day war, which ended with the occupation of 20% of Georgian territory and the appearance of a new wave of refugees, provoked the use of culture as an image tool to demonstrate democratic values.

The fourth period (2012 - 2024) - The era of the Georgian Dream party:

2012-2014 - In the first period of the Georgian Dream's ruling (the period of cohabitation of two political forces) the cultural policy was homogeneous.

In 2014, the EU-Georgia Association Agreement was signed.

2015-2017 - the first Culture Strategy 2025 was developed and adopted with EU participation.

2018-2020 - constitutional reforms and transition to a parliamentary republic, the sphere of culture was administered by a unified Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

2021 - The Georgian Dream government reorganized the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

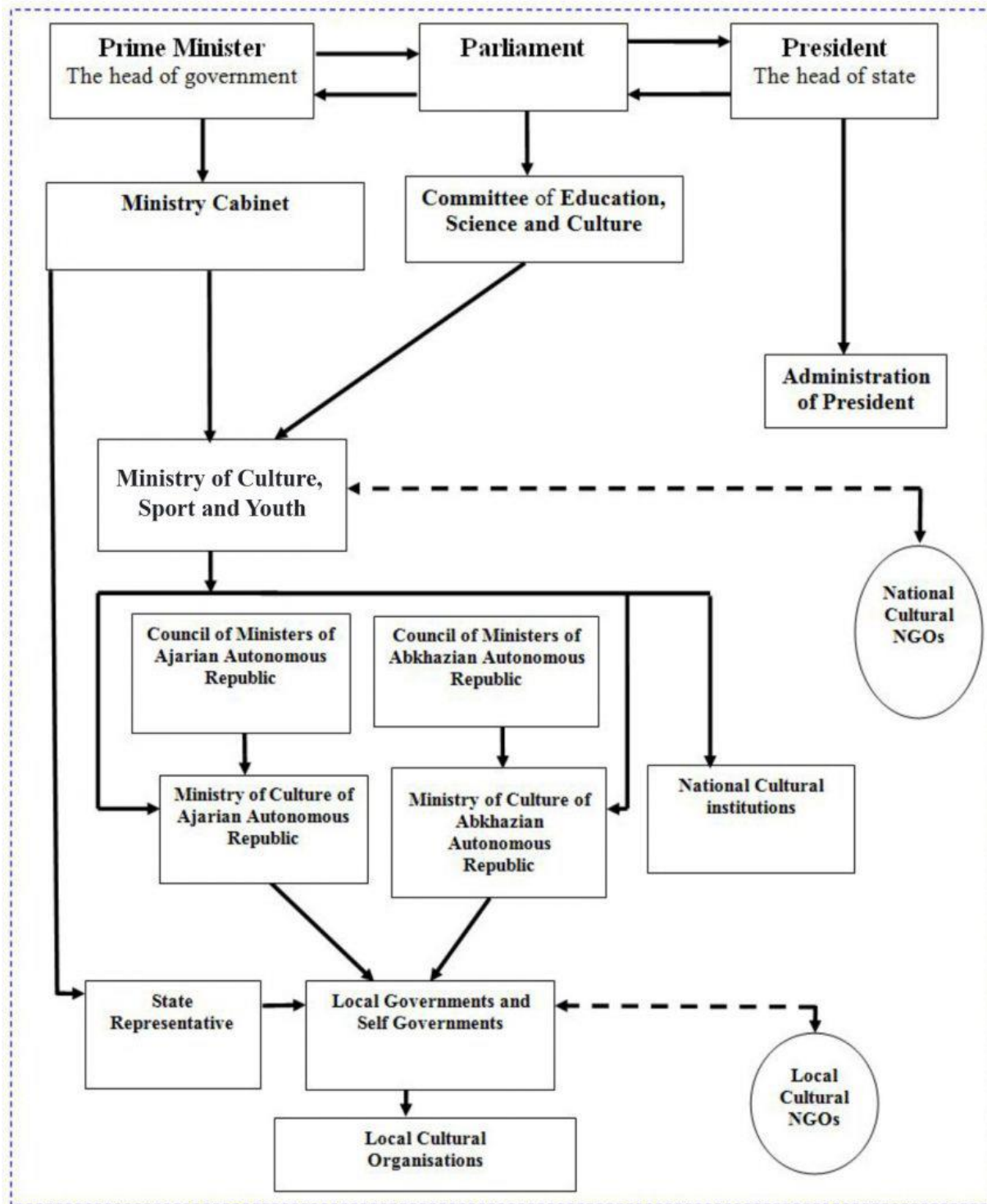
2022-2024 - Emergence of anti-democratic and nepotistic tendencies in cultural policy.

2023 - On 8 November 2023, the European Commission issued an official recommendation to grant EU candidate status to Georgia, which was confirmed on 14 December 2023.

2024 - Adoption of the "*Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence*" in May, suspension of the EU accession process. The problem of the legitimacy of the October 26 parliamentary elections.

1.2. Domestic governance system

1.2.1. ORGANISATIONAL ORGANIGRAM



1.2.2. NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Georgia is a unitary parliamentary republic.

On October 15, 2010, a new *Constitution of Georgia* was adopted, which changed the system from a presidential state model to a mixed parliamentary-presidential model. In March 2018, amendments were passed approving the final transition to a parliamentary republic. As a result, the role of the Parliament of Georgia has increased, especially in relation to the executive branch, which has become more accountable to the legislative branch. With the reform of the Parliamentary Regulations, the functions of the Parliament were further expanded and new mechanisms were introduced to carry out legislative, supervisory and representative activities of the Parliament.

The system of administration includes the following branches of authority:

Parliament – the legislative power; the parliamentary committee for culture (established in 2020 after the Parliamentary Elections) is responsible for legislation and supervision of the executive power (Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia)

National government – the executive power; Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia (restored under this name in 2021)

The Ministry is responsible for the development of cultural policy.

The Ministry has undergone the following changes over the last 30 years:

- 1990-2003- Ministry of Culture
- 2004-2010 - Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sports
- 2010-2017- Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection
- 2017-2018 - Ministry of Culture and Sport
- 2018-2020 – the Ministry of Culture and Sport was integrated with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.
- 2021 - The Georgian Dream government reorganized the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.
- Since 2023, the Youth Department was separated from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and as of today it is the Ministry of Culture and Sports.
- It was announced that after the 2024 parliamentary elections, the Ministry of Culture and Sports Department will be separated into two individual ministries.

The Ministry includes several agencies responsible for various areas of cultural policy:

The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia (<http://heritagesites.ge/>) was created in 2008.

Two Creative Europe desks - culture and media - were established at the Ministry in 2016.

In 2017, this new government organization Creative Georgia was created at the Ministry: Creative Georgia is a LEPL (Legal Entity of Public Law), that focuses on the commercialisation of the creative industries' sector and supporting its sustainable development. <http://creativegeorgia.ge/>

Advisory bodies or councils: In the Georgian system of cultural administration there is no institute or independent arts council. Advisory bodies – branch committees – were established at the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia. These committees are composed of freelance experts but remain largely inactive. Small grants are made available to ensure public participation in the implementation of cultural policy.

There are no special bodies such as councils, committees or working groups that facilitate the representation and participation of national and cultural minorities or groups of immigrants in the cultural processes. The only authority that indirectly addresses these issues (in the context of the protection of the general rights of minorities) is the Centre for Tolerance at the Office of the Ombudsman of Georgia.

1.2.3. REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

In line with Georgian legislation, the governments of Abkhazia and Ajaria Autonomous Republics have their own Ministries of Culture (which are responsible for programmes within their respective administrative borders). The Ministry of Education and Culture of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Ministry of Education Culture and Sport of Ajaria Autonomous Republic are under dual subordination – they are accountable to local governments and to the central authority. However, in view of the war and the 12-year conflict, the de-facto Abkhazian authorities independently control the cultural policy in the territory of Abkhazia. Similarly, the Ministry of Culture of the Ajaria Autonomous Republic pursues the cultural policy, in the context of the decentralisation policy, declared by the Georgian government within its administrative borders.

The period 2008-2011 (from the early presidential elections on January 5th 2008 until now) was marked by intensification of centralisation and a weakening of self-governing institutions – e.g. the Ajara Autonomous Republic's cultural policy is the embodiment of the central authority's policy.

This trend has continued during the period of the ruling of the Georgian Dream Party - since 2012. However, the activities of the Ministry of Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara are much more transparent and qualified than the national ministry.

1.2.4. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Municipalities of Georgia represent the lower-level administrative units in Georgia, where local self-government is exercised. As of 2020, there are 69 municipalities in Georgia, which are united in 9 provinces, which in turn are de facto units.

Five municipalities have been occupied by Russia since 2008 and it is not possible to implement the state cultural policy on their territory.

The local authorities of administration (municipalities) and self-government (sakrebulo – city or village councils) bear responsibility for cultural activity in the regions.

The structural units of local authorities are the departments of culture, cultural heritage and protection of monuments at the local governmental level. Most of the institutions of culture (theatres, clubs, museums, libraries, centres and houses of culture, art and music schools) responsible to the local bodies of administration and self-government have legal NGO-status although they receive state-municipal financing.

Apart from the capital and a few large cities, municipal funding remains rather small and insufficient for cultural development.

Central/national power in the regions is realized through the institute of Presidential "rtsmunebuli" (the governor / president's attorney until 2013). There are 10 rtsmunebulis throughout Georgia. The Governor's Office includes the committee for culture institutions and programmes of regional importance. The Rtsmunebuli Office is financed from the central budget (the role of the rtsmunebuli - governor (the president's confidant in each region) is defined in the new Constitution of Georgia of 15 October 2010). In many respects, the President's institutes - "rtsmunebuli"- duplicate the functions of the bodies of local administration and self-government and due to a trend of centralisation in recent years the powers of the rtsmunebuli have been further reinforced.

In some cases there are conflicting priorities and approaches taken by the national cultural policy and by the policies of local self-government which can result in the lack of a coherent system for cultural support.

From 2013, Following the amended Constitution of Georgia, the institute of presidential "rtsmunebuli" (plenipotentiary) has been changed and turned into the institute of governmental "rtsmunebuli" (Resolution No. 308 of the Government of Georgia dated November 29, 2013 "On Approval of the Statute of the State Rtsmunebuli – Governor").

Now it is subordinate to the Government and not the President but maintains the same function of the centralised administration. Local authorities lacking legislative and financial levers for implementation of their own cultural policy instead implement the cultural policy of the national government.

To further the centralisation of cultural management in the regions, so called centres of culture (with the legal status of LEPL) were created. Institutions of culture (theatres, clubs, museums, libraries, centres and houses of culture, art and music schools) subordinate to the local administrations and self-governments are united in the so called centres of culture – the umbrella organisations with specific status and state-municipal financing.

The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection (in all forms of its existence) promotes initiatives in cultural animation in the regions in the framework of the cultural support programme; the programme provides support for traditional folk holidays, restoration and popularisation of national holidays, and promotion of tourism.

Despite the collaboration of local authorities with the national government, most theatres chose to come under the national Ministry of Culture rather than remain under the municipalities because of their small financial resources.

1.2.5. MAIN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

In the broad range of Georgian public organizations, the share of the nongovernmental sector in the field of culture is rather small, generally due to the low level of financing of culture and non-diversified sources. This has resulted in a dependence on the financial support of the state. On the background of a stable fall

in international funding of culture and possible termination of state financing, some organizations have been abolished or reorganized. This process intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The “Cultural Strategy 2025” includes general issues regarding cooperation with NGOs; however, the state in addition to the programmes supporting thematic competitions and free projects, does not make adequate steps in the direction of creating the necessary environment for institutional development of the NGO sector. This is especially related to the lack of proper regulation of benefits and financing diversification issues.

The 2015 Memorandum (the practice of cooperation of 36 NGOs with the Ministry) has institutionalized civil society participation in the field of culture and creation of the policies set out by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection to promote, create, distribute and provide access to cultural goods and services.

However, the Cultural Action Plan for the 2017-2018 does not specifically describe the projects for cooperation with non-governmental sectors.

The creative unions established during the Soviet period have lost most of their assets and influence, and trade unions have few resources. Only some of them (the Union of Architects, Union of Cinematographers and Georgian Copyright Association (GCA)) continue to be leaders in their fields.

The most influential are NGOs that collaborate with international donors and networks and play an advisory or lobbying role in the area of culture.

These include the Georgian Arts & Culture Centre (GACC), CCA - Centre of Contemporary Art - Tbilisi, Propaganda network, Georgian Craft Association, Artisterium Association, ICOM Georgian National Committee, ICOMOS Georgian National Committee, YTA UNION - OISTAT Georgian National Center, Culture and Management Laboratory, Georgian Museums Association, NNLE “Gift”, Georgian Libraries Association, Georgian Blue Shield, “Hamkar”, Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association, Prometheus-Cinema Centre, Caucasian House-Centre for Cultural Relations, etc.

Since 2022, several nongovernmental organizations have been established to defend the rights of cultural representatives and artists, such as:

[N\(N\)LP 'Gildia' \(the Guild\)](#) - a joint group of workers aiming to create decent working conditions in the cultural and media sector. Gildia's objectives are to provide highly qualified legal services, to create a democratic platform for the struggle for workers' rights, and to carry out research, education and information activities. The organization defends the interests of artists in court on issues such as copyright and labour rights.

[The Trade Union of Scientific, Educational and Cultural Workers of Georgia](#), which has defended in court the rights of dozens of museum employees dismissed from their positions as part of the reorganization of the National Museum (and the reason for dismissal indicated in almost all dismissal orders stated the lack of competence of the employee).

[GFI - Georgian Film Institute](#) -the Georgian Film Institute's primary objective revolves around the advancement, bolstering, and advocacy of contemporary Georgian film. GFI safeguards the interests of film professionals, ensuring the alignment of their collective objectives concerning both domestic and international processes and institutions.

[The Professional Union of Georgian Musicians](#) is a full member of the International Federation of Musicians (FIM). Its main activity is to protect the rights of musicians, and to initiate and advocate important legislative changes in this sphere.

[Culture for Democracy Public Initiative](#), which aims to fight for democracy, independence, European integration and development of open civil society in Georgia.

1.2.6. TRANSVERSAL CO-OPERATION

Cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia and other ministries is determined by their participation in public cultural development. Co-operation is regulated under the Law on Structure and Procedures of Executive Power.

The ministries responsible for some aspects of regulation / management of culture are:

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the implementation of reforms in higher, vocational and secondary education, including legislative reform, and accordingly is responsible for education policies. The Ministry also implements the state policy on the official Georgian language.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the development and implementation of a single foreign policy, including foreign cultural policy. The National Committee of UNESCO at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia coordinates the ministries, institutions and agencies engaged in the sphere of culture.

The Ministry of Economic Development (Departments for Tourism, Construction and Privatisation) is responsible for the strategy on privatisation and attraction of subsidies (including for the cultural sector); for tourism development (including cultural tourism); creation of a favourable investment environment for cultural industries; and provision of the official system for the preservation of cultural heritage in the areas of construction, spatial planning and cultural landscaping.

The Ministry of Finance, like the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection is responsible for execution of the budget.

The functions of the *Ministry of Justice* regarding the cultural and natural heritage are limited to the activities of its subordinate entities of public law:

- The National Archive maintains the documents of cultural heritage value and ensures their inventory, identification and rehabilitation.
- The National Agency of Public Register is authorised to register the title to ownership for all immovable assets and among them cultural heritage monuments as well.

The Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources (the MoE) manages the territories of environmental value, which apart from valuable natural resources contain historic monuments and sites. More importantly, according to environmental legislation, the World Natural Heritage sites and Protected

Landscapes are part of the legislative system of nature protection, therefore they fall under the direct management of the MoE. Thus, the MoE is involved in the protection of cultural heritage, although this is not its direct responsibility.

On the regional level, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia cooperates with the local authorities, the office of rtsmunebuli / governor and municipal authorities in the form of methodological consultations, concrete projects or in the context of collaboration in respect of a budget-funded institution or monument of culture.

On 21 November 2014, a working group for reviewing infrastructure needs was established by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, with the Minister as Chairman. The Interdepartmental Working Group is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Finance, Economy and Sustainable Development and Tbilisi City Hall.

In 2016, in the process of developing the Georgian Culture Strategy 2025, an interagency committee and a working group have been established aiming to involve all government agencies in the development of the culture strategy document and its implementation.

The 2017-2018 Interagency Action Plan for Implementation of the Culture Strategy was developed as well.

The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia, which was reconstituted in 2021 and has been operating as the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Georgia since 2023, despite promising declarative statements, had not published a continuation of the Action Plan until the parliamentary elections on October 26, 2024, much less announced the development of a further Action Plan.

1.3. Cultural institutions

1.3.1. OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

According to Georgian legislation, cultural organisations (as for other organisations) may have three types of legal status – state, private commercial legal entities and non-profit making (non-state) organisations.

The higher art schools, cultural heritage sites, archives, libraries, museums, most theatres (only a few are NNLEs), symphony orchestras, 3 folk ensembles and the centre, the Writers' House, and the Cinema Centre are subordinated to the state (central and municipal authorities.).

Architecture, design, fashion, handicrafts, art galleries, TV and radio (except 2 public broadcasters), film studios, publishing houses, production and advertising firms, gaming, audio and video, multimedia and club industries, contemporary and electronic music fields are privately owned.

The nongovernmental sector more or less covers the areas of cultural heritage and cultural industry. Most of the intellectual resources are concentrated in this sector, but in terms of infrastructure it is still quite weak.

Cultural infrastructure was severely damaged during the hostilities of the 1990s and the economic crisis. Uncontrolled privatization in the 2000s destroyed many cultural heritage sites and disrupted the integrity of the historical city network. At the same time, the restoration and renovation of facilities of national importance (state theatres, higher art schools, churches, etc.) was carried out in cooperation with the state, international donors and the private sector. Often the share of the private sector far exceeded that of public investment.

Today, the issue of cultural infrastructure is still acute and budget funds cannot cover its needs.

"The cultural infrastructure dissemination in Georgia according to the CDIS survey is 0.312. This final result of 0.312 is low for the average indicator of spaces designed for museums, libraries, exhibitions and performing arts in Georgia" (Source: UNESCO "Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS) Georgia", 2017; EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme).

Therefore, in the Culture Strategy 2025 approved in 2016, this issue is given a strategic role: "Cultural Infrastructure and New Technologies."

Objective: The development and effective management of the cultural infrastructure contributes to producing and disseminating high-quality cultural products and services, preserving cultural properties and improving the working environment in accordance with international standards."

In 2021-2024, there were no significant changes in the legal status of most cultural institutions.

In general, the number of non-governmental sector organizations has increased, especially those engaged in protecting and defending the rights of representatives of the cultural sphere. The reason for this trend is the anti-democratic and unprofessional policy of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Georgia and its leadership, which consists of law enforcers. The need for human rights organizations in the cultural sphere arose after the mass and inadequate dismissals of experienced professionals from state institutions of culture and science.

1.3.2. DATA ON SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Table 1: Cultural institutions, by sector and domain

Domain	Cultural institutions (subdomains)	Public sector		Private sector	
		Number (2020)	Trend last 5 years (In %)	Number (2020)	Trend last 5 years (In %)
Cultural heritage	Cultural heritage sites (recognised)	7915		-	
	Complex monuments of national and world value	15	+6.6%	-	
Museums	Museum institutions	18*		216	+
Archives	Archive institutions	2**		-	
Visual arts	Public art galleries / exhibition halls	1***		not available	
Performing arts	Scenic and stable spaces for theatre	29		23	+15%
	Concert houses	5		-	
	Theatre companies	29		23	+15%
	Dance and ballet companies	5		1	+100%
	Symphonic orchestras	4		-	
Libraries	Libraries	1****		824****	
Audiovisual	Cinemas	1		-	
	Broadcasting organisations	2		not available	
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses	2		not available	
Other (please explain)	Child musical, art and painting schools	10		not available	
	Higher education institutions	5			

Source(s): State Department for Statistics,

* 12 museums and 4 house-museums are part of the Georgian National Museum

** Archives are under the Ministry of Justice

*** The National Gallery is part of the Georgian National Museum up to 2021

**** 2 opera and ballet theatres and 3 state folk song and dance ensembles subordinate to the state

***** "Tbilisi Modern Ballet" subordinates to Tbilisi Municipality

**** The National Library is under of the Parliament of Georgia.

***** From 2009, the information about other libraries has no longer been available from administrative sources

There is no data on private cultural institutions, only incomplete and fragmented information. For example, there is data on private broadcasters, and some on museums and galleries.

However, statistics on the private sector of the other domains shown in the table are mostly unavailable.

The Ministry of Culture Sports and Youth controls 18 state museums (including the National Museum of Georgia, which includes 12 museums, 4 house museums, 1 National Gallery and 2 research centres), 29 theatres, 5 concert halls, 14 educational institutions (of which 4 are higher institutions and 10 colleges and schools of art, ballet, music and fine art), LEPL Giorgi Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Monument Protection, Films, Folklore, Theatres, Classical Music Centres, National Music Centre, Writers' House, LEPL Circassian (Adyge) Cultural Centre; LEPL- Tbilisi State Chamber Orchestra; and LEPL Gori Women's Chamber Choir.

The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia under the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth deals with cultural and historical monuments and archaeological sites.

Some institutions are managed by other state institutions, e.g. the Ministry of Justice manages the archive institutions, the Parliament of Georgia manages the National Library, and 14 state reserves are managed by the Agency of Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources.

Libraries, culture houses, some theatres, museums and music schools have been transferred to municipalities.

According to data from 2008, there were 824 libraries in Georgia (without data from the Republic of Adjara). Since 2009, information about libraries is no longer available from administrative sources.

New data (in 2022-2024) on cultural institutions are not available due to the closed nature of the Ministry, as well as due to the lack of official statistics.

1.3.3. PUBLIC CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: TRENDS AND STRATEGIES

Since 1999, in compliance with the *Law on Legal Entities under the Public Law*, the main institutions of culture have been re-registered and established as legal entities.

In 2021, 77 cultural institutions were subordinated to the new Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia. Some state institutions – libraries, archives, and some museums fall under the responsibility of the Parliament, Ministry of Justice and municipalities.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, under the consolidated Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the funding for culture was reduced in the development programmes and free projects.

After the re-establishment of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia in 2021, some state associations have undergone changes (for example 4 museums have been excluded from the structure of the National Museum and now subordinate directly to the Ministry).

There is an example of transition from private to public ownership - the Black Sea Arena was handed over to the state by the Cartu Foundation.

State-run foundations do not exist in Georgia. Despite the urgent need for public foundations to accumulate funds for the development and support of culture and the constant debates on this issue, there has been no adequate legislative activity in this area. All private donations go through foundations with the status of nongovernmental, non-profit organizations.

All private donations for the public organizations and institutions – legal persons under the public law subordinated to the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia of Georgia - go through the foundations with the status of non-governmental non-profit organizations.

The long-term cooperation between public institutions of culture and private sponsors is somewhat irregular and unofficial. One of the few sponsors regularly cooperating with key organizations of national importance is the Georgian foundation Cartu which has financed large projects such as the rehabilitation of several theatres of national importance and institutions of higher cultural education.

Other important examples of cooperation between the state and international foundations are the Soros Foundation, the British Council in Georgia, the U.S. Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP), etc. These initiatives often encourage participation of NGOs and cultural societies to cooperate in projects with central or local authorities as a third partner.

Successful examples of public-private partnerships or collaborations (involving state, municipalities and NGOs) are the traditional international film festival "Prometheus", Theatre Festival Gift, Tbilisi Jazz Festival, and other international events, which attract many visitors and sponsors.

A special mention should be given to the Fund for Preservation and Rescue of Georgian Historical Monuments, which is the only privately funded donor organization active in the cultural heritage field since 2004. The Fund has the biggest share in financing the restoration, inventory and rehabilitation of listed properties. In 2004-2009, the Fund financed more than 430 projects all over the country, including 390 Orthodox churches (after the restoration most of these churches reopened). The archaeological works have been implemented on the most important sites in Georgia and abroad (e.g. Ghalia Monastery in Cyprus). The Fund also provided financing to equip conservation research laboratories at the Restoration Faculty of the Academy of Fine Arts and the Nokalakevi museum-reserve. The Fund actively cooperates with the MoC,

the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation and the Patriarchate of Georgia to define the priorities and agree to the annual list of monuments for rehabilitation.

In 2021, the reconstituted Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth started the detrimental practice of blocking the submission of projects of persons (scientists) disloyal to the ruling party, employed in legal persons of public law (LEPLs), or entire organizations (LEPLs), to various funds, both national and international. It also suspended the awarded/signed grants (e.g. blocked the grant received by the National Museum staff from the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, blocked the projects of the Chubinashvi Research Centre and blocked them from sending their grant applications to foundations., suspended bureaucratic processes for projects that succeeded in the competition of an independent organization - Film Centre, failed to provide documentation for international co-financing in order to prevent/disrupt co-productions).

1.4. International cooperation

1.4.1. PUBLIC ACTORS AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Since regaining independence, Georgia has been active in working with international organizations and is a member of the UN, UNESCO, Council of Europe, European Union, World Tourism Organization, ICCROM, and GUAM.

Georgia has signed various agreements in the sphere of culture with EU countries, CIS countries (Commonwealth of Independent States), USA, China, Israel, India, etc. (100 countries).

The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia (in all its modifications) has developed and implemented bilateral and multilateral foreign cultural policies.

In the Culture Strategy 2025 the seventh strategic goal is "Internationalization of Culture".

7.1. Objective: The internationalization of the cultural sector helps the development of culture, increases the nation's export capacity and empowers its image.

Tasks:

- To ensure harmonization of cultural sector legislation with ratified international norms and its approximation to EU legislation;
- To strengthen cooperation between Georgia and other countries through bilateral/multilateral agreements and/or joint programmes;
- To support the internationalization of Georgia's cultural sector and intensify efforts to establish it in the European and international markets.
- To strengthen international cooperation to support the efforts of creative industries to join international online platforms, export their products and increase the public accessibility of international online platforms;
- To take into account the importance of cultural and creative resources in terms of foreign trade policy, international relations and diplomacy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also has a responsibility for international cultural cooperation which is administered by its Department for Foreign Economic and Humanitarian Relations. This Department is responsible for some aspects of cultural policy and the protection of Georgian cultural heritage abroad. After 2008, the cultural policy of the separatist governments in the breakaway "independent" republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been openly nationalistic and anti-Georgian. In particular, this relates to the immovable monuments of cultural heritage and teaching and use of the Georgian language. The Georgian state has opposed this policy using legal measures (*Law on Occupied Territories*, and financial tools (financing of programmes for reintegration and integration, promotion of culture of national minorities).

In the joint strategic priorities of the Ministries of Culture and Monument Protection and Internal Affairs of Georgia for 2011-2014, special attention was paid to the active involvement of UNESCO in the problems of protection of cultural heritage and the education sphere in the Georgian territories occupied by Russia.

The Ministry of Culture (in all its modifications) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperate closely on Euro- Atlantic integration. Georgia and the European Union signed the *Association Agreement*, including a deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA), on June 27th 2014 in the margins of the European Council meeting in Brussels. Chapter 17 of the *EU-Georgia Association Agreement* is devoted to cooperation in the cultural field and is concretely mentioned in Article 362 and 363:

Article 362: " The Parties will promote cultural cooperation taking duly into account the principles enshrined in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005. The Parties will seek a regular policy dialogue in areas of mutual interest, including the development of cultural industries in the EU and Georgia. Cooperation between the Parties will foster intercultural dialogue, including through the participation of the cultural sector and civil society from the EU and Georgia".

Article 363: "The Parties shall concentrate their cooperation in a number of fields:

- Cultural cooperation and cultural exchanges;
- Mobility of art and artists and strengthening of the capacity of the cultural sector;
- Intercultural dialogue;
- Dialogue on cultural policy; and
- Cooperation in international fora such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe, inter alia, in order to foster cultural diversity, and preserve and valorise cultural and historical heritage."

Significant financing and support of international cultural cooperation was implemented through the international funds and institutions, such as the Open Society Georgia Foundation (Soros Foundation), South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the British Council Georgia Office, the Alexander Dumas Centre of French Culture, the French Institute, the Goethe Institute, and USAID. Each of the listed funds contributes to the development of public participation and cultural diplomacy according to their priorities.

In 2007 - 2011 the "Georgian Seasons" programme was organized and financed from the presidential and governmental reserve funds at the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection. The state undertook liability for the regular participation in such prestigious international events as the Venice Biennale, Prague International Festival, Frankfurt Book Fair, Berlinale, Istanbul Biennale, Edinburgh Festival and others.

Since 2012, the programme has evolved into the Strategic Goal "Internationalization of Culture", which is funded by the Ministry of Culture.

Before the pandemic, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, through the International Education Centre established in 2014, actively promoted the participation of young people in international exchange programmes, including in the field of culture.

Among significant international cultural events, Georgia's participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2018 as a guest of honour is worth mentioning.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, which significantly affected international activities, one of the most important events on the road to European integration was Europolia 2023, a festival of European culture dedicated to Georgia. Within the framework of the festival, a big presentation of Georgian culture took place in the Kingdom of Belgium from October to December 2023.

2023-2024

A separate dedicated culture committee in the Georgian Parliament has been organizing various international events since 2022:

In 2023, for the first time in the history of German and Georgian parliamentarism, a joint meeting of the Culture Committee of the Parliament of Georgia and the Culture and Media Committee of the German Bundestag was held within the framework of a visit to the Federal Republic to discuss important challenges in the field of culture following the Covid pandemic, as well as to consider development and reforms in the fields of art.

The Committee, with pre-emptive status, considered the agreement "On Cooperation between the Government of Georgia and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Field of Culture" submitted for ratification by the Government of Georgia (No. 07-2/207; 14.11.2022);

Also in 2023, the Committee, with the mandatory status, considered the agreement by exchange of notes "On Amendments to the Agreement on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation between Georgia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of October 21, 2019" submitted for ratification by the Government of Georgia (No. 07-2/282; 18.05.2023);

According to the amendments, a footnote was added to the term "original work of art" in Article 155(1) to clarify and explain it.

On September 21, 2023, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Culture Committees of the Parliament of Georgia and the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan.

On June 7, 2023, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG) and the Higher Education and Science Committee (HESC RA) of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia signed a programme on "Cooperation in Science and Technology", based on which a grant competition was announced in September 2024 to support joint scientific projects of Georgian and Armenian research groups.

1.4.2. EUROPEAN / INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND PROGRAMMES

There are agreements in place between Georgia and international organizations such as UNESCO (since 1995), ICROM, ICOM and ICOMOS. Georgia is included in HEREIN, the Participation Programme and the Creative Cities Network (UNESCO). Georgia is also a member of the BSEC (Black Sea Economic Cooperation) working group on culture and European Heritage Days (since 1999). Regarding the transnational organizations, Georgia has executed cultural agreements with the CIS, GUAM and BSEC countries.

Since 2001, Georgia has cooperated with the project STAGE (since 2005-2006, this project has been transformed into the Kyiv Initiative) and since 2005 has participated in the CoE / ERICarts comparative research project "Cultural Policy in Europe: a Compendium of Key Facts and Trends."

Responsibility for the provision and monitoring of the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (ratified in 2008)* is carried out by the National Committee of UNESCO, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Georgia participates in the EU Neighbourhood Policy. The Twinning Project was implemented within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme.

In 2010, Georgia ratified the European Landscape Convention and in 2011 - the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. In 2011 Georgia joined Eurimage.

From January 2015, Georgia became the first Neighbourhood country to join the Creative Europe Programme. In 2016 Georgia joined the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes project and the Ministry became a member of ENCATC.

By 2017, Georgia had become a member of the following international organizations: IFACCA, EUROPA NOSTRA, Bureau of the Steering Committee for Culture, and Heritage and Landscape.

In 2021 Georgia's capital Tbilisi and the seaside city of Batumi joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. In 2021 Tbilisi became the World Book Capital within the framework of the UNESCO World Book Capital programme.

In 2023, Tbilisi became a member of the UNESCO City of Media Arts.

In October 2023, Kutaisi joined the UNESCO Creative Cities network in the direction of literature.

1.4.3. NGO'S AND DIRECT PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION

The government of Georgia actively cooperates with civil society within the framework of the Eastern Partnership and in the process of development and implementation of the Culture Strategy 2025. Accordingly, it considers the nongovernmental sector as a permanent partner in ongoing activities. One of the objectives (3.2.) of Strategic Goal 3. "Culture and Other Key Areas" of the Culture Strategy 2025 is Regular cooperation among cultural professionals, public, civil and private sectors, which is reflected in the following:

- Promoting public-private partnerships, creative approaches and interdisciplinary cooperation in the cultural sector to solve problems in various fields;
- Developing flexible and attractive funding mechanisms to facilitate cooperation between the representatives of the cultural sector on the one hand, and cooperation of cultural and other sectors, on the other hand.

This results in direct professional and transnational cooperation between NGOs, the public sector and municipalities in Georgia, especially for implementation of large projects.

However, most of the interesting and successful projects are initiated by individuals and NGOs or through the bilateral relations of various public and private organizations which have been initiated by personal contacts rather than as a matter of state policy.

Thus almost all international festivals (architecture, theatre, film, contemporary art, craftsmanship, books and publishing, and contemporary dance) have been initiated and organized by various NGOs with the support of central and local authorities and international donors. Examples are: *Artisterium*, *Georgian International Festival of Arts*–"Gift", *Tbilisi International Summit ETHNOFEST*, *Tbilisi International Film Festival*, *Tbilisi International Jazz Festival*, *Black Sea Jazz in Batumi*, *International Folk Festival "Chveneburebi"*, *South Caucasus Contemporary Dance & Experimental Art Festival in Tbilisi*, *Tbilisi International Book Festival*, *International Animation Film Festival* Nikozi, *Batumi International Art-House Film Festival*, *Tbilisi Biennale of Stage Design*, *Tbilisi Architecture Biennial*, etc.

Promoting transnational cooperation is also described in Objective 7.1. "The internationalization of the cultural sector helps the development of culture, increases the nation's export capacity and empowers its image" of Strategic Goal "Internationalization of Culture" of Culture Strategy 2025, which is divided into the following tasks:

To help the creative industries in creating co-funding opportunities and developing co-production through international programmes, such as Creative Europe, Eurimage, the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme, Creative Cities Network - UNESCO, etc.;

To elaborate and introduce a more comprehensive concept for Georgia's cultural days abroad (e.g. in addition to cultural heritage, demonstrate contemporary achievements, initiatives, successful creative businesses and investments, public facilitation programmes and etc. and create integrated promotion policy);

In order to promote Georgian culture abroad, to facilitate public-private partnerships and the implementation of joint projects (e.g.: organize exhibitions, present Georgia at international fairs, festivals and other events, support the integrated representation of business, tourism, agricultural and cultural resources, etc.);

The state supports the promotion of Georgian culture on such important international platforms as the Cannes Film Festival, the Venice Biennale, the Prague Quadrennial, the Frankfurt Book Fair, etc., in which the>NNLs of the respective fields are actively involved.

Most of the intellectual resources are concentrated in the nongovernmental sector of the cultural field. As usual, the international networks (for example ICOM, ICOMOS, OISTAT, European Theatre Convention "ETC", ASSITEJ, New European Theaters Association "NETA" UNIMA, Blue Shield, etc.) are represented in Georgia by the organizations of this sector.

Nongovernmental cultural institutions actively cooperate with international partners around the world, have active contacts in relevant fields (cultural heritage, professional arts, cultural industries and cultural tourism) and carry out joint projects, research, exhibitions, concerts, festivals, competitions and more.

2022-2024

Due to the nepotistic and politicized policies of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, international professional cooperation was actively started by independent, newly established organizations that represented Georgia with alternative projects and messages at major international events.

For example, at the 2024 Berlinale, in addition to the pavilion of the National Film Centre, Georgia was represented by a booth of **GFI - Georgian Film Institute**, which expressed the position of filmmakers boycotting the Film Centre.

In 2023 and 2024, Georgia was represented at the Frankfurt Book Fair by an independent booth organized by 4 publishers and the PEN Centre of Georgia. In these years, writers and publishing organizations boycotting the Ministry, by their own efforts and with the help of international donors, hold various activities that are not supported by the government.

2. Current cultural affairs

2.1. *Key developments*

The main objective of cultural policy (before 2004) was the maintenance and support of a centralized system. The creation of a decentralized model and the redistribution of powers were supported only on a declarative level.

In the post-revolutionary period (since 2004), experiments with entrepreneurship and total privatization of the cultural industries began. However, against the background of modified legislation and the institutional model of centralization, the cultural policy pursued did not provide a systematic capital inflow, but was focused on the "blind" application of market logic to the cultural sphere. This strategy failed, both in terms of investor interest and in terms of development of institutions and infrastructure. In practical terms, the institutional reform had led to changes in legislation which resulted in a strengthening of the centralized system, and unification, instead of diversification.

The coalition "Georgian Dream", which won the parliamentary elections in October 2012, formed a new cabinet of ministers. Respectively, the new leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection started to develop a new strategy of cultural policy.

In 2016 the strategic document Culture Strategy 2025 was adopted. The formulation of the Strategic Goals and the sub-goals therein is of an integrative nature, which is an obvious innovation in the practice of cultural policy in Georgia. 8 Strategic Goals are:

1. Awareness Raising and Education
2. Access to Culture and Cultural Diversity
3. Culture and Other Key Areas
4. Funding of Culture
5. Cultural Infrastructure and New Technologies
6. Creative Industries
7. Internationalization of Culture
8. Principles of the Governance of Culture

Specific tasks (Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks) are based on traditional forms of art and culture, such as:

- Cultural Heritage
- Cultural Tourism
- Libraries and Archives
- Museums
- Traditional Crafts
- Architecture

- Audio-visual sector
- Design
- Literature and Publishing
- Music
- Performing arts
- Visual arts
- Media and Broadcasting

This section of the document was based only on those expert opinions that were collected by the Ministry in the process of developing the Strategy (no strategies and full-scale research on the forms of art were available). Accordingly, the need for scientific, statistical research for the development of sub-strategies for each form of culture was declared.

The development of sub-strategies began with the implementation of the 2017-2018 Action Plan for Implementation of the Culture Strategy.

Despite a promising start, no significant steps have been taken towards strategy development and implementation in 2018-2021.

No changes were made in the culture funding model and diversification of financial resources, or in the implementation of the principle of “good governance” and full integration of culture in other industries in the context of sustainable development.

The main goal of the government programme for 2021-2024 – “Towards Building a European State” (published in December 2020) is:

“To overcome the crisis created by the pandemic, thereby ensuring a rapid recovery and development of the economy to create a stable and secure environment for every citizen.”

The following was again declared in the field of culture: “State programmes and initiatives promoting the development of arts and culture will be continued and expanded in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the Culture Strategy through 2025. Legislation regulating the arts and culture will be improved, including legislation in the field of cultural heritage. A flexible arts and culture management model will be established, which will be approximated to European standards and an effective funding mechanism.”

2021-2024

However, after the pandemic, from 2021 onwards, we have observed a growing deviation from the principles declared in the Cultural Strategy 2025, which can be called a precursor to the anti-Western rhetoric and general policy of the ruling party especially manifested in 2024.

An important internal topic for discussion is the real policy of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, which formally adheres to the priorities stated in the Culture Strategy 2020-2025. However, the lack of

transparency, the closed nature of the Ministry and the inadequacy of some decisions taken both in the reform of institutions and personnel policy, and, as a consequence, the de-professionalisation of the system, especially in the cultural heritage sphere, cause conflicting and mostly negative assessments from the professional community.

While implementing in practice a policy of recentralization, it actively reforms the sphere of cultural heritage in general and the National Museum of Georgia in particular (in 2021-2022, the structure of the Georgian National Museum was fragmented and many professionals were fired), while not basing its decisions on expert methods and not taking into account best scientific practices. The mass dismissal of professionals from the system has caused controversy among the public and several lawsuits have been won against the Ministry related to the professional discrediting of dismissed scientists.

In 2021, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth of Georgia was recognized by the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information as the most closed. <https://idfi.ge/> (2022) This trend intensified in the following years as well.

Debates about recentralization and selective paternalization, the unrealized diversification of funding for culture, and the failed Culture Fund are ongoing in the media and among NGOs. However, there is no effective influence on the shut-in Ministry. There are precedents of lawsuits against the Ministry that were successful for the plaintiffs.

Since all these changes are taking place within the framework of the rule of one political force, the Georgian Dream party, it can be said that the political vector of the ruling party has shifted significantly in an anti-democratic, pro-Russian direction. This is confirmed by both legislative changes (for example, the **"Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence"**) and support for projects and ideas clearly directed against European values.

Accordingly, the repressions conducted by the Ministry of Culture have affected institutional independence, weakened public systems, and created individual censorship.

In this context, the situation was aggravated for the top officials too - the humanitarians and art-managers have been replaced by law enforcers (Thea Tsulukiani, the lawyer and former Justice Minister, who is also Deputy Prime Minister under Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, former Minister of Interior, held the position of Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth in 2021-2024).

The Ministry's consistent repressive policy has affected all spheres of culture and art, with the film industry, writers and cultural heritage institutions particularly under pressure.

Before the parliamentary elections of 2024, representatives of the cultural sphere founded the public initiative "Culture for Democracy", within the framework of which the "Declaration of Culture of Georgia" (19.08.2024) was created: *"The crisis was precipitated by an authoritarian governance model, where decision-makers were selected based on party affiliation, with professionalism not considered a leading criterion. Consequently, we have witnessed restrictions on freedom of speech and expression, the principles of justice, accessibility, professionalism, research, and academic freedom. Additionally, the diversity of Georgian culture and pro-European cultural values, recognized by the Constitution of Georgia and international conventions signed by Georgia, have been neglected"*.

The President of Georgia and the opposition parties that overcame the barrier do not recognize the results of the parliamentary elections on October 26, 2024 (27.10.2024) and demand an international investigation into election fraud.

2.2. Cultural rights and ethics

Cultural rights in Georgian legislation are mainly reflected in the Constitution (1995), the Law on Culture (1997) and the Law on Copyright and Related Rights (1999).

According to *Article 23*, the Constitution of Georgia shall ensure the inviolability of intellectual property and creative freedom. Interference in creative activity or censorship in the creative sphere is not permissible. Placing a prohibition on the product of a creative work or on its distribution shall not be permissible, unless it violates the legal rights of others.

According to *Article 34*, "The state shall maintain the development of culture, unrestricted participation of citizens in cultural life, expression and enrichment of cultural origins, recognition of national and generic values and a deepening of international cultural relations. Each citizen of Georgia shall be obliged to protect and preserve the cultural heritage. The state shall protect cultural heritage by law."

According to *Article 38*, citizens of Georgia are equal in social, economic, cultural and political life regardless of national, ethnic, religious or linguistic origin. The freedom of citizens to use freely their native language and to develop their culture is safeguarded.

The Law on Culture establishes the principles of cultural activity and fundamental human rights and freedoms in the field of culture. In particular, according to Article 4, the principles of cultural activity are:

- Freedom and total independence of cultural activity;
- Recognition of national and common values;
- Protection of intellectual property;
- Inadmissibility of monopoly in the field of culture;
- Accessibility and publicity of cultural and creative activity;
- Facilitating awareness and consolidation of cultural individuality by the citizens of Georgia;
- Humanism of cultural activity.

This law protects:

- The right to participate in cultural activity;
- Priority of workers in creative fields against the rights of other subjects of cultural activity
- The right to creative activity
- Freedom and independence of creative activity (*Interference in the creative process, censorship of creative activity, seizure of a creative work, and prohibition of its distribution shall be impermissible,*

except in the cases if it infringes on the rights and legal interests of any other person, stirs up national, ethnic, religious, or racial discord, preaches war and violence, or makes propaganda of pornography).

- The human right to cultural individuality
- The right to enjoy cultural values
- Art education (*the unrestricted right to receive*).
- The property rights in the field of culture (*all forms of property are recognized by the legislation of Georgia and shall be permitted in the field of culture. Everyone shall have a property right in the field of culture. The results of creative activity shall be under the ownership of the creator, except as provided for by the legislation of Georgia*).
- The right to creation of an organization, institution, association, creative union, other nongovernmental union and enterprise in the field of culture
- The right to take the results of one's own creative activity to a foreign country.

The Law also defines the obligation of a citizen in the field of culture “to respect and protect the principles and norms in the field of culture provided for by the legislation of Georgia.”

The Law also defines the scope of authority of state government bodies in the field of culture. In particular, the state shall:

Protect:

- Human rights and freedoms in the field of culture, including the right to use the creative and intellectual potential by disabled persons;
- Accessibility of cultural activity, cultural valuables and values;
- Cultural heritage objects and history and culture monuments of Georgia.

Facilitate:

- Defining the state cultural policy and programmes through allocations from the budget and other funds;
- Establishing the procedure of disposal of cultural values and ensuring accessibility;
- Equity participation in funding cultural non-governmental organizations;
- Charity and sponsorship;
- Supporting creative workers;
- Fighting against monopoly in the field of creation and distribution of cultural valuables.

Strategic Goal 1. “Access to Culture and Cultural Diversity” of Culture Strategy 2025 also refers to the right to cultural diversity, free expression and interaction between different cultures. Examples of the institutionalization of norms of professional ethics can be found in the charters of professional societies and associations. An example of this is the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, which sets ethical standards in the media.

2021-2024

Declared rights and ethical norms have been repeatedly violated by the Ministry of Culture. Most of the complaints filed against the Ministry have been upheld by the court (see chapter 2.1.)

In this context, a new reality has emerged in Georgia following the adoption of the "**Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence**" in May 2024. According to representatives of the NGO and media sectors, as well as international experts, the existing democratic norms are being revised, reviewed, or replaced by new undemocratic norms. This presents a significant obstacle to Georgia's path toward integration with the European Union.

- **Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence (2024):** According to representatives from the NGO sector, media, and international experts, this law creates significant barriers to the development of the NGO and media sectors. It imposes substantial restrictions by labelling any organization that receives more than 20% of its annual income from foreign sources as under foreign influence. Notably, this includes funding from international organizations, such as UNESCO.

2.3. *Role of artists and cultural professionals*

The Georgian Law on Culture defines two categories of workers:

- Creative worker - a natural person, engaged in creating, rehabilitating or interpreting cultural valuables;
- Culture worker - a natural person, engaged in an activity in the field of culture;

The rights of this category of workers are protected by the Constitution and this law:

- Citizens of Georgia shall be equal in cultural life, whatever their national or ethnic origin, religion, language, disability or another feature;
- The rights of creative workers related to cultural and creative activity shall have priority over the rights of other subjects of cultural activity - the State and a legal person. The rights of a natural person shall be realized on the basis of the legislation of Georgia in the field and the international obligations of Georgia.
- Everyone shall have the right to creative activity of any kind, according to one's own interests and skills.

Article 31 of the Law defines the labour relations and social protection of workers of culture:

- The labour relations of the workers of culture shall be regulated by the labour legislation of Georgia.
- The amount of author royalties and the procedure and time of its payment shall be defined by a contract made with the author, according to the applicable legislation.
- The State shall ensure the social protection of cultural workers, according to the legislation of Georgia.
- The minimum salary of workers of culture shall exceed the average amount of salary of workers of organizations financed from the state budget in Georgia.

The latter provision is declarative and does not apply in reality.

There is no term “free artist” in Georgian legislation and, consequently, there is no law on the status of a free artist, which would define the socioeconomic status of this category, its obligation to the state (special social security, health insurance, etc.).

Nevertheless, at the legislative level, creative freedom and equality of access to culture are generally safeguarded:

- The relevant international legal norms are shared and in force;
- The legislation on copyright and related rights is applicable and harmonized with international norms.
- The existing national legislative framework in the field of culture generally addresses the issue of protection of creative freedom, access to culture and participation in the creation and dissemination of culture in general.
- There is legislation governing creative and trade unions:
 - Law on Creative Workers and Creative Unions (08/06/1999/ №2059). Under the Law on Creative Workers and Creative Unions, Article 8, paragraph 1, a creative worker may be a person with an independent profession, or may work on the basis of an employment contract or other kind of agreement. The social insurance and pension provision of a creative worker are based on the appropriate legislative acts of Georgia. The Law On Creative Workers and Creative Unions establishes the legal status of a creative worker and a creative union, and the procedures for the creation of a union, its activities and its reorganization and liquidation. This Law shall apply to all creative workers, all creative unions and their branches (local organizations) registered in Georgia under the procedures established by legislation. It is noteworthy that the law provides the definition of the creative worker, literary and artistic work, creative union, creative group, etc. According to the law, the creative worker is defined as follows: a natural person whose intellectual and creative activity has resulted in the creation of literary and artistic work or their interpretation.
 - Law of Georgia on Trade Unions, 2 April 1997. №617- IIs. Under this law, artists have the right to associate in art unions or in professional organizations to represent and protect their interests; social protection is enforced under the Law on Creative Workers and Creative Unions, 02.04.1997 №617- IIs Article 8, paragraph 2, social insurance and pension provision of a creative worker are based on the appropriate legislative acts of Georgia.)

The Trade Union of Creative Workers exists under the Trade Union umbrella.

Traditional Creative Unions operating in Georgia

- Writers' Union of Georgia (created in1932)
- Composers' Union of Georgia (created in1932)
- Artists' Union of Georgia (created in1933)
- Architects' Union of Georgia (created in1934)
- Union of Theatre Workers of Georgia (created in 1945)
- Union of Journalists of Georgia (created in1959)

- Union of Cinema Workers of Georgia (created in 1961)
- Designers' Union of Georgia (created in 1987)

Creative unions like other nongovernmental nonprofit associations and unions are eligible to participate in the target competition of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth. There are also practices of financing various projects by municipalities.

Despite the existence of creative and trade unions, it is not a practice in Georgia to agree on the terms of collective agreements or other types of agreements with the client through the unions. There is no system of employment, or any other supportive regulations with the unions. Also, there is no precedent for monitoring the effectiveness of trade organizations.

The state has developed support programmes and LEPLs for both direct (state awards, scholarships, travel grants) and indirect promotions.

An example of direct support is the Culture Promotion Programme, under which the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has held various competitions in 2021.

A special programme of state awards in literature, art and architecture as well as a programme for the support of gifted children and teenagers is underway in Georgia.

Creative workers awards: Order of Honor; Medal of Honor.

These awards are given for exclusive achievements in various fields of culture and art. The candidates are nominated by the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth. Decisions on awards are made by the State Committee for Honor Awards at the President's Administration.

The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth gives awards in drama and music – for vocal ensembles, opera and pop singers and folklorists.

Notable awards are instituted by private organizations

- “Saba” - an annual literary award founded in 2003.
- “Duruji” – an annual theatre prize initiated and founded in 2008.

Two institutions have been established for the protection of the copyright of cultural workers and artists: LEPL Sakpatenti and the NNLE Georgian Copyright Association;

Mobility support, in addition to the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science, under which the International Centre for Education was established in 2014. It provides scholarships for Georgian citizens wishing to study abroad (including in the field of culture) <http://iec.gov.ge/>.

Creative freedom, cultural activities and the creation, production and distribution of cultural products and services are free from censorship and/or other restrictive systems.

According to a study conducted in 2017 within the framework of the European Union-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme UNESCO CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS/ Georgia's Analytical and Technical Report, the indicator of freedom of self-determination in Georgia is quite high: "Freedom of Self-Determination - Georgia's final result is 8.5/10, with 10 representing the situation in which individuals believe that there is 'a great deal of freedom of choice and control' and 1 being 'no freedom of choice and control.'"

Source: <https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/article/cdis-georgia>

There is no system of independent art boards that provides direct support for creative freedom. There is no registration of artists at risk in the field of culture and, consequently, no monitoring of their protection and no practice of recording precedents of restriction of creative freedom.

2023-2024

YTA union drafted the law on the Status of the Artist supported by the UNESCO-Aschberg Programme for Artists and Cultural Professionals.

The Draft law aimed at protecting and promoting artistic freedom and the status of the artist, is guided by the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist.

In 2024 the final draft law on the Status of the Artist, as well as supplementary legislation, has been prepared and presented to the Parliament of Georgia, in accordance with Article 105 of the Parliamentary Regulations of Georgia. The issue was coordinated with the Culture Committee of Georgia.

Nevertheless, the draft law has not yet been discussed.

2.4. Digital policy and developments

The Georgian government has switched to an electronic management system, which has further refined in the context of remote management and services during Covid-19.

The work on the digital programme of the cultural heritage management system started in 1999 (The first project of applying GIS was implemented in 1999-2000).

Significant work has been done over the years to digitize the allocations of the National Film Fund, the National Library and the National Museum.

The strategic goals of the Culture Strategy 2025, approved in 2016, include "Cultural Infrastructure and New Technologies":

Goal: The infrastructure of culture is developed, necessary professional environment is provided and the application of new technologies is ensured.

5.2 Objective: The development and effective application of new technologies and the integration of culture into the digital realm contributes to the strengthening of the cultural sector, intensification of creative processes, and the creation of innovative products and services.

Tasks:

In accordance with the Culture Strategy 2025 priority “Improvement of Cultural Governance” the following was created in 2017:

- www.egmc.gov.ge

Institutional support for innovative ecosystem is provided by:

- The Board of Research and Innovation of Georgia (founded on 03/02/2015. It represents a consultative body to the Government of Georgia, designed to support the development of science, research and innovations).
- [Strategy “Innovative Georgia 2020”, 2016](#)
- Law of Georgia on Innovations, adopted 22nd of June 2016, N5501-IIs.

Significant shifts in the development of new technologies started in 2014; *Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency* was established at the [Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia](#).

The mission of this *Agency* is to create an ecosystem required for the development of innovations and technologies in Georgia; to promote the commercialization of knowledge and innovation; to encourage the use of innovations and technologies in all fields of the economy; to create an environment for growth in the export of innovations and high-tech products and to develop a high-speed internet network nationwide.

Computerization:

1. To develop the use of internet and computer skills for the regional population; the Agency launched the project “Computer for Everyone”.
2. Providing computers to students and young people in the regions at a discounted price.
3. The project is implemented together with the company Intel.

The first research and technology park and a network of innovation laboratories were created

In 2014, on the basis of three universities jointly collaborating with the private sector, 3 laboratories were created to conduct teaching in:

- Programming for mobile platforms
- Creating computer games
- Computer graphics and visual effects

All labs are equipped with modern techniques. Laboratory staff have undergone additional training, and laboratories are involved in skills competitions organized by the Agency and in creating startup companies.

The Agency works both with the private and educational sectors to continue the development of innovation laboratories on the basis of other educational institutions.

In 2021, Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency and Catapult Georgia (Catapult Ventures, one of the leading Silicon Valley venture funds) signed a partnership agreement, according to which Catapult Georgia will invest \$ 50 million in Georgian technology and innovation startups.

In 2024, with the support of the European Union, the Georgia Innovation and Technology Agency - GITA launched various programmes. In particular:

- IT employment programme, which gives both novice and experienced IT specialists an opportunity to improve their qualifications and start their career in the global or regional IT market.
- Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency's (GITA) International Certification Programme within the framework of the EU-funded project "Do IT with the EU" - the goal of the EU-funded project is to train qualified IT specialists in Georgia and increase their competitiveness in the global digital market.
- Technology Transfer Programme", which aims to promote commercialization of scientific projects that meet market needs.
- Innovation and Technology Camp for Students - the programme includes holding an innovation and technology camp for students in Batumi city within the framework of the World Bank project "National Innovation Ecosystem", organized by the Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency.

The training programme for 3,000 IT specialists is ongoing. Within the framework of the project "National Innovation Ecosystem" (GENIE), the Georgian Agency of Innovation and Technology continues to train qualified personnel in the most in demand and highly paid professions in the market - in a total of 45 directions. (Courses: programming, project management, game/mobile development, AI, design, cybersecurity, blockchain, networking, virtualization and others).

GITA provides training in remote IT support, VOIP, Front-End, Java, Python, PHP, Android, iOS programming, IT projects and their quality management, and cybersecurity.

Within the framework of GITA-2020, a graphic design course was implemented in the regions of Georgia.

GITA and the GeoLab project: Since 2018, GeoLab, with the support of GITA, has been implementing new technology training programmes in Tbilisi and the regions of Georgia.

Training programme for online learning: GITA also implements the "How to Create a Startup" project across Georgia.

The number of organizations working in the field of new technologies is growing every year. An important role in this was played by the **Georgian Artificial Intelligence Association (GAIA) founded in December 2023.**

GAIA's mission is to accelerate Georgia's economic development by promoting the best use of AI by society and business. The association works to spread education about artificial intelligence and supports the academic, private, and public sectors in the introduction and development of AI technologies.

GAIA has three working directions - Knowledge Sharing, Awareness Raising and Advocacy; Support of Businesses and Startups and Development of Georgian Artificial Intelligence. In all three directions, GAIA cooperates with association members and partners from the private and public sectors, academia, civil society and media.

Speak for Georgia is a joint project of GAIA and Common Voice Georgia, supporting data collection for the development of the Georgian Speech-to-Text model.

GAIA works with government agencies, community groups, businesses and donors to ensure Georgia has an AI strategy and a vision for its development and adoption.

2.5. Cultural and social diversity

2.5.1. NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Georgia is rich in the diversity of ethnic, religious and cultural groups, which has given the country a unique and centuries-old experience of intercultural dialogue. According to the 2014 census, ethnic minorities make up about 14% of the population.

According to the data of UNESCO CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS, Georgia's Analytical and Technical Report, 2017, tolerance towards other cultures is indicated at 66.23%. This indicator determines the level of readiness for intercultural dialogue as well as the level of interaction within the community. A similar figure reflects respect for cultural diversity in state policy-making, which is converted into Georgian legislation and strategic documents.

The Constitution of Georgia provides for the equality of all citizens regardless of their national, ethnic, religious or language background. Freedom for citizens to use their native language and to practice their culture is safeguarded. In addition to the Constitution, the rights of minorities are specified in the *Laws on General Education, on Culture, and on Broadcasting*. To assist minorities to exercise their constitutional rights the state supports:

- Languages of minorities in the educational system;
- Maintenance of minority cultures and development of their creative activities; and
- Cultural cooperation with countries that have Diasporas residing in Georgia.

Georgia acceded to the Vienna Convention on the Protection of Ethnic Minorities and signed the European Framework Convention on National Minorities (2006).

In 2008 Georgia acceded to the UNESCO Paris Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

On June 28, 2013, the Eastern Partnership Ministerial Conference on Culture, the first in the region, was held and the Tbilisi Declaration was developed, which is based on the principles established in the 2005 UNESCO Paris Convention.

In 2014, Georgia signed the Association Agreement, under which it undertook to develop and deepen intercultural dialogue.

In 2016, the Culture Strategy 2025 was adopted, the Strategic Goal “Access to Culture and Cultural Diversity” of which provides: "Goal: Culture is accessible to all members of society and the freedom of cultural expression is safeguarded."

Objective: All members of society, including vulnerable groups, youth and minorities are actively engaged in cultural life and have access to cultural infrastructure and resources.

Objective: Cultural diversity, freedom of expression of different cultures and their interaction empowers the state and contributes to society's development."

Some state authorities such as the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Public Defender's Office, The Tolerance Centre, The Council of Minorities and Council of Religions, public TV and radio - broadcasting companies, the municipal culture services - have responsibilities related to minorities and intercultural dialogue.

Under the *Law on Broadcasting*(Article 16, paragraph 1), public broadcasting shall "broadcast a number of programmes in certain proportions prepared in the languages of minorities, about minority groups and programmes prepared by minorities." Accordingly, Georgian radio and TV have special news programmes in some languages (Abkhaz, Azeri, Armenian, Russian and Ossetian). These programmes occupy 4% of air time on public television and 2% of air time on public radio. In addition, there is special public broadcasting in Abkhaz and Ossetian languages, which covers a part of Abkhazia and the total region of the so called “South Ossetia”. Local community broadcasting companies also provide coverage of various spheres within their broadcasting, including the cultural life of minorities and national intercultural dialogue.

The majority of issues related to minorities are dealt with on the municipal level. The Tbilisi Municipality supports cultural centres (Russian, Azeri and the Caucasus House), sponsors and finances the Petros Adamyan Tbilisi State Armenian Theatre, Tbilisi State Azeri Drama Theatre and A. S. Griboedov Academic Russian Drama Theatre, which is the oldest Georgian theatre (opened in 1845). Three museums address the cultural identity of ethnic minorities of Georgia - David Baazov Museum of Georgian Jews and Georgian Jewish Relations History Museum, Mirza Fatali Akhundov Azerbaijani Culture Museum, and the Smirnovs' Museum.

Together with the local authorities, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection carries out different cultural events, festivals, conferences and days of culture (Armenian, Azeri, Lithuanian, Israel etc.). One important cultural event in Georgia was the exhibition dedicated to the 26 centuries old history of the establishment of Jewry in Georgia (held in 1998), which covered the history of the peaceful coexistence of Georgians and Jews.

One of the third sector unions engaged in the introduction and promotion of intercultural dialogue in Georgia is the Public Movement "Multinational Georgia" and the Centre for Cultural Relations of Georgia - Caucasian House - is a cultural, educational and peacekeeping institution (it receives state financial support).

The following NGOs representing cultural minorities are registered in Georgia: the Latvian Association in Georgia "Ave Sol"; "Public Movement Multinational Georgia"; Union of Russian Women "Yaroslavna"; "Armenians' Union in Georgia"; "Ossetins' Association in Georgia"; "Kurds' Union in Georgia"; "Armenian Youth Union in Georgia"; "Yezid Youth Association in Georgia"; "The Independent League of the Kurd-yezid Women in Georgia"; "The National Congress of the Kurd-yezids in Georgia"; "Einung" – German Association in Georgia; "Union of Azerbaijani Women in Georgia"; "Hilel-Tbilisi" – Jewish Youth Foundation; "The National Congress of Assyrians in Georgia"; "The Ukrainians' Association in Georgia"; "The Georgian Federation of the Greek Associations"; and the Polish Community.

Examples of good practice and collaboration between an NGO, government and international organization is the "Diverse Georgia – Civil Society Platform for Cultural Diversity and the Elaboration of a Package of the Non- Governmental Sector Recommendations Concerning the Implementation of the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions" Project by YTA Union. (Support by PARTICIPATION PROGRAMME, UNESCO).

Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed many systemic problems, which have significantly worsened since 2022.

The 2018 monitoring of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (project "Pilot Scheme for Monitoring Implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions" by YTA Union) and the post-pandemic informational and educational programme on cultural self-expression for women working in the cultural sector (2021) (project "In the framework of the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, an information and educational programme to empower women working in the field of culture in the post-pandemic era" by YTA Union) have highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the Convention in Georgia.

Specifically, they revealed the negative aspects in the social and economic dimensions of the profession under the conditions of the absence of a legal status for artists and creative professionals, emphasizing the need for policies to address these issues.

The aforementioned research confirmed that the legal status of artists and creative professionals is essential and should not be viewed as a privilege or honorary title. Policies in this area should be planned and implemented to overcome the social and economic challenges of the profession.

The 2024 study identified the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges defining the situation of artists and cultural workers over the past five years. It also confirmed the necessity of a law on the "Status of the Artist"

to protect the socio-economic rights of artists, and to safeguard their freedom of creative expression, which is fundamental to an open democratic society.

The 2024 legislative initiatives are an important challenge: The recently adopted "Foreign Influence Transparency Law" (4194-XIVms-Xmp; 28/05/2024) is considered by the non-governmental sector, media institutions, and international experts as a threat to freedom of expression.

2.5.2. EDUCATION DIVERSITY

The Ministry of Education and Science, which is conducting education reform in Georgia, is responsible for promoting intercultural education. National goals for education have been adopted in Georgia in October 2004, stating that the development of intercultural skills for graduates of secondary level education is one of its priorities. The *Law on Secondary Education*, adopted in April 2005, grants rights to all schools to teach in minority languages and to teach the history of minorities without any discrimination regarding the content or the financial support offered.

In 2008, the new Strategic Vision Project – the National Vision and Action Plan on Civil Integration and Tolerance - identified objectives for the education and culture of minorities.

Intercultural education is a part of the National Curriculum of Georgia and is integrated into teaching, mainly in the subjects of Georgian literature, social sciences and foreign languages.

One of the national education goals in Georgia is to educate tolerant citizens who know how to effectively communicate with diverse individuals and groups.

There are several topics included into the teaching of the arts / music through the general school curriculum covering the artistic experiences from different parts of the world and of the minorities in Georgia.

One of the aims of the introduction of the separate subject, "Civic Education in Georgia" was to increase the student's sensitivity towards the knowledge of human rights, citizenship, world religions and influences of various cultures on society.

The public movement "Multinational Georgia" has developed an alternative package of recommendations and has introduced intercultural education as a part of the general school curricula, within the civil education discipline.

In Georgia, there are public primary and secondary schools for minorities (Azeri, Armenian, Russian), where the Georgian language is taught as the official language. The publication of textbooks for minorities is provided by state procurement.

In accordance with the Culture Strategy 2025 one of the strategic goals is "Awareness Raising and Education". "Goal: Culture and creativity is integrated across all levels of the education system and the public is aware of its importance."

In accordance with the Government Programme 2021-2024 approved in December 2020:

- A different model of bilingual teaching will be introduced on a large scale for students of non-Georgian language schools.
- The policy of integration of people left out of education in the educational process will be defined, and an alternative curriculum will be developed for them.
- A Georgian language distance learning course will be available for Diaspora representatives;
- Awareness raising activities will be implemented to promote inclusive education.

On November 21, 2023, the first stage of work on changes to the National Curriculum, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, was completed, as the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia stated. The changes, the Ministry says, are aimed at giving private and public schools more autonomy.

"Changes have been made to all components of learning-teaching, planning and management, including learning-teaching principles, plans, and content components, as well as teaching methods, assessment, and organization of the learning process," – said the Ministry, adding that all components are aimed at supporting general education institutions and giving schools more opportunities to plan a more student-oriented learning process.

The Ministry reformulated the objectives of the National Curriculum, and the goals for each subject group. Private schools will be allowed to decide for themselves which subjects to teach to achieve the goals. Schools will also decide independently on the methodology.

Previously, ethnic minority students could only study their mother tongue if there were ten applicants. This rule has been removed in such a way that from now on, every ethnic minority will be able to get the opportunity to study his or her mother tongue individually.

In addition, the textbook agreement rule was approved, allowing private and public schools to use unmarked textbooks, if agreed with the Ministry.

At the same time, according to the Ministry, the process of revising the subject standards is underway and the formation of subject groups has begun, involving teachers, representatives of the academic community and psychologists. The revision process was completed in the spring of 2024.

2.5.3. MEDIA PLURALISM AND CONTENT DIVERSITY

Freedom of expression, freedom of the media and information is safeguarded by the laws and the Constitution of Georgia (Chapters 19 and 24) as well as a separate normative act on media freedom.

Georgia is ranking 60th in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index.

Adoption of the *Laws on Broadcasting and on Telecommunications* has initiated a new stage of development of mass media and relations within Georgia.

The *Law on Broadcasting*, adopted in 2004, was developed in association with the EU and Georgia acceded to the EU Directive "TV without Frontiers". It specifies three kinds of radio and TV companies:

- *Public*: The Public Broadcaster shall ensure balance between news, social and political, educational and analytical, cultural and sport programmes in accordance with the interests of the public;
- *Community*: Community broadcasting shall serve community interests; ensure participation of representatives of the community it serves in the broadcasting process; ensure covering the opinions of minorities living within the respective service area including cultural matters, in their native language (Abkhaz, Azeri, Armenian, Ossetian and Russian). These programmes play an important role in pluralism within the mass media and address diversity within the coverage of radio and TV mass media.

Media strategic documents:

- Code of Conduct for the Public Broadcaster, 2006.
- Decree #6 of the Georgian National Communications Commission, October 31, 2016 Article 3. Placement of programmes produced in non-state language(s) in the broadcasting net.
- Media and Broadcasting issues are included in the "Culture Strategy 2025" (01.07.2016).
<https://tinyurl.com/y9xhm3cc>
- General Concept of the Programme Policy of the Public Broadcaster, 2017.
- The Transformation and Development Strategy of the Public Broadcaster "Quality, Depth, Diversity", 2017.
- The strategic areas of the Culture Strategy 2025 include "Sector-specific Tasks: *Media and Broadcasting*"
 - *Use the potential of the media to advance public awareness about culture, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;*
 - *Update laws and regulations and plan mechanisms in order to establish and develop cultural media outlets; encourage regional, private commercial and non-commercial media to produce cultural products and to cover cultural processes;*
 - *Design measures to help the public broadcaster contribute to the creation and distribution of products of cultural importance;*
 - *Produce special public broadcasting programmes, both in the official and ethnic languages, to expand opportunities for ethnic minorities to access information about cultural processes;*
 - *Support institutions of higher education to develop programmes on cultural journalism and facilitate the participation of journalists working on culture in local and international training programmes;*
 - *Sustain critical evaluation of professional activities to enable analysis of cultural life, which shall in return lead to increased public awareness and allow cultural professionals to assess their own work."*

The Public Broadcaster is funded with 0.15% of GDP from the state budget. The Parliament, when planning the state budget, relies on the approved GDP from the previous year, not on the projected GDP for the following year.

In 2004-2005 there was a decrease in the very small share of culture-oriented programmes; in some cases, this decline was caused by closing TV companies that had special culture programmes, while in other cases the culture programmes were replaced with more profitable entertainment programmes, e.g. reality shows. In general, only some channels have short programmes in art and culture.

The estimated share of domestic television programmes produced in Georgia vs. imported products is 70 to 30. (Out of 30% imported product, the major part is produced in the USA, followed by Brazil, Argentina, Columbia, Turkey, and India (serials); some product is from the Russian Federation. Almost all products are dubbed by TV companies in Georgian (no exact statistical data is available, the information is given in general).

There are only two TV companies that have a significant share of cultural content:

In 2007, the TV company "Iveria" was launched under the Patriarchy of the Georgian Apostolic Orthodox Church, which is oriented to religious and cultural development.

The only culture-oriented TV channel in Georgian media is "Artarea". This is a private television channel. Since December 25th, 2013, Artarea has broadcast as a cable television channel.

According to the data of 2016, culture and art make up 20% of the total content in Georgian public broadcasting. Source: Stat. from State TV, 2016. There are no other in-depth statistics; no targeted surveys in the media have been conducted on the role of culture and cultural content.

Since 2015, Georgia has switched to digital broadcasting.

The National Strategy for Development of Broadband Networks in Georgia for 2020-2025 and the Action Plan for its implementation envisage the achievement of strategic goals and the development of a digital economy in the country. The Georgian National Communications Commission is working on the introduction of 5G technology by sharing and supporting international practices.

In 2020, a total of 295 operators were registered in the field of electronic communications, of which 89 were TV and 53 radio broadcasters.

Important projects were launched by the Communications Commission in 2020:

- Media literacy projects, including in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities.
- The Young European Ambassadors project, in which young people have deepened their knowledge of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, European values, the country's future prospects and aspirations.

In 2020, the exclusive project of the Media Academy “Online Masterclasses” for journalists was launched. It should be noted that masterclasses are conducted by not only journalists, but also by experts in culture and art (literature and photography).

2021-2024

The public broadcaster unites two TV channels – Georgian First Channel (broadcasting since 1956) and Second Channel (since 1991), as well as Teleschool (since 2020); radio channels - Georgian Radio FM 102.3 (since 1925), Georgian Radio Music FM 100.9 (since 1995); online platform 1TV.ge, as well as mobile applications for smartphones running on Android and iOS operating systems.

External production

The public broadcaster is one of the largest producers of original Georgian programs and documentaries in the country. It is also committed to supporting and investing in the industry in this area.

In 2018, as a result of legislative changes, it became possible to fulfil the obligation defined by the Law of Georgia “On Broadcasting” - to cede at least 25% of production to programs produced by independent studios.

In 2023, as a result of legislative changes, at least 10% of budgetary funding should be allocated to Georgian feature TV films, TV documentaries and TV series.

In 2023, up to GEL 8 million was spent on external production, which is about 9.1 percent of the total budget. It is planned to maintain the mentioned trend in the future as well, investments will be directed towards promoting the production of original Georgian products.

In October 2024, a new building of the Public Broadcaster was opened, equipped in accordance with modern standards.

Diversity is one of the strategic directions of the Public Broadcaster.

However, there are some controversies in this regard.

Legislation

- The issue of cultural diversity in the media regulatory legislation is inadequate.
- Issues of media and culture correlation are not adequately covered in the legislation
- At the same time, the adoption in 2024 of the Foreign Influence Transparency Law of Georgia is perceived by representatives of the nongovernmental sector and media, as well as part of society and international partners as a danger threatening democratic values, media freedom and pluralism; in addition, this law creates a problem for self-expression and, consequently, the diversity of creative expression.

Cultural diversity activities

- The cultural activities carried out by the initiative of various organizations (mainly local and non-governmental organizations, as well as international organizations) are covered with more or less intensity by the Public Broadcaster.

The issue of public awareness-raising - the use of public media on the diversity of cultural expressions - is not satisfactorily addressed.

Awareness problem

- Media diversity is a significant component of cultural self-expression. However, coverage of cultural events by the Georgian media is inadequate, and the time and place for professional criticism in the culture field is inadequate in almost any media environment.
- In the context of cultural self-expression, there is a lack of joint efforts of the state, society (and primarily, the expert community) and the media to develop the diversity of media that can be explained by the low level of understanding of these issues in all three sectors;
- The lack of responsibility of the mass media for promoting and protecting the diversity of cultural expression creates an unfavourable environment; consequently, the lack of popularization of quality cultural product and the lack of cooperation with institutions responsible for implementing the Convention is constantly increasing.

Monitoring and Research

- Despite the stable practice of media monitoring and the activities of numerous qualified non-governmental organizations, there is no research on the cultural content of the media and the diversity of cultural self-expression.
- There are no media monitoring projects, evaluation documents, or debates within the cultural context.
- There is no research base or methodology for media related to culture; although the Journalistic Ethics Charter systematically publishes studies, nothing has been conducted in the areas of culture, languages, ethnic cultural diversity, or the protection of artists' socioeconomic rights.

Support Measures/Programmes/Initiatives

- There are no legislative or other supportive measures to motivate the media and encourage the active involvement of civil society in promoting cultural diversity in the media. As a result, there is a lack of activity among cultural specialists in this area, and the socioeconomic rights of artists and cultural workers are only of interest to the media in the context of political disputes.
- Media inspiration for cultural activities is very rare, and government support for media-culture collaboration is sporadic and low-budget.
- There is no targeted support for projects involving cooperation with the governing bodies of the Convention to address issues of inaccessible Georgian broadcasting for Georgian-speaking populations in occupied territories, including the implementation of relevant Convention articles

(Article 8 – Measures to Protect Cultural Self-Expression and Article 17 – International Cooperation in Situations of Serious Threat to Cultural Self-Expression).

- The media does not address or study the issues faced by artists and cultural workers living in occupied territories.
- There is no state support for monitoring cultural content in the media.
- The conflict between the financial profitability of various media products and their cultural value hinders private businesses from sponsoring high-standard cultural content.
- The lack of transparency in criteria for determining the prioritization of cultural fields by mass media and the difficulty in obtaining state funding for media projects related to culture impede the improvement of cultural content quality.

2.5.4. LANGUAGE

The official language of Georgia is Georgian. In the territory of Abkhazia there are two official languages – Georgian and Abkhazian. Abkhazia is populated by two indigenous groups – Georgians and Abkhazs – whose linguistic difference is confirmed by the Constitution.

The significant factor in Georgian national identity is that the Georgian original written language is one of the oldest written languages worldwide (it was created no later than III-IV centuries A.D.). But the oldest literary monument is dated V c. A.D. The Georgian alphabet is used in all dialects of the Georgian language. Only in Abkhazia the modified Cyrillic alphabet has been used since the establishment of the Soviet regime.

In Georgia, national minorities constitute 16.2% of the population, with the largest linguistic minorities being Azeris with 6.5% and Armenians with 5.7%. Until recently the most widespread language after Georgian was Russian.

The Constitution of Georgia obliges all departments, municipal services and users to use the Georgian language and all official versions of legislative texts must be published in Georgian. In order to promote integration of minorities and their participation in the state administration, the Ministry of Education and Science arranges intensive teaching of the official language.

Unfortunately, in the territories beyond the control of the government of Georgia, the teaching of the official language has been stopped and the system of education operating in Abkhazia is based on Abkhazian and Russian and, in the Tskhinvali Region, the education system is based on the Ossetian and Russian languages.

The issues of protection and development of language are within the terms of reference of the Ministry of Education and Science. The support and development of the literary language and language diversity as a cultural phenomenon are also the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection.

The Georgian Language Programme was financed by the Ministry of Education and Sciences. In 2009, this programme was replaced by the Programme of Support for Multilingual Education.

Since 2006, responsibility for the R&D institutes under the Academy of Sciences of Georgia has been delegated to the Ministry of Education and Science. Among these institutes are significant scientific and cultural centres for research and development of Georgian culture, language and literature such as: the Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics, the Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature, the Korneli Kekelidze Institute of Manuscripts.

The State Language Department (created in 2017) is a legal entity under public law, which protects the constitutional status of the state language within the framework established by the legislative acts of Georgia, takes care of its popularization and the establishment of norms of the Georgian literary language.

The Georgian language is the native language for many ethnic Georgians who reside outside the country (about 5 million live in Azerbaijan, Turkey, Russia, Iran, Europe and the USA). Support and development of the Georgian language abroad is the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via its Section for Cultural Relations and Relations with the Diaspora. Also, the Ministry of Education and Science has implemented the Programme of Assistance for Georgian Schools Abroad.

2015 - Law of Georgia On the Official Language was adopted.

In 2021, a working version of the State Language Strategy 2021-2030 and the Action Plan for Strategy 2021-2022 was developed.

2.5.5. GENDER

The strategic goals of the Culture Strategy 2025, approved in 2016, include "Access to Culture and Cultural Diversity.

"Goal: Culture is accessible to all members of society and the freedom of cultural expression is safeguarded.

2.2. Objective: All members of the society, including vulnerable groups, youth and minorities are actively engaged in cultural life and have access to the cultural infrastructure and resources.

Tasks: Ensure that principles of gender equality are taken into account during the planning and implementation of cultural policy, use the potential of culture to foster gender equality."

In 1996, Georgia acceded to the International Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, adopted on 29 June 1951 by the General Conference of the International Labour Organization, arranged by the Administrative Council of the International Labour Bureau. However, according to the available statistical data, the average remuneration of women engaged is only 63% of the rate of remuneration of men engaged in the same sphere. At the same time, according to Geostat ([in 2020](#)), this imbalance in the field of arts, entertainment and recreation in Georgia is minimal.

Among the Ministry staff, the number of women in positions of responsibility is decreasing: in 2004, out of 118 employees of the Ministry, 70 were women (59%); in 2005, out of 151 employees, only 81 are women (54%).

Until 2021, all ministers of culture were men and only one of the deputy ministers (20%) was a woman; from heads of 10 departments, 5 were women (50%).

After the October parliamentary elections in 2020, the first woman (who previously held the position of the Minister of Justice) became the Minister of Culture, Sport and Youth and a Vice Prime Minister in the “Georgian Dream” Government. All her deputy ministers are men.

Also, women are appointed to the positions of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (de jure) and the Minister of Education Culture and Sport of Ajaria Autonomous Republic.

According to GEOSTAT data, as of 2020, 2027 women (70%) and only 909 men (30%) are employed in museums.

Among theatre workers – the number of women (50.4%), and men (49.6%) is almost equal (3963 employees in total). A great number of women are employed as librarians (99%). Out of total 3 325 employees of libraries 3 305 are women (according to 2008 data).

There is no more precise statistical data relating to the employment of women in the sphere of culture.

According to the GEOSTAT data, as of 2020, women have mostly received higher education in education, arts and humanities. In 2019, the number of female teachers was 55 000, which is 6.5 times higher than the number of male teachers. Women outnumber men in vocational and higher education institutions, although gender difference is not so critical there.

In 2017, in accordance with the Culture Strategy 2025, raising public awareness on gender equality has been highlighted by:

- Supporting thematic projects on gender equality
- Supporting women’s creative activities

There are general awareness programmes on gender equality that are implemented by the non-governmental sector and the state (see the Parliamentary Gender Equality Council plans), UN Women’s Projects.

In 2017, the survey “Pilot Scheme for Monitoring Implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” was conducted (Project by YTA Union). According to the survey, the challenges are as follows:

- The issue of gender equality in cultural legislation is reflected very generally; specifically, women’s cultural rights, including the right to express their creativity, are not covered.
- Gender projects in culture are available as separate initiatives of non-governmental organizations and international organizations that cannot provide sustainable support for the consumption and availability of cultural goods and services by women and their involvement in and access to cultural life.
- There are no mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and review of gender equality policy in culture; there is no research base and methodology; the efforts of NGOs in this direction are unsustainable.

In 2021 a gender survey was carried out within the project “The information-educational programme to empower women employed in the cultural field in the post-pandemic era by implementing the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” by the YTA Union.

The findings of the survey have revealed the conflicting attitudes towards gender equality:

- Covid-19 identified one of the most important common challenges as widening the gap in civic consciousness, which manifests itself in the weakening of social cohesion, solidarity and support for women.
- Women and men do not have a "competitive" attitude towards gender equality. Attitudes towards gender policies and laws are also generally positive among both genders.
- The cultural professional community is open and tolerant towards gender balance, as well as directly towards women employed in the field of culture. At the same time, the tolerant attitude of society towards gender balance is to a lesser extent converted into raising the status and role of women and stimulating leadership qualities.
- The data of various gender studies indicate the presence of a "glass ceiling".
- The gender norms continue to influence the assessment of the professional skills of women and men, and division of occupations.

2.5.6. DISABILITY

The strategic areas of the Culture Strategy 2025, approved in 2016, include "Goal: Culture is accessible to all members of the society and the freedom of cultural expression is safeguarded.

Objective: All members of the society, including vulnerable groups, youth and minorities are actively engaged in cultural life and have access to cultural infrastructure and resources.

Tasks:

- Support and encourage cultural institutions, organizations and the businesses, including on the legislative level, in order to provide people with disabilities, socially vulnerable groups, refugees, IDPs, residents of occupied territories with the availability of special services (e.g. lower price tickets, free entrance, informational meetings, etc.) and employment opportunities;
- Ensure that cultural infrastructure, new and existing facilities, comply with accessibility requirements for people with disabilities, adopting them where necessary;
- Train the employees of cultural establishments and organizations to develop their skills necessary for communication with vulnerable groups;
- Support cultural establishments and organizations in providing special programmes and materials (e.g. audio-books, books with Braille font, sign-interpretation, subtitles, on-line and digital applications, etc.) for people with disabilities;
- Support the implementation of legal and regulatory mechanisms, creation of a favorable environment and special programmes in order to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in cultural/arts educational processes at all levels of education;

The next step was the preparation of a "Roadmap for Ensuring Equal Participation of People with Disabilities in Georgia's Cultural and Creative Life for 2017-2018" by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia in 2017.

This document aims to create the conceptual framework and mechanisms that will facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in the cultural life of society. The Roadmap is focused on the challenges of accessibility to culture and creativity, cultural education and services by persons with

disabilities and contains the list of activities to be carried out by the Ministry in cooperation with relevant authorities (Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia; Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and others) in 2017-2018. The activities provided by the abovementioned Action Plan were planned by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, involving various agencies, local or international NGOs working on issues of persons with disabilities, the association of persons of children with disabilities and directly persons with disabilities.

The document reflects the legislative framework regulating the sphere, challenges in terms of the access to culture for disabled persons, the problems of infrastructure adaptation, as well as cultural and arts events, inclusive cultural tourism, inclusive education and employment issues for people with disabilities.

The Roadmap activities have been planned based on the problems identified by the monitoring of the situational analysis/research, quantitative and qualitative data."

Consequently, the "Action Plan for Equal Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Cultural and Creative Life, 2017-2018" was created.

In 2020, the Law of Georgia on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (6823-rs) entered into force, according to which "the state shall promote the realization of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities", including the realization of cultural and intellectual opportunities.

According to the Government Programme 2021-2024 approved in 2020: "Access to culture will increase for the general public, especially the population of the regions, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities, and will promote the development of creative skills of people with disabilities".

The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth funds various projects with the participation of people with disabilities.

In the years 2015-2016, the activities of the Cultural Centre of the Union for Persons who are Blind and the Union for Persons who are Deaf of Georgia were promoted. In 2017 the Project "Inclusive Education in Georgian Museums" was implemented. Also, inclusive concerts, exhibitions, performances with the participation of people with disabilities were promoted and adapted versions of the films "Jay's Wedding" and "I See the Sun" were created. There are various nongovernmental organizations of people with disabilities in Georgia, e.g. Inclusive Dance Development Centre, etc.

In 2023, the Cultural Committee of Parliament prioritized the establishment of a case study group on inclusion of students with disabilities in public and private arts education institutions.

The following objectives were identified:

- To analyse the current situation based on available data and develop an overall picture of the inclusion of students with disabilities in public and private art schools across the country;
- To analyse the process of enrolling a student with a disability in an art school and to analyse in this process, on the one hand, the motivation of the student/parents and, on the other hand, the factors influencing the school's decision;
- To analyse how the needs of students with disabilities are taken into account in the learning process;

- To identify what physical and social barriers arise in the learning/teaching process;
- To assess the level of competence of teachers taking into account the specifics of working with students with disabilities;
- To develop appropriate recommendations for executive authorities to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in art schools and their access to better education.

By December 2023, the case study identified a number of important issues. As part of the report, the research team developed important findings and recommendations, with legislative and executive branch agencies identified as the primary recipients.

The aforementioned conclusion of the study group, in accordance with Article 155.8 of the Parliamentary Regulations of Georgia, was submitted to the Culture Committee at the spring session of 2024 and will be forwarded to the addressees of the recommendations.

The case study was conducted with the support of the USAID Public Administration Program.

2.6. Culture and social inclusion

During the past 30 years, as a result of conflicts with the separatist authorities of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and former South-Ossetian Autonomous District (the Inner Kartli), a new group has been formed in the population - IDP (internally displaced persons). Currently, there are 286 643 IDPs officially registered, of which 275 096 (95.97%) are from Abkhazia and 11 546 (4.0%) from the former South Ossetian Autonomous District (the Inner Kartli). Following the Russian - Georgian conflict in August, 2008, a new stream of IDP has emerged from so-called South Ossetia, the historical Shida (Inner) Kartli, the region Samachablo and from Kodori (a mountain part of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic) and from other Georgian cities and villages. This raised the number of IDP's by an additional 192 000 persons. The total number of IDP's is now estimated at almost 500 000.

The state assistance to IDPs is minimal, which causes social discontent of both IDPs and other residents. Since the integration of IDPs in other regions has been difficult due to unemployment and inflation, the idea of social integrity is unsteady. Against this background, the focus of government and public attention is directed to the territorial integrity of the country, the protection of constitutional laws, of IDP's and of minorities.

Following the Russian-Georgian conflict in August 2008, voluntary assistance and donations by nongovernmental and trade organizations to support IDP's increased to help address their material needs and psychological rehabilitation.

We may only assume (as there is no special research or debates thereof) that culture is (not) used as an instrument for reinforcement of social cohesion. At the same time the concept of national integrity has ever been supported by the national culture and the national culture has been the basic parameter of the national identity.

Therefore, Georgia for the first time institutionalizes access to culture and declares social issues in the context of cultural policy.

The Culture Strategy 2025 also envisages ensuring access to culture for IDPs as well as social integration and employment through the cultural industries:

Objective: All members of the society, including vulnerable groups, youth and minorities are actively engaged in cultural life and have access to cultural infrastructure and resources.

Tasks:

- Organize cultural and creative projects, initiatives, events and campaigns and support access to appropriate spaces/facilities in order to reinvigorate the contribution of vulnerable groups, youth and minorities to cultural life;
- Support the development of specially adopted media programmes in order to contribute to the integration of vulnerable and minority groups into the general public;
- Elaborate incentive measures for students representing disability groups, refugees, IDP's, residents of occupied territories, repatriates and socially vulnerable citizens, in order to ensure their access to cultural studies;
- Support and encourage cultural institutions, organizations and the businesses, including on the legislative level, in order to provide people with disabilities, socially vulnerable groups, refugees, IDPs, residents of occupied territories with special services (e.g. lower price tickets, free entrance, informational meetings, etc.) and employment opportunities;
- Support the engagement of children and youth groups representing refugees and IDPs, repatriates and Georgian citizens residing in occupied territories and abroad in different cultural projects in order to ensure their integration with local coevals;
- Support cultural initiatives of minorities and enhance their knowledge of the Georgian language in order to ensure they have a fair part in the country's cultural life;
- Ensure that principles of gender equality are taken into account during the planning and implementation of cultural policy, and use the potential of culture to foster gender equality."

Recently, the issues of social cohesion are considered by the government in the context of integration of all layers of youth – representatives of national minorities, urban and rural residents. The main participants of the process are governmental structures. For example, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia (operated in this format until 2016) effectively is engaged in the planning of such programmes. The working process is implemented in close cooperation with youth organizations, international organizations and various public institutions. Many human rights NGOs use creative projects and art forms for social advertising and promotion of anti-discrimination policies, and educational activities to raise awareness and promote tolerance, etc.

2.7. Societal impact of arts

There is a tradition of active public debates in Georgia, especially in the context of a polarized political environment. Culture often becomes a victim of political mainstreaming. At the same time, the importance of the social aspects of culture is largely understood and voiced by the professional community and the nongovernmental sector.

The potential for significant social impact of culture is manifested in the development of cultural tourism and urban planning, creating a new habitat, especially in the historic part of cities.

The heavy interventionist urban policy in Georgia since the 2000s has become an important topic of public debates. The intensity and purposefulness of the debates have in some cases yielded positive results (for example the public and expert monitoring of the restoration-rehabilitation project of the Tbilisi ancient district - Gudiashvili Square).

A positive example of ensuring informed, transparent and participatory processes for the development of a policy of cultural expression diversity are the meetings organized by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection in the process of creating the Culture Strategy in 2015-2016. Both the state and 36 NGOs that signed the Memorandum "Creating a Culture Policy Together" actively supported the informed policy-making process. As a result, the issues of equal access to culture and the social aspects of culture have been reflected in this document.

An important place in the Culture Strategy 2025 is allocated to the equal access by different groups to culture.

"2.1. Objective: Culture is made accessible to all, including the communities in mountainous regions, municipalities adjacent to the state borders, occupied territories and across the dividing lines of occupied territories."

Tasks:

The correlation of culture with social welfare and intersectoral cooperation is also reflected in the Third Goal of the Strategy: *"Goal: Culture and creativity help other key areas to contribute in a wider sense to the State's sustainable development and social well-being."*

Objective: Regular cooperation among cultural professionals, public, civil and private sectors brings about more effective decision-making and problem-solving methods and results in a better quality of life."

Other documents, which more or less reflect the aspects of the cultural impact of culture, serve this goal as well:

- The Georgian National Youth Policy Concept for 2020 – 2030 (7054-rs; 24/07/2020) in addition to various educational and social areas, includes support for youth cultural and creative activities (in frames of interest groups, clubs, hubs and summer camps).
- State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and Action Plan for 2015-2020 (1740; 01/09/2015) addresses the issues of preserving the culture of ethnic minorities and promoting a tolerant environment.
- The Law on Innovations (N5501-II dated 22.06.2016) is aimed at creating an environment conducive to the creative industries.
- The Georgian Tourism Strategy (2015) is a document focused on greater socialization and commercialization of cultural infrastructure, cultural heritage sites and cultural services.

2.8. Cultural sustainability

Cultural sustainability is one of the goals of Georgia's cultural policy. However, it is written only in the Culture Strategy 2025.

Other strategic documents of Georgia indirectly refer to culture. Recognition of its potential economic, social and environmental consequences is the achievement of the Ministry of Culture and the nongovernmental sector only.

"The Sustainable Development Goals National Document"

"The Sustainable Development Goals National Document depicts the priorities of the UN SDGs at the national level, aimed at promoting the implementation of SDGs and introduction of evidence-based national policy according to the 2030 agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals National Document equally addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental."

"Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia 2020"

Socio-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia 2020 outlines the country's economic development visions, where tourism is a part, which includes the use of cultural monuments and the sale of various cultural products; however, no direct vision is apparent in the context of cultural development.

The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection has developed the "Culture Strategy 2025" (approved 30.06.2016), which includes the main indicators and trends in the field of culture. The purpose of the document is to establish an interagency coordination platform; on the basis of this Strategy the policy Goals within the framework of the Strategy 2025 will be included in the policies of other Ministries (<http://www.culturepolicy.gov.ge/getfile/29f126fc-420a-43f5-bcecadaf14f9d779/.aspx>).

Consequently, since 2016 there is a sustainable coordination mechanism that is the basis for the development under the common umbrella of culture policy.

At the same time, there is an internal interdepartmental plan designed to provide the appropriate reflection of the trends specified in the policy document in the budgets and action plans of the Ministries.

- [Interagency Action Plan](#) for Implementation of the Culture Strategy for 2017-2018
- [Action Plan](#) for Equal Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Cultural Life for 2017-2018
- [Roadmap](#) for Developing Cultural and Creative Industries in Georgia 2016 – 2017. CREATIVE GEORGIA.

These documents show that the society and state structures have already come to the understanding that a synergistic approach is necessary for the implementation of national sustainable development policies, taking into account the multifaceted resources of culture and their importance.

The Culture Strategy 2025 contains the 3rd strategic Goal: Culture and Other Key Areas.

The expected result of this Goal is: culture and creativity will contribute to various areas and the sustainable development of the country and the well-being of society, in general.

"Goal: Culture and creativity help other key areas to contribute in a wider sense to the State's sustainable development and social well-being.

Objective: Culture is integrated into the development policies of different sectors, different government agencies and municipalities based on regular consultations between the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and other important agencies and stakeholders.

Tasks:

- Raise the awareness of policy-makers and other key stakeholders about the cultural spill-overs on and the economic impact;
- Taking into view the crucial role of culture with regard to economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, integrate culture into policy planning documents on the national, sectoral and regional levels, and into other policy sectors;
- Create a platform for regular consultations between policy-makers of culture and other agencies, which shall ensure their involvement in the policy-planning processes from its initial stages;
- Develop joint initiatives and programmes between the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and other agencies, in order to enforce the development of the national economy and contribute to a wider international recognition.

2.9. Other main cultural policy issues

The problem in Georgian cultural policy is not having a paradigmatic approach to culture in whole or in part, but understanding the essence of a "cultural" component of the cultural good and its significance in a long-term strategy.

Moreover, culture is becoming increasingly important as a tool of the political and economic power of the elite: In Georgian cultural policy a significant, fast emerging class of political and financial elites is implanting the ideology of a "consumption" policy. This naturally reflects on cultural consumption and participation. In Georgia, cultural consumption is a field for further manipulation of a well-established political PR system. The best illustration of this is the architecture of the "new" Georgia beginning from the presidential palace to the cultural complex on Rike in Tbilisi, as well as the pseudo-rehabilitation projects such as the Rabat complex in Akhaltsikhe. In the long term, the implementation of such a policy through manipulating consumption in order to ease the government will result in an even more rapid decline in public taste.

Cultural consumption is differentiated.

Consumption is changing at the expense of diversification and stratification of society; an increase is forming in the gap between the elite and the majority of the population which stays near the poverty line. However, the emergence of a middle class slowly occurs, albeit at the expense of the bureaucracy.

Over the past 30 years (1990 to 2020), no surveys and other systematic studies have been conducted in the culture area; there are no accurate data on culture from the State Department of Statistics. However, we can say that there is an empirically revealed correlation between income level, education level and intensity of cultural consumption.

It is obvious that the public, the majority of which is near the poverty line, cannot participate to the full extent in the process of creation and consumption of the cultural product; for the same reason it is impossible for the majority of the public to provide adequate care for the privately-owned cultural heritage that damages the common cultural landscape and heritage. All these factors provoke impunity for the political and economic elites, which have lobbied for and implemented such projects as "The New Life of Old Tbilisi", which resulted in the unqualified reconstruction and restoration of historic districts and was a futile waste of budgetary funds.

Cultural consumption is also differentiated according to the place of residence: the lowest traditionally remains in the countryside, where the cultural infrastructure is poorly developed. Therefore, the general political task of ensuring equal access to culture and leveling participation in cultural life remains relevant throughout the country. The tools for solving this problem may be the Internet. The level of cultural consumption and nature of participation vary under the effect of such factors as, for example, the economic crisis, under which the free services provided by public institutions become more attractive. "Domestic consumption of culture" is also growing (use of the Internet and the option of downloading, often illegally, various cultural and artistic content).

The main problems and challenges that were identified during the development of the Culture Strategy 2025:

- Information deficit on the role of culture and its economic potential;
- Education programme flaws - culture and creativity are inadequately reflected in the education stages;
- Culture is not equally available to all members of the community. Cultural diversity is not adequately protected and developed;
- Culture and creativity are not integrated into the policies of other fields and there is no great awareness of its contribution;
- There are no relevant social guarantees for cultural workers and their remuneration is low;
- Cultural infrastructure and its material-technical base are underdeveloped;
- Budgetary funding of culture is poor and alternative sources of funding are not developed;
- Cultural governance at central or municipal levels can to be improved;
- Surveys and statistical data are scarce;
- The legislative base and mechanisms for promoting integration into the international space of culture are to be improved.

Source: Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection (2016)

One of the priorities of the Strategy was to create a new model of culture financing. In 2016, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection formulated the idea of a financial sustainability package, which includes the following:

- Exemption of real assets used in the creative, artistic and scientific research activities (theatres, centres, museum, etc.) from property tax;
- Exemption of the activities implemented in the cultural field under the state order from value added tax;
- Exemption of royalties, cash and other awards paid by the state from income tax;
- Charity Law and voluntary 1% initiative;
- Drafting the law on state pensions, which means the possibility of retaining pensions for persons employed in artistic organizations;
- Transferring a part of lottery revenues to the cultural sphere.

As of December 2021, this package has not been, however, realized.

Summary

- The openness of public cultural policy does not always meet European standards;
- The decision-making system and indicators are not always clear (especially since 2021);
- Underdevelopment of civil society: the lack of responsibility and involvement in the protection of cultural heritage, urban planning matters, etc.
- The legislation remains unbalanced: The primary issues are to improve the legislative framework in the field of cultural heritage, especially in the context of decentralization and self-government reform, and the Concordat.

Over the past 25 years, the representatives of culture have required the introduction of the *Sponsorship Law* as means of diversification of the financing of culture and legislative improvements for the delimitation of powers and the protection of regional and municipal sectors of culture. The central government was quite sceptical about this idea.

2021-2024

The last and most important challenges for Georgia, as well as for the world, was the crisis associated with the COVID 19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

During Covid 19, problems were identified in the legislative framework of Culture defining economic, social and labour rights, including the lack of free artist status; as a result, free artists are considered unemployed and the meagre state aid measures do not apply to them. A common problem has been the inability of the state to make quick and flexible decisions in force majeure situations. In particular: pandemics, lockdowns and strict bans have affected freelancers and representatives of non-state and private cultural institutions/enterprises most severely. However, the special governmental anti-crisis measures (programmes, funds, subsidies, tax exemptions, etc.) were not extended to them. With few exceptions, the lockdown has caused not only economic but significant socio-psychological damage to the field as a whole, and especially to members of the performing arts.

Also, the need for more digital development in the creative industries were identified.

For Georgia, both for the state and the people as a whole, the war in Ukraine has become a test of commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration, and at the same time of balanced hospitality due to the huge flow of Russian and Belarusian citizens crossing the border into Georgia. Such a flow is of great concern to the population and experts, since it is fraught with various risks, changing the demographic situation, especially in large cities, which consequently changes the cultural landscape as well.

In this context, a flexible and coherent national strategy for the preservation of cultural diversity, cultural correlation and social integration is particularly important.

Assistance to refugees from Ukraine is also an important issue. Both the state and the population, especially cultural actors, have worked to the greatest extent possible to provide assistance to Ukrainian citizens in Georgia; numerous cultural projects by NGOs and private initiatives are aimed at supporting them.

An important contribution by the Ministry of Education and Science was the opening of the Ukrainian language sector in schools for refugee children. The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth also intended to support them - summer camps were run for Ukrainian children.

In the 2021-2024 policy of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the issue of cultural heritage protection remains a sensitive one. The unqualified personnel policy implemented in the National Museum and the Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation, failing credible scientific evidence, led to the dramatic destruction of frescoes in the Gelati Monastery Complex, a monument inscribed on the UNESCO Cultural Heritage List. In addition, the decision of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of Georgia to transfer the management and supervision of the restoration process of the Gelati Monastery Complex to the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia on the basis of the Concordat has created a perception in part of society that the secularization of the state is weak.

The origin of various religious buildings also remains a very sensitive issue.

It should be noted that by Decree No. 63 of the Government of Georgia a governmental commission was established to consider the issues stipulated by the constitutional agreement between the State of Georgia and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia, in the work of which the Culture Committee of the Parliament represented by its Chairman participated. In particular, the Chairman of the Culture Committee of the Parliament is a member of two working groups - the working group on establishing a regime of care and preservation for church valuables stored in state museums and temples of historical significance, and the working group on establishing the origin of religious buildings.

3. Cultural and creative sectors

3.1. *Heritage*

Cultural heritage has always been of great importance and pride in Georgia.

The main body responsible for the protection of cultural heritage is the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth in particular the General Inspection for Cultural Heritage and Cultural Property Protection (new Department) and the National Agency for Cultural Heritage of Georgia. Some responsibilities are also allocated to the National Committee of UNESCO under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The National Agency for Cultural Heritage of Georgia (established in 2008) has been constituted on the basis of the existing complex monuments of national and global significance. It represents their totality and is their legal successor. 15 complex monuments of national and world value are incorporated in the new agency. The register of tangible monuments of culture includes 7 915 items, and the register of intangible monuments of culture includes 65 items.

Georgia became a plenipotentiary member of UNESCO on the 7th of October 1992. 3 monuments of Georgian cultural heritage are included on the World Heritage List of UNESCO (Historic Monuments of Mtskheta, Gelati Monastery, Upper Svaneti) and 3 Georgian elements are registered in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Georgian polyphonic singing, the Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri winemaking method, the living culture of the three writing systems of the Georgian alphabet).

The following nominations from Georgia have been inscribed in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register: Georgian Manuscripts of Byzantine Era, "Description of Georgian Kingdom" and "Geographical Atlas" by Vakhushti Bagrationi, Manuscripts of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" by Shota Rustaveli, Ancient manuscripts preserved in the National Archives of Georgia, and The Tetraevangelion-palimpsest.

One of the most difficult problems is the preservation of monuments in the occupied territories. In this context, in late 2012, the Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) was established.

Georgia is actively involved in the work of UNESCO for the protection of cultural property in case of armed conflict. The country was a member of the Committee created by the Organization on this matter from 2013 to 2017.

Another thorny issue is the protection of the Georgian cultural heritage outside Georgia, namely, on the territory of Turkey, in the historical province of Tao-Klarjeti where old Georgian cathedrals are located and require restoration. The negotiations with the government of Turkey started in 2005 are underway and quite successful.

Archaeological excavations and conservation at the Ghalia Georgian Monastery in the Republic of Cyprus carried out since 2006 were successfully completed. In addition, the cooperation with the Russian Federation State Film Fund "Gosfilmofond" to transfer Georgian films produced in 1916-1990 started in 2015 and is underway.

Georgia actively cooperates with international partners - the Council of Europe (PP2), the European Commission (TWINNING), *ICROM*, ICOM, ICOMOS, IUCN, and the European Heritage Network.

Museums

In 2020 the museum system of Georgia included 249 museums of various profiles, which are subordinated to and financed from different levels of authority. Since the Rose Revolution, museum reform has been a priority; in particular, improvements in museum administration have been stipulated. A first step was the creation of the National Museum of Georgia (30.12.2004). According to 2020 data, 18 museums subordinate to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs, including the Georgian National Museum - which includes 12 museums, 1 national gallery, 4 house-museums and 2 scientific research centres.

In 2021, the new Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth put the Shalva Amiranashvili Art Museum, part of the National Museum, under an emergency management regime for reconstruction and safe transfer of funds (including the National Treasury), which provoked mixed reactions in the expert community.

In recent years, the number of private museums have increased, for example, the Holoseum – Audio-Visual Museum was opened in Tbilisi, one of the patrons of which is JSC Bank of Georgia.

In the strategic document “Culture Strategy 2025” (01.07.2016), Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks

Cultural Heritage aim to:

- Introduce the Code on Cultural Heritage in compliance with ratified international conventions, in order to accomplish the harmonization of existing legislation concerning cultural heritage and ensure that all relevant aspects are adequately considered;
- Prepare new candidates from the intangible, tangible and natural heritage for submission to the UNESCO;
- Elaborate and reinforce different measures for safeguarding and monitoring cultural heritage in occupied territories;
- Digitalise and develop cataloguing of intangible and tangible cultural heritage for protection purposes and in order to increase public accessibility;
- Facilitate and promote scientific and research activities regarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Georgia and beyond its borders;
- Support archaeological fieldwork linked to cultural heritage and encourage the application of new technologies for research;
- Promote Georgian cultural heritage as the heritage of all mankind through different mechanisms;
- Ensure that the conservation of cultural heritage follows an integrated conservation approach and that urban, spatial and regional development plans take into consideration the protection of buildings, architectural ensembles, cultural heritage protection zones and landscapes of cultural value;
- Protect intangible cultural heritage, facilitate revitalization and practicing of endangered forms of intangible cultural heritage and raise public awareness;

- Support research and safeguard the Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Mingrelian, Laz, Svan) and tones, Georgian scripts and alphabet;
- Protect and develop endangered languages, especially the Abkhazian language, as a part of Georgian identity and intangible cultural heritage.

Museums

- Support local and international collaboration in order to share professional knowledge and museum practice and develop training programmes for museum workers;
- Support new initiatives in order to promote museums;
- Support the protection and enrichment of Georgian museums' collections in order to safeguard cultural heritage and to prevent the outflow of cultural heritage from the State;
- Encourage museums to apply new technologies, innovative approaches, interactive e-services, to develop and use diverse software applications, in collaboration with other museums, cultural institutions, universities and the business sector;
- Establish and develop virtual museums by means of digitizing museum collections and use of appropriate internet platforms, in order to encourage research, improve public accessibility, attract visitors and raise international awareness;
- Support the development of museums into public spaces, into institutions of educational and research purpose by implementing different programmes, including children and youth programmes;
- Support the establishment and development of thematic museums;
- Support efforts by the museums to set up and develop restoration centres of higher standard that comply with international criteria.

2021-2024

- **National Museum**
- The National Museum was restructured between 2021-2023, and now, as of 2024, it includes 10 museums, 1 national gallery, 4 house-museums and 2 research centres.

The document Culture for Democracy mentions the following anti-democratic examples:

"These are some instances of repressive politics:

Georgian National Museum - *Violations of museum guidelines, appointing non-professionals to the leading positions to conduct so-called reform; repressions based on political preferences, and job interviews in the form of interrogations, as a result up to 300 scientists were fired (30 individual court cases against the Ministry have already succeeded by the former museum workers).*

Archaeological sites - *excavation restrictions that led to the loss of significant discoveries.*

Gelati Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site - the conservation process led by unprofessional teams caused the partial inevitable damage to the monument.

George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation & The National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage - *replacing the leaders of the organizations in like manner to the National Museum and other institutions with the representatives of the juridical system, firing*

professionals, pausing and stopping previous projects and programmes, withdrawing from international agreements, neglecting the significant recommendations in the monument preservation and conservation business."

This document was created by the initiative "Culture for Democracy"(19.08.2024)

3.2. Archives and libraries

Against the relatively favourable background of development in the sphere of cultural heritage, the situation for

libraries and archives is completely inadequate. The present system includes 824 libraries and their number is decreasing day by day (in comparison, in the Soviet period, the number of operating libraries was about 8 000).

Table #2: Public and universal libraries in Georgia, 2001-2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*	2007	2008
Public and universal libraries (in units)	2 170	2 160	2 123	2 090	2 056	1726	672	824
Quantity of readers (in thousands)	2 311.3	1 625.9	1 421.3	1 528.9	1 556.1	732.1	---	778.3
Average quantity of readers (per library)	1 065.1	752.7	669.5	731.5	761.7	424.2	---	945
Quantity of copies (in million)	30.8	30.6	29.6	28.5	28.3	20.7	---	17.3
Quantity of workers (persons)	4 278	4 044	3 819	3 730	3 727	3 408	N/A	N/A

Source: State Department for Statistics of Georgia

Note: Not including the data on Adjara Autonomous Republic.

Most of the libraries in Georgia are accountable to the local authorities. School libraries (2,100 units) are accountable to the Ministry of Education and Science. The financing of the library sphere is the weakest and the librarian's salary is one of the lowest nationwide. This has resulted in the outflow of personnel and complicates the inflow of new high-skilled workers.

The National Library conducted library, bibliographic and scientific-research activities; centralized the collection and analysed statistical data; aids state protection in the field of libraries; identified policy for training-retraining appropriate human resources; and extended the electronic library and diversified the proposed services.

The preservation of archival cultural heritage is vested in the National Book Chamber, which holds more than 1 600 000 titles. The Chamber's role is to prepare the national bibliography and to store, in the archives, all editions dedicated to the culture, history and achievements of Georgia.

The National Archive Fund, which was established for the extended use and improvement of the centralized register of documents created by the state authorities, is also engaged in the protection of cultural heritage (the State Department of Archives under the Ministry of Justice).

The strategic document "Culture Strategy 2025" (01.07.2016),

Chapter III: Sector-specific Task

Libraries and Archives, aims to:

- Improve the legal and administrative regulation of libraries, design standards and certification guidelines of the post of librarian; enforce coordination between stakeholders and designate involved responsibilities;
- Facilitate the growth of library collections and service improvements, support the introduction and application of innovative approaches and new technologies (e.g. mobile libraries);
- Support libraries in the digitization of their collections and archive materials, in the development of libraries, which shall allow an increase in public access to more literature and shall facilitate the transformation of libraries into on-line learning centres;
- Develop libraries into multifunctional institutions in collaboration with different stakeholders (e.g., the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia, the Service Development Agency, the Administration of the President of Georgia, municipalities, the Association of Libraries, etc.), in order to ensure that libraries, along with traditional functions, respond to current challenges by providing opportunities for learning, education, socializing and improve accessibility to public services;
- Support libraries in designing programmes for the development of reading habits and promotion of literacy, in order to develop a more educated public;
- Establish an integrated reserve of various types of national literature and intellectual material (manuscripts, music records and music scores, etc.) and ensure public access to these materials;
- Support archives in digitizing their collections and materials, and in developing other measures in order to safeguard, protect cultural property and to increase public access;
- Encourage growing collaboration between archives, public, educational, research and other organizations, implement joint projects and events for raising awareness about cultural property and materials reserved in archives and for encouraging their application in practice.

According to statistical data of May 2022:

- 796 state public libraries operate in 64 municipalities of Georgia;
- Of these, the main (central) libraries of municipalities - 64;
- City and village libraries - 732;
- Funds of 796 public libraries total - 9,840,249 copies.

The Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association has been implementing the project of renewal of the book stock of regional libraries of Georgia for several years. The aim of the project is to fund regional libraries so that they can annually replenish their book collections with the latest Georgian titles from publishers. The project contributes to the development of the libraries of different regions of Georgia, as well as the development of the publishing sector and popularization of modern literature throughout the country.

In 2020, the project became one of the parts of the anti-crisis plan related to the Pandemic, which, in addition to the renewal of the book collections, was aimed at helping the publishing sector and minimizing losses for the people employed in it. In 2020, more than GEL 1,000+ books per library were donated to 64 regional libraries in Georgia. (https://www.nplg.gov.ge/geo/Library_Network)

3.3. *Performing arts*

According to data from 2022, there are 52 theatres in Georgia, including 2 opera and ballet theatres, 41 drama theatres, a musical comedy theatre and miniature theatres, 2 youth theatres, 7 puppet theatres. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth manages 29 theatres and also N(N)LT - the Centre for the Development of Contemporary Theatre Art. The rest of the theatres are either under municipal jurisdiction or belong to the private or nongovernmental sector.

Over the years, the Cartu Charitable Foundation has restored, reconstructed and equipped theatres (Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, Rustaveli National Theatre, Marjanishvili Theatre, Batumi Drama Theatre, A. Griboedov Russian Drama Theatre, and Ozurgeti Theatre. Rehabilitation of the P. Adamian Armenian Theatre is underway).

According to the 2017 UNESCO CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS / Georgia's Analytical and Technical Report: "The result of the distribution of cultural infrastructure in Georgia according to CDIS is 0.312. [The result](#) of 0.312 is low for the average number of Museums, Libraries and Exhibition venues dedicated to the performing arts for all of Georgia."

6 theatrical festivals are held in Georgia. Notable among them are Tbilisi International Festival of Theatre and GIFT - Georgian International Festival of Arts in Tbilisi.

In 2021, 820 000 GEL (227 777 EUR) were allocated for the priority area "Support for the Development of Georgian Theatre and Theatrical Arts" of the Culture Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. This area consists of 6 competition and 1 non-competition sub-programmes.

In May 2021, in order to promote the development of the theatre sector, a memorandum was signed between the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth of Georgia and the Theatre Society, in which the parties have defined the basic principles of theatre reform to be carried out in the theatre sphere. They will work on identifying the issues related to the field of theatre to be included in the draft Code of Culture, as well as in the theatre development programmes, in human resource strengthening and implementation of

mechanisms that meet modern challenges and ensure access to the theatre arts, as well as the financial and creative sustainability of theatres.

The Memorandum also provides for consultations with the Ministry in the process of selecting candidates for artistic directors of state professional theatres subordinating to the Ministry.

The rule for selecting the artistic directors of state theatres, as well as the Law on Professional Theatres adopted in 2013, is the subject of heated discussions and goes beyond professional issues, as it has a political background.

The strategic document “Culture Strategy 2025” (01.07.2016), Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks in the Performing Arts aims to:

- Improve the legal and regulatory framework of the performing arts sector in order to raise administrative effectiveness and quality across the sector;
- Support the development and popularization of the national dramaturgy (e.g. consider the integration of new works by contemporary Georgian playwrights into the repertoire of national theatres, introduce thematic competitions in order to reveal outstanding new plays, and encourage performing arts criticism, etc.);
- To advance the professional level of performing arts by facilitating the organization of different events, festivals, master-classes. To also support the participation of Georgian actors, directors, playwrights, choreographers, etc. in international events (competitions, festivals, residencies and etc.);
- Improve educational standards and teaching methodologies, legal and administrative regulations for instructors’ licenses and certification procedures in order to develop a continuous and adapted system of choreographic education;
- Facilitate the betterment of the learning environment (study equipment and other materials) in the institutions of choreographic education;
- Support the development of circus art by ensuring that circus education is adequately represented in the wider system of professional education and by providing access to necessary facilities.

It should be noted that apart from this chapter in the Culture Strategy 2025, there is no sectoral research-based strategy developed by theatre figures and experts, which is a necessary tool for the development of the field.

2021-2024

In 2021, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth announced that it would enact legislative changes to move the theatre sector to a modern management model. But this promise for 2021-2024 was not fulfilled.

The document Culture for Democracy mentions the following anti-democratic examples:

"Theatres. The Ministry replaced most of the heads of the state theatres in Tbilisi and the regions and stopped funding for established festivals and projects, such as the Tbilisi International Festival of theatres. As a result, the leaders of Marjanishvili State Theatre resigned and established the independent theatre

Studio 42, which now implements the festival with private and international funds. However, in the regions, significant programmes that positively affected community and professional development were cancelled." *This document created by initiative "Culture for Democracy" (19.08.2024)*

3.4. Visual arts and crafts

Georgia has a long and great history of fine arts and traditional handicrafts, as evidenced by the frescoes, reliefs and works of fine and applied art preserved in museums.

Support for contemporary art since the 1990s, even with very limited funding, has been a priority for the state.

In 1996, the first Tbilisi Biennale of Contemporary Art was held. The art scene of independent Georgia sought to restore Tbilisi as a hub of contemporary art, which it held as the Caucasus centre of modernist bohemia in the early twentieth century.

Since the late 1990s, contemporary art activities have shifted from public museum spaces to the private and non-governmental sectors.

Today, there is one state-funded national gallery in Georgia, which was part of the National Museum until 2021.

Accurate statistics on private art galleries are not available.

In 2021, 450 920 GEL (110 000 EUR) were allocated for the priority area "Promoting the Development of Fine and Contemporary Art" of the Culture Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth. Important non-commercial projects from the non-competition sub-program are:

- Artisterium - Tbilisi International Contemporary Art Exhibition (established in 2008)
- Fest i Nova - The Zdanevich Brothers' International Festival of Contemporary Art
- Furnishing museum funds with new and contemporary works of art.

Despite the lack of state promotion, the activity of private galleries in the international art market is increasing day by day. Noteworthy is the presentation of Georgian artists at Sotheby's and Crossroads art auctions and sales by Baia Gallery and TBC Art Gallery.

TAF - Tbilisi Art Fair is an important player in the exhibition industry. TAF is an international contemporary art market focused largely on galleries and artists from the Black, Caspian and Baltic States. 12 galleries from Georgia are consistently participating in it.

Since 2018, with the support of Adjara Group (a leading Georgian company in the fields of hospitality, lifestyle development and agroproduction), the N(N)LE Propaganda's project "Oxygen Contemporary Art

Biennale” has been implemented, which initially operated in “Non-Exhibition” format. Since 2020, the exhibition has gained international scale.

The best example of social responsibility and support for culture by the private sector is the creation of multifunctional spaces by the Adjara Group, which have become cultural hubs of Tbilisi (“Stamba”, “Fabrika”). Hotel “Stamba” also houses the Tbilisi Museum of Photography and Multimedia.

According to the Contemporary Art Market study conducted by the Tbilisi State Academy in 2020: “Because of the pandemic caused by Covid-19, galleries have virtually stopped exhibition programmes in physical spaces and moved to a virtual platform, which contributed to the democratization of contemporary art to some extent.”

Preserving and developing handicraft traditions is also on the agenda of cultural policy. Important kinds of Georgian traditional handicrafts are: Textiles, Ceramics, Metalsmithing, Jewellery-making, Woodcarving, and Enamelling. The development of these industries as part of the creative industry is greatly facilitated by the nongovernmental sector, in particular, the Georgian Craft Association and the Georgian Art and Culture Centre (GACC).

The strategic document “Culture Strategy 2025” (01.07.2016),

Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks, includes the development of the Visual arts:

- In order to allow the development of an effective visual arts education and improve its quality, advance legal and administrative regulations of visual arts education, designate teaching standards and learning methodologies, etc.;
- To support the development of the institutions of visual arts education;
- To create and develop the system of visual arts schools in order to develop professional skills and thinking;
- To deliver special incentives to encourage artists;
- To support the development of corresponding business models and business skills for the personnel of galleries, curators and arts consultants in order to promote visual arts and stimulate the dynamics of domestic art market;
- To facilitate the organization of periodic events, arts residencies and galleries and encourage participation in international projects in order to raise the interest of international artists and curators towards Georgia;
- To create a multifunctional facility of culture - the museum of contemporary art, in order to ensure national and international promotion of visual arts, its protection and demonstration.

Traditional Crafts

- To develop legislative initiatives, identify artisans, create an integrated public electronic database, develop craft studios, encourage corresponding publications and support the participation in exhibitions and fairs in order to develop Georgian traditional craftsmanship and contribute to its integration into the international market;

- To support the development of sustainable entrepreneurship by studying historical Georgian crafts and by employing the resources of the existing and forgotten traditions;
- To support the realization of training programmes for artisans and the development of distribution networks, in order to ensure the production and sale of high quality products.

2021-2024

In 2021-2023, the National Gallery/National Museum acquired works by contemporary artists for the first time in many years.

The document Culture for Democracy mentions the following anti-democratic examples:

"Some individual cases:

Artist Sandro Sulaberidze removed his work from the exhibition "Self-Portrait by the Mirror" at the National Gallery and left the words "Art is alive and independent" written on the wall. The Ministry of Internal Affairs opened an investigation into the incident on grounds of theft, despite the absence of a signed contract for the specific work. This action was met with protests of cultural workers and some members of the public. As a result, the Ministry of Internal Affairs dropped the investigation against the artist due to a lack of evidence of a crime."

This document created by initiative "Culture for Democracy" (19.08.2024)

3.5. Cultural arts and creative industries

3.5.1. GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Culture Strategy 2025 adopted in 2016 defines the cultural and creative industries as follows: "Cultural and creative industries - The industries producing and distributing goods or services which embody or convey cultural expression, irrespective of the commercial value they may have; also industries in which the product or service contains a substantial element of artistic or creative endeavour. Besides the traditional arts sectors, creative industries encompass the audiovisual sector, advertising, media and broadcasting and etc."

The Culture Strategy 2025 Task 1.1 refers to the development of mechanisms promoting the so-called startup businesses of the creative industries, and "creative incubators" as an example of an instrumental approach in the context of awareness raising and audience development.

And the 6th Strategic Goal deals with the "Creative Industries":

"Goal: Creative industries represent an important source for job creation, economic growth and innovation; it is a competitive sphere of activity.

Task 6.1.: Creative industries in Georgia have a favourable environment for development: the output of higher quality and competitive products and services has increased.

Tasks:

- Perform mapping of the current state of the creative industries, evaluate their economic importance and potential, in order to design an effective system for the attraction of investments;
- Establish a supplementary public programme – “Creative Georgia” - in order to develop creative industries with different mechanisms;
- Create and strengthen organizations (e.g. Crafts Council) concerned with the business-oriented development of different sub-sectors of culture in order to support professional development, intersectoral dialogue and internationalization of the cultural sector in question;
- Raise the financial power of the creative industries on the one hand by creating sector-specific funding programmes, initiatives and a system of incentives and, on the other hand, by raising awareness about relevant national and international funds and programmes;
- Modernize/create appropriate spaces for creative industries; offer outdated, dysfunctional and unused buildings to creative industries in order to stimulate the materialization of their creative and innovative ideas, revitalize cultural activities and facilitate clustering within the cultural sector and their cooperation with the private sector;
- Execute special programmes to help creative industries develop their business-related skills and vice versa, help businesses expand their creative skills;
- Help the establishment of creative incubators where creative businesses, including start-ups, are offered appropriate spaces and services;
- Support the development of creative industries’ webpages and commercial platforms;
- Encourage the establishment of clusters and networks of creative industries in Georgia and beyond its borders.

Following the Strategy, in 2017 a new state organization LEPL “Creative Georgia” was created under the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, the areas of work of which are commercialization of the creative industries sector and supporting its sustainable development. <http://creativegeorgia.ge/>

In 2016 the Creative Georgia Roadmap for Developing Cultural and Creative Industries in Georgia was elaborated based on the recommendations received in the framework of the series of sub-sectoral round table meetings with representatives of the CCI sector, and under the guidance of the leading EU experts from the EUEaP Culture and creativity programme.

The Creative Georgia project “Creative Twist - Boosting the cultural and creative industries in Georgia”, funded by the UNESCO International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) that was launched in 2021, is important. The project provides for the following:

1. Conduct a research and mapping exercise to measure the social and economic impact of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in order to inform the development of an evidence-based policy;
2. Raise awareness of CCIs and their economic dimension;
3. Elaborate a medium-term state strategy and action plan for CCIs, identifying the fiscal, legislative and/or policy measures required for their development”.

Other important institutions for the CCI development are:

Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency/GITA (founded in 2014) which supports initiatives to create innovative ecosystems. These are: Game Jam, Innovation Week, INNOV-A-THON Tbilisi, "Innovation in Architecture" and others.

In 2016, GITA established the National Network of Innovation Centres "Technology Park Georgia" in Tbilisi.

Also, in 2016 the JSC Partnership Fund's programme *Startup Georgia* promoting innovative business was launched jointly with GITA. A small number of cultural projects is supported by this programme.

The agency "*Produce in Georgia*" is established under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. It aims to improve the entrepreneurial environment, develop the private sector, promote exports and attract investment. The Agency, in cooperation with the National Centre for Cinematography, is implementing the programme "Film in Georgia", which aims to promote Georgia as one of the main locations for shooting Western European films.

Compiling accurate statistics and analysis are essential for the development of CCIs.

In 2015, Culture for Development Indicators for Georgia started. It is an initiative by European Union-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Programme, funded by the European Union.

According to the UNESCO CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS/Georgia's Analytical and Technical Report (2017), employment in the cultural sector in Georgia in 2015 made up 5.02% of the total employed. According to the same research, in 2017, CCIs share in the national GDP made up 2.8%.

However, Geostat has not yet fully assessed the creative industries according to the CDIS methodology. The 2016 report of the Georgian Business Agency "Bia" states that the active companies in the field of culture and art make up only 0.8% of the business database. It should be noted that this component does not include the architecture industry.

The Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, as a prerequisite for the effective development of CCIs, is considered by the state and the private sector.

In this context, it is noteworthy that in January 2017, a special interagency committee for the development of cultural strategy was set up, consisting of representatives of various ministries and autonomous republics. This working group coordinates the development of CCIs in Georgia.

There are examples of successful collaboration between professionals within the sector.

The establishment of the Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association (GPBA) was followed by various studies and activities that laid the foundation for a steadily growing industry.

The number of local centres of the International Impact Hub Network is increasing ("Fabrika 40/Impact Hub Tbilisi", "Stamba", "Radio City" (under construction) - all are financed by the company Adjara Group). These hubs integrate the common working spaces with workshops and shops and hospitality facilities in the old rehabilitated industrial buildings.

The development of CCIs is greatly facilitated by online media; for example, Artarea TV which has been operating since 2012 focuses on art, culture and creative content. Festivals are attracting attention in terms of professional development and promotion of this sector. Festivals are creating the image of the country, have a direct and indirect economic impact and increase quality cultural tourism.

At the end of 2020, the Creative Industries Platform, a non-governmental organization, was established. It conducted two studies aimed at identifying challenges in the creative industries sector.

"Creative Industries Needs Study" (30.12. 2020)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vyAguQuYH3gTyTwjNjIRr2-AMB11ej1/view>

and "The impact of COVID 19 on the creative industries" (04.28.2020).

3.5.2. BOOKS AND PRESS

According to the Georgian Book Market Survey conducted by LEPL Georgian National Book Centre in 2013-2015:

"By 2015, about 100 publishing houses were registered in Georgia, of which 55 were active publishers, most of them were small businesses. In 2013-2015, the largest share of revenues received by publishing houses came from sales of fiction. Editions and sale of academic/professional literature (20%), children's literature (11%) and supporting textbooks (9%) are the most profitable after fiction for publishing houses."

According to the Geostat data, the total circulation of books and brochures published in 2016 was 3.1 million copies, and the circulation of published magazines - 27.8 million copies. There is no data for subsequent years.

In recent years, the number of printed newspapers has sharply decreased: in 2016 there were 317 newspapers, in 2017 - 218, in 2018 -175, in 2019- 177 and in 2020 - only 98. Such a decline is due to the sharp increase in consumption of electronic publications and social networks.

About 80% of the book publishers registered in Georgia are members of the NNLE Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association. The [Association](#) was founded in 1996 and it defines and protects the interests and copyright in the book sector and freedom in publishing. The Association has developed a code of professional ethics as well as legislation to improve the book sector.

In 1997 the Association held the first Tbilisi Book Festival, which has become annual since 2000 and is the largest international book fair in Georgia.

There are also other local book fairs: Tbilisi Book Days, Book and Music, New Year Book Festival, Autumn Book Festival, Tbilisi Book Fair, New Year Book Fair, and International Book Day.

The largest forum for the international popularization of Georgian literature and books is the Frankfurt Book Fair, where the Georgian national stand has been presented since 2007. In 2018, Georgia was represented at the Frankfurt Book Fair as an honorary guest.

Tbilisi is the World Book Capital (UNESCO) from April 23, 2021 for a year.

The *Tax Code* of Georgia specifies some preferences for the importation of scientific, creative editions and fiction, books and periodicals where the authors are citizens of Georgia as well as for the importation of Georgian classics published abroad. Guidelines are also set for the distribution, import, sale and printing of periodicals and fiction. The state supports publishing activities through governmental programmes.

In 2021, 900 000 GEL was allocated for the priority area “Promotion of Georgian Books and Literature” of the Culture Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth.

LEPL Writers’ House and LEPL Creative Georgia are the state organizations supporting the development of literature and creativity of writers with this funding through various literary competitions.

The strategic document “Culture Strategy 2025” (01.07.2016), Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks lists priorities for Literature and Publishing:

- In order to develop reading habits/skills and literacy of the public, particularly among children and youth, and promote literature in general, it is important to work with different organizations (e.g.: the National Parliamentary Library, the Writers’ House, the Literature Museum, the Service Development Agency, etc.) and support special projects and events;
- For the protection and development of national literature, including literary heritage, to setup necessary mechanisms and a convenient environment to create, publish and translate new works and also make them accessible; introduce residency programmes for Georgian writers;
- Support participation in international events, such as festivals, exhibitions and competitions in order to develop and ensure international promotion of Georgian literature;
- Sustain the teaching of creative writing at all levels of education and encourage the development of literature studies and criticism;
- Support the development of children's literature through special funding mechanisms;
- Support the translation of Georgian literature into other languages and vice-versa; provide training programmes for the translators of the Georgian literature and develop professional networks of translators;
- In order to ensure the development of print distribution networks, to study the local market and in accordance with international best practices, to elaborate measures for encouraging book quality control and incentives for book publishers and booksellers;
- Facilitate the production and distribution of different types of (cultural, scientific and technical) literature in order to support publishing companies;
- Taking into consideration innovative approaches and new technologies, to elaborate special training programmes, in order to develop, distribute and promote e-books.

In 2020 the Georgian Publishers and Booksellers Association conducted a study, which found that “as of 2021, there are about 150 book publishing companies in Georgia. The vast majority of them are in Tbilisi and most of them are small businesses. Book sales was characterized by an upward trend until 2019”.

According to the study, “the most popular and large-scale book fair is the Tbilisi International Book Festival, which is characterized by the large number of visitors and loyal publishers”. Among international events with the largest number of Georgian participants, the Frankfurt Book Fair leads the way, with publishers showing particularly strong interest in 2018. “Frankfurt is followed by Sharjah, Leipzig and London book fairs with a relatively high number of participants.”

It is worth noting that in addition to publishers, cultural and educational centres such as: state universities, museums, etc. contribute to the development of the Georgian book market.

According to the research, the average selling price of a book amounted to (GEL/EUR):

- 2016- 14.04 /5.37
- 2017- 14,16/5.07
- 2018- 14.94/4.81
- 2019-16.51/5.40
- 2020- 18.04/5.61

Along with printed literature, the e-book market is also developing. Digital editions are mainly available on the websites of the publishers themselves, as well as in specialized online stores (eg, www.saba.com.ge , www.lit.ge and www.ibooks.ge). However, it still represents a small share of publishers' revenues (<10%) according to 2020 data.

LEPL Writers' House has played an important role in the development of literature and the book business. It's task is to create an open space for the presentation of the Georgian and world cultural traditions and ongoing literary processes.

In 2019, the Writers' House and the National Book Centre of Georgia merged. The Writers' House aims to popularize cultural heritage and literature, promote literary processes, establish literary competitions and awards, establish and develop contacts with foreign governmental and nongovernmental organizations, agencies and creative associations, to create two museums (D. Sarajishvili and repressed writers), offer interesting projects for young people interested in literature, and to publish a literary newspaper.

Since 2023, the change of leadership of the Writers' House has led to some writers and publishers to oppose the new leadership and to their boycott of important activities organized by the Writers' House.

The document Culture for Democracy mentions the following anti-democratic examples:

"These are some instances of repressive politics:

Writers House - Appointed a new director who, as a member of the Georgian Parliament, cut funding for important programmes and events like the Tbilisi International Festival of Literature and the Tbilisi International Book Fair. They also interfered with the main literary prize - Litera, resulting in over 100 writers, translators, and publishers boycotting the Writers' House and the Ministry. In response, independent participation, funded by

publishers, was organized at the Frankfurt Book Fair, along with the Independent Litera and Tbilisi Literature Festival, conducted by PEN Georgia and supported by international partners and local businesses”.

This document created by initiative "Culture for Democracy" (19.08.2024)

3.5.3. AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

In 2001, in order to rescue the cinema industry, the Ministry of Culture established the National Film Centre which, to some extent, drove the reforms in the film sphere. The Georgian National Cinematography Centre, as a distanced organization, distributes state funding and operates as an in-gatherer and supporter of this industry. Its work is also crucial in strengthening international ties and promoting joint production. To promote the film industry, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia initiated the amendment to the *Tax Code of Georgia* which provided that producers that obtain funding from the National Film Centre will be charged income tax only after the release of a film. *Amendments to the Tax Code* came into effect on 1 January 2015 in the form of additions to paragraphs 65, 66, 67 of Article 309 under which 20% of qualified expenses from the film production costs are returned to the production company; in addition, 2-5% of qualified expenses are reimbursed for the promotion component.

The situation in the film distribution network is poor. Only 4-5 cinema theatres in Georgia meet modern standards. One of the main problems of cinema halls is the piracy releases in private TV companies, despite the active work of the Georgian National Communications Committee. Another issue of concern is the dominance of American films which must be addressed by developing and propagating Georgian national and European cinema with the help of public television companies.

Georgia became a member of Eurimages in 2011. During these years, the Georgian Film Centre has supported 17 Georgian-foreign co-productions, and 3 322 322 EUR have been issued to finance Georgian projects.

The number of Georgian films has increased significantly in international forums and festivals: Cannes, Berlinale, Locarno, and others.

Among 7 international festivals in Georgia, the Tbilisi International Film Festival is important.

In 2021, 973 000 GEL was allocated for the priority area “Promotion of Georgian Cinema” of the Culture Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Among Georgian film producers, JSC Georgian Film is the largest film production company in Georgia, which has 100 years of filmmaking history.

The audiovisual services industry is developing rapidly in Georgia. For example, POSTRED, a Tbilisi-based postproduction film company founded in 2015, already collaborates with Netflix, A24, BBC, and Paramount. The computer games industry is also growing in Georgia. It is noteworthy that state support in this area started with creation of a simulation game for the police. In summer 2010, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia initiated an innovative project aimed at the promotion and development of the gaming industry in Georgia.

Within this Ministry, a special studio has been created to work on 3D games technology.

In 2021, 150 000 GEL were allocated for the creation of a computer game promoting Georgian culture, history and mythology in the priority area of the Culture Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Today, various successful companies operate in this market, and an important role for the development of the field is given to the training of professional staff in such a leading organization as the Computer and Mobile Games Laboratory of Ilia State University (GAMELAB ILIAUNI).

Unlike the film and computer games industry, the cultural content of Georgian media is rather uniform. The total annual airtime of local television feature programmes is divided as follows: according to 2016 data, in the Georgian Public Broadcaster's programmes, feature programmes holds 46%, of which 37% (3051.8 hours) are local productions, 8% (657.7 Hours) - co-productions, and 54% (4439.8 hours) - international productions. Apart from the Public Broadcaster, only Internet TV Artarea has a large amount of cultural content.

The strategic document "Culture Strategy 2025" (01.07.2016), Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks, highlights the following priorities for the Audiovisual sector:

- Develop services and professions linked to the production, post-production and distribution of audio-visual content;
- Develop regulatory mechanisms for the audiovisual sector (e.g. box office transparency, designation of age limit, dubbing quality, etc.) by employing best international practices (EU Directive on Audiovisual Media Services);
- Promote Georgia's convenience as a filming location and facilitate international co-production by developing the necessary infrastructure, legislation and system of incentives (cash rebates, tax rebates, credit incentives, insurance etc.);
- Establish the national cinema reserve in order to preserve and organize the film heritage and ensure the public's accessibility to Georgian and world cinematography;
- Facilitate the development of multifunctional cultural-educational centres and/or of appropriate cinemas and alternative means of screening for the purpose of ensuring film screenings;
- Considering the importance of visual and audio effects for the audiovisual industry in general, to facilitate the mobilization of necessary human and technical resources - to elaborate professional training programmes and a system of incentives; to ensure access to appropriate facilities and equipment and etc.;
- Foster the development of the multi-media and games industry by promoting new business models and simplifying methods for the internationalization of the games industry.

Media and Broadcasting

- Use the potential of the media to advance public awareness about culture, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;

- Update laws and regulations and plan mechanisms in order to establish and develop cultural media outlets, encourage regional, private commercial and non-commercial media to produce cultural products and to cover cultural processes;
- Design measures to help the public broadcaster contribute to the creation and distribution of products of cultural importance;
- Produce special public broadcasting programmes, both in the official and ethnic languages, to expand opportunities for ethnic minorities to access the information about cultural processes;
- Support institutions of higher education to develop programmes in cultural journalism and facilitate the participation of journalists working on culture in local and international training programmes;
- Sustain critical evaluation of professional activities to enable analysis of cultural life, which shall in return lead to increased public awareness and allow cultural professionals to assess their own work.

In 2013, the CG Georgia Group was founded, belonging to the Georgian Visual Effects and Computer Graphics Development Association. Their FB group includes 43,205 members.

VRex Immersive Inc. was established in 2014. Since 2014 VRex have been perfecting its craft, knowledge and VR infrastructure. VRex is creating Virtual Reality experiences of places for tourism, helping them showcase their services through VR.

In 2015-2024 their activities included participation in various events: London - WTM, Berlin - ITB, Dubai - (ATM), New York - VR experiences were a part of international exhibitions in the U.S., Johannesburg - tourism and tech events, Dubai - VRex began to operate in the city of comfort and innovation, with the aim of generating significant value in the hospitality sector.

In 2021-2024, in the film industry, critically-minded representatives came under significant pressure:

*The document Culture for Democracy mentions the following anti-democratic examples:
are some instances of repressive politics:*

"These

The National Film Centre has cut off funding for confirmed projects, international collaborations, and periodic events like the Tbilisi Film Festival. They have also stopped the participation of Georgian filmmakers and field representatives in international programmes and festivals. The Centre has rejected previously confirmed and new funds, or intent letters, based on the political preferences of the applicants. Additionally, they fired the director and a few leaders from the Centre and replaced them with leaders from the GD radical propaganda channel.

As a result, several independent institutions and movements have been formed, including the Georgian Film Institute, the Doca Association, and the Movement Georgian Cinema under Threat".

Some individual cases:

Salome Jashi's film "Timing the Garden" was not allowed to be screened by the Georgian Film Academy, an independent institution. According to the director, the film was denied due to differing opinions. In reality, it resulted from direct criticism by the Ministry and leading MPs of the Georgian Dream. The documentary follows

the transportation of massive hundred-year-old trees from the coast of the Georgia to the private garden of Bidzina Ivanishvili, which incurred great expense and inconvenience."

This document created by initiative "Culture for Democracy" (19.08.2024)

3.5.4. MUSIC

Georgia has a long and rich tradition of musical culture and, in particular, of traditional folk music, which is witnessed by the introduction of Georgian polyphonic singing on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In 2021, 1 170 000 GEL was allocated for the priority area "Promotion of the Development of Georgian Professional Music Art" of the Culture Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and 378 000 GEL - for the priority area "Promotion of Georgian Folklore".

In addition to the two opera and ballet theatres, the following LEPLs are state-subordinated, namely:

- LEPL Center for the Protection, Development and Promotion of Classical Music;
- LEPL Georgian National Music Centre;
- LEPL Jansug Kakhidze Musical and Cultural Centre;
- LEPL Anzor Erkomaishvili State Folklore Centre;
- LEPL Tbilisi State Chamber Orchestra;
- LEPL Gori Women's Chamber Choir;
- LEPL Iliko Sukhishvili and Nino Ramishvili Georgian National Ballet State Academic Ensemble;
- LEPL Georgian Folk Song and Dance State Academic Ensemble "Erisioni";
- LEPL Ensemble "Basiani";
- LEPL Georgian State Academic Folk Song and Dance Ensemble "Rustavi".
- LEPL Zakaria Paliashvili Central Ten-Year Music School of Talents;
- LEPL Extracurricular Art Educational Institution - Evgeni Mikeladze St. Tbilisi Central Music School;
- LEPL Extracurricular Art Educational Institution - Rustavi Music School;
- LEPL Extracurricular Art Educational Institution - Telavi Niko Sulkhaniashvili Music School;
- LEPL Extracurricular Art Educational Institution - Sokhumi Dimitri Arakishvili Music School;
- LEPL Gori Sulokhan Tsintsadze Music College;
- LEPL Tbilisi Vano Sarajishvili State Conservatory;

There are also folklore ensembles and music schools in each of the municipalities.

Classical music festivals, as well as jazz and electronic music festivals are held in Georgia. Prior to the pandemic, Tbilisi was an electronic music hub in the region, which also contributed to the rapid development of the club industry.

An important role in the musical culture of Georgia is played by folklore, especially polyphony, an important institution of which is the International Centre for the Study of Traditional Polyphony.

The strategic document "Cultural Strategy 2025" (01.07.2016), Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks sets the following priorities for Music:

- Improve legal and administrative regulations in order to develop a coherent and continuous system of music education: develop professional performing skills and thinking in parallel with general education and practice in mastering (the instruments) from basic education to higher education;

Improve the quality of education (determine teaching standards and methodologies, ensure their implementation into practice, especially in the regions, etc.);

- Support the development of a favourable study environment in music educational institutions;
- Collect, document, publish, and promote the artistic heritage of national professional performers and composers;
- Support and promote national composers;
- Support different events, festivals, competitions and master classes in the sphere of music, especially classical music, in order to ensure the professional development of national composers and music performers, and facilitate the participation of Georgian musicians in various international events;
- Support the development of the music industry by developing new business models, new technology, appropriate professions and services, supporting mergers and coproductions of networks and clusters, and enforcing the protection of intellectual property, develop incentives, etc.

3.5.5. DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES

Architecture/construction is the fastest growing and developing field in Georgia.

In 2016, 1 500 newly registered companies were added to the BIA Business Agency database, of which 1 435 are small, 29 medium and 9 large companies. The majority of newly registered companies by category are Construction Products, Construction and Real Estate - 25% (966).

In the BIA database, the most active companies are registered in the field of construction products, construction - 19.6%. 5 493 businesses in this category can be found on bia.ge.

One of the most influential organizations in the field of architecture is the Union of Architects of Georgia.

In 2021, a memorandum was signed between the Ministry of Culture and the Union of Architects of Georgia. The document envisages cooperation for the protection of cultural heritage, both nationally and internationally. The work is planned in the direction of protection of cultural heritage and artistic monuments, development of modern Georgian architecture and popularization of the achievements.

The most important international forum in the field is the Tbilisi Architecture Biennale, which is funded by Creative Europe, Tbilisi City Hall and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Until 2016, advertising was a growing field. But in 2016 it experienced a sharp decline due to the general crisis.

Television advertising revenues in 2020 amounted to 75.2 million GEL, which is 7.6 million GEL (11%) more than last year. Due to the 2020 parliamentary elections, despite the pandemic crisis, the overall market growth largely resulted from highly paid political advertisements. The total amount of political advertising was 13.9 million GEL.

According to the report of the National Communications Commission:

“The analysis of television advertising revenues in 2020 shows that the largest decrease in revenues from commercial advertising occurred in the second quarter of 2020; it should be noted that it was the period

when the pandemic imposed large-scale restrictions in the country and all areas faced new challenges, including both advertisers and broadcasters. It took some time to adapt to the new realities and challenges, and in the third quarter, as the National Communications Commission had predicted, the TV advertising market returned to normal rate, with a 7% increase.”

As for radio broadcasters, in 2020 the advertising revenues of radio broadcasters amounted to 6.8 million GEL, which is 23% less than the same period last year. The decline in radio broadcasters’ advertising revenue is largely due to the pandemic.

At the same time, more and more companies are emerging in the advertising market with their young creative staff who are competitive in the international arena: the first gold at Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity was brought to Georgia in 2011 by the advertising agency Windfor’s; in 2016, Georgia became the winner in the Young Marketer category.

Batumi, the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, hosts the International Black Sea Advertising Festival every year, which promotes the development of the field and creative industries in general.

According to the Culture Strategy 2025, the state policy is aimed at creating incentives for the development of enterprises, including in the fashion and textile sectors.

Tbilisi Fashion Week was first held in 2009 and has become an international platform where fashion professionals and designers working in the region can interact with the media and clients. It presents Tbilisi as the fashion capital, where East meets West, and popularizes Georgia by its art and fashion. In addition to the portfolio of its designers, it is noteworthy that it also facilitates parallel events and organizes shows for professionals around the world. Now Tbilisi Fashion Week is sponsored by Mercedes-Benz, which connects this event with other similar events worldwide.

The strategic document “Cultural Strategy 2025” (01.07.2016),

Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks, sets the following priorities for Architecture:

- Promote architecture as a complex discipline bearing cultural, creative and aesthetic value; on the one hand ensure its institutional and legal position within the cultural sector and on the other hand to consider it as a cultural resource in economic and construction policies;
- Introduce a synchronized policy of spatial planning and cultural heritage protection - to consider the principles of integrated conservation and energy efficiency; to create environmentally-friendly architecture and apply new technologies;
- Follow the principles of good governance when architecture intervenes in the cultural landscape and engage experts, professionals and interest groups in the decision making process;
- Improve legal and administrative regulations, and empower law enforcement in regard to issues connected to spatial planning, relevant expertise and standards and licensing of architects;
- Ensure private sector motivation in order to achieve higher architectural standards of the built environment;
- Help Georgian architects to participate in international architectural competitions and events and promote their participation in experience-sharing programmes with foreign agencies.

Design

- Raise awareness of policymakers, representatives of the business sector and the general public about design as an interdisciplinary sector comprising arts, innovation, creativity, and technology and about its importance in cultural, social, economic and environmental dimension;
- Create integrated platforms for designers, researchers, technicians, engineers and entrepreneurs in order to develop and deliver joint innovative products;
- To accomplish the development and international promotion of the national design sector, empower various sorts of design companies and strengthen their international competitiveness;
- Support research and the use of intangible cultural heritage and national themes and elements in the design industry.

3.5.6. CULTURAL AND CREATIVE TOURISM

The abolition of the visa regime with the European Union as a result of the Association Agreement of 2014 allows free movement and exchange for the citizens of Georgia.

Against the background of this liberalization, the government has attracted foreign investment in the country through the platform “Trade with Georgia”, which acts as a kind of “open door” and a popularization stage.

According to the Georgian National Tourism Administration, the conditions for attracting investment are mainly simplified procedures, lesser bureaucracy, improvement of the business climate and support for the development of the technical sector.

The state policy in the tourism sphere is pursued by the Georgian National Tourism Administration, a Legal Entity of Public Law, within the system of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, which independently conducts activity by state control.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration reported that the tourism-related services accounted for 6.73% of the national GDP in 2015. However, it is impossible to separate cultural tourism from other types of tourism economic activity.

Georgia has often been praised in the international media for its cuisine, historical heritage, nature, fashion, design and films, and it has become an attractive country for tourists, travellers, culinary fans and wine experts.

According to the 2019 data, popular activities for visitors are:

- Tasting of Georgian wine and cuisine - 80.15%
- Sightseeing - 77.5%
- Visiting nature, landscapes - 34.1%
- Visiting local culture and art - 25.5%

The number of tourists visiting Georgia reached record levels in the first semester of 2017. Their number exceeded 2.9 million, which was 13.4% more than the previous year. The number of international traveller visits in the fourth quarter of 2019 was 2 120 404, which was 12.1% more than the previous year.

However, in October 2021 - the second year of the pandemic - the number of visitors decreased by 71.8% compared to October of 2019.

The share of tourism and related services in the economy was 7.3% according to 2017 data. The pandemic has hampered tourism development and revenues, but infrastructure development has not stopped, allowing the industry to recover rapidly in the post-pandemic period.

Among 1 500 newly registered companies added to the business agency BIA database in 2016, 8% represented the tourism sphere. Among active companies, 4.3% are engaged in tourism.

The state cooperates closely with international organizations to develop tourism. Georgia became the 27th member state of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in 2016.

In 2021, the 10th Consultative Forum of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe was held by the city of Kutaisi. Due to the pandemic, the forum was held online.

The theme of the most important international event was "Resilient and Sustainable Cultural Routes – Innovating Our Way out of the Crisis".

Georgia is currently participating in five certified cultural routes of the Council of Europe:

- The European Route of the Jewish Heritage;
- The Wine Route;
- Prehistoric Rock Art Trails;
- European Route of Historic Thermal Towns;
- European Route of Historic Gardens.

In connection with the opening of domestic tourism in the country in the summer of 2021, the first mobile application of Georgia's cultural routes was launched.

The free mobile application Cultural Routes Georgia, created at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, is available for both Android and iOS platforms.

In 2021, Georgia became a member of the Executive Board of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) for the period 2021-2025.

In 2021, 50 000 GEL were allocated for the sub-direction "Development of a special training module in the field of culture for tourist guides" of the Culture Promotion Programme of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The strategic documents "Georgian Tourism Strategy 2025" and "Cultural Strategy 2025" promote Georgian tourism. The Cultural Strategy 2025, Chapter III: Sector-specific Tasks - Cultural Tourism prioritises the following:

- Promote and exploit the economic potential of cultural resources (e.g. intangible, tangible and natural heritage, exhibitions, concerts, festivals, traditional holidays, etc.) in terms of encouraging sustainable development of tourism, use this potential to create unique, authentic and internationally competitive tourism experiences;

- Develop training programmes for managers of cultural objects and representatives of the tourism sector about existing trends in tourism markets and tourism marketing, but also about the opportunities to use different cultural resources in tourism development, the economy of cultural tourism, international best practices and other relevant tasks;
- Strengthen coordination between the authorities, representatives of tourism and the creative industries and non-governmental sector in order to allow accumulation of information regarding cultural tourism, statistical data about its economic influence and in order to develop and implement research-based policies;
- Promote public-private partnership in order to develop cultural tourism (e.g. elaborate legislative initiatives, investment packages and partnership schemes, support cultural events of national importance, develop brand packages, participate in support programmes of international donors, etc.);
- Develop local and international cultural routes (guidance and information symbols, paths, etc. for tangible, intangible and natural heritage); Integrate Georgia in transnational cultural routes (e.g. the Europe Cultural Routes programme, UNWTO Silk Road Programme);
- Support the sustainable development of tourism in collaboration with interested organizations in order to limit the negative impact of tourism on monuments of cultural and natural heritage and the environment, and ensure the growth of economic and social benefits for local populations.

2020-2024

Challenges:

- **Impact of COVID-19 and Political Instability:** The COVID-19 pandemic caused a global crisis, significantly affecting tourism. Although tourist numbers were approaching 2019 levels by 2023, there was a sharp decline in spring 2024 following protests against the controversial "Foreign Influence Transparency" law in Georgia.

In 2023, the number of international tourist visits amounted to 7,072,220 (+30.3%). Tourist visits are characterized by a particularly high growth and, accordingly, their share in the total number of visits has increased, namely, compared to the figure for 2019, the share of tourist visits increased from 65.8% to 75.7% in 2023. It is worth noting that the annual growth of tourist visits is 27.8 %.

4. Law and legislation

4.1. General legislation

4.1.1. CONSTITUTION

Following independence, Georgia adopted the country's basic law, a constitution in 1995, which was drafted by multi-party parliament in accordance with the fundamental principles and norms of international law defining Georgia as a presidential republic.

On October 15, 2010, the new *Constitution of Georgia* was adopted, which changes the system from a presidential state model to a mixed parliamentary-presidential model.

Georgia is a democratic republic where the rights and freedoms of individuals are of the highest value. The *Constitution of Georgia* is a superior law and all other laws and acts of legislation shall comply with it. The following *Articles of the Constitution* refer to cultural issues:

Article 23: "The Constitution of Georgia shall ensure the inviolability of intellectual property and creative freedom. Interference in creative activity or censorship in the creative sphere is not permissible. Placing a prohibition on the product of a creative work or on its distribution shall not be permissible, unless it violates the legal rights of others".

Article 34: "The state shall maintain the development of culture, unrestricted participation of citizens in cultural life, expression and enrichment of cultural origins, recognition of national and generic values and a deepening of international cultural relations. Each citizen of Georgia shall be obliged to protect and preserve the cultural heritage. The state shall protect cultural heritage by law."

Article 38: "Citizens of Georgia are equal in social, economic, cultural and political life regardless of national, ethnic, religious or linguistic origin. The freedom of citizens to use freely their native language and to develop their culture is safeguarded."

4.1.2. ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The procedures for allocation of state funds for culture in Georgia are determined by the Constitution, Law on the State Budget of Georgia, and the annual state budget laws.

The Cabinet of Ministers develops and submits to the Parliament the draft State Budget. It is the role of the Parliament to approve the State Budget on the proposal of the Prime Minister and supervise its implementation. The annual state budget law approves the amount of revenues and expenditures for the following year, including centralized and local ones.

All proposals for the allocation of state funds for culture are based on the country development estimates and forecasts for the next year.

Culture action plans are prepared and aggregated in the preparation of the draft state budget, which is initiated several months prior to the next budget year.

All budget institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs submit, in accordance with the administrative hierarchy, their budget requests and forecasts to the Ministry which integrates them into single application.

Under Georgian legislation (*The Law on Culture, Article 29*) financing of the cultural sector shall be determined by the state budget.

The state safeguards the protection and development of culture by allocating finance under the state programme; and Cultural activity determined by the state programme is financed from the state budget in compliance with the Constitution and the *Law on the Budgetary System* and other acts of legislation.

In accordance with the Law on the State Budget of Georgia, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth is allocated a total amount for culture, sports and youth affairs. These funds are dispensed among the subordinate organizations, legal entities under public law and specific state programmes for culture, cultural heritage, sports and youth affairs. Specific programmes are designed for the various spheres of culture.

Local authorities allocate approximately 30% of all state expenditure on culture (in the 1990s the share of municipal (the Tbilisi city hall) and regional (the Autonomous Republic of Adjara) expenditures was higher).

Some spheres of culture are financed from various state institutions, namely: archives are funded from the budget of the Ministry of Justice; the national library from the budget of the Georgian Parliament; while public TV and radio broadcasting has direct funding from the state budget.

In addition to these programmes, the state budget contains reserve funds for the Georgian Government and Parliament. The funds from these reserves are held for emergencies, such as disasters or for payment of unforeseen state liabilities. The reserve funds are dispensed via the relevant ministries. In rare cases, funds from the reserves are allocated to culture.

In compliance with *Article 14 of the Tax Code*, similar reserve funds are created in the local budgets of the autonomous republics.

Under the Law on Culture the state supports donations and sponsorship of private individuals and legal entities in the sphere of culture using tax incentives and other privileges established by Georgian legislation. However, Article 14 is not supported by adequate definitions in the Tax Code or other acts of legislation.

4.1.3. SOCIAL SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

In Georgia, there is no definite legislation to regulate social security provision for the cultural sector, although various kinds of security are provided under other legislation. In particular:

Law of Georgia on State Pension (December 23, 2005. №2442-rs)

Law of Georgia on Social Assistance (LHG, 51, 31/12/2006)- Law of Georgia on State Compensation and State Academic Scholarships (December 27, 2005. №2549-rs) (applies to scientists and not artists).

The social assistance system in Georgia is established in accordance with the Law of Georgia “On Social Assistance”. The law contains general provisions regarding the applicability and scope of social Assistance. The law establishes 6 types of social assistance: living allowance, reintegration allowance, foster care allowance, allowance for family care of an adult, and non-monetary social assistance and social package. Special provisions related to unemployment benefits and other forms of financial assistance are not foreseen by the social assistance system in Georgia. The social assistance system is also lacking special provisions related to cultural and art workers.

State programmes for social and health care are administered by the LEPL Social Service Agency under the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia. The function of the Agency is to provide maximum assistance to the contingent in need of various services or assistance, through social benefits as well as state health and social programmes. The Agency serves 2.5 million Georgian citizens (about 60 percent of the Georgian population).

Under the *Law on Art Workers and Art Unions, Article 8, paragraph 2*, social security and pension provision for artists shall be implemented under the relevant acts of legislation.

The *Law on Social Security for Researchers / Scientists* regulates the creation of safeguards and conditions for the work of scientists. While culture is not mentioned specifically in the legislation, it is applicable to some cultural workers.

General unemployment in Georgia is a major issue for the government to tackle and therefore the cultural sector has not yet been singled out for specific development.

According to the 2021 data of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), the official employment rate in the population is 22%. Unofficially it reaches 50%. Presumably in the field of culture this number is much higher.

To alleviate the grave social situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the government, which did not have an unemployment benefit scheme before the crisis, has introduced two new temporary measures: unemployment benefits for previously officially employed and assistance for the self-employed.

1. Unemployment benefits for previously officially employed persons

Beneficiaries in this category were selected through the National Tax Registry, which contains data on the payment of income tax by all individuals. The government estimates that about 350 000 people met the requirements for receiving this transfer, which is a very high figure in relation to the number of officially employed persons.

The transfer amount was 200 GEL (62 USD) per month/person and benefits were provided for 6 months. The total budget of the transfer is 460 million GEL (143 million USD).

Payment of benefits terminated as soon as the beneficiary got a new official job and was re-registered in the taxpayer register.

2. Assistance for the self-employed

Self-employment is very common in Georgia, accounting for 45% of all employment and 36% of non-agricultural employment. Under the resolution of the Government, assistance was provided to the self-employed in the form of a one-time payment of 300 GEL (93 USD). The total budget for the transfer is estimated at 75 million GEL (23 million USD), providing assistance to 250 000 self-employed.

The selection of beneficiaries in this category is complicated because most of the self-employed are not registered in any public database. To solve this problem, the government decided that the self-employed should submit any proof of income.

These two categories of benefits cover part of the employment in the field of culture, but do not include those who do not have a stable and registered income.

4.1.4. TAX LAWS

There are few legal incentives for investment in culture in Georgia. This sphere is regulated by general legislation. The *Tax Code* determines some tax privileges, such as exempting the following areas from tax payments: the sale and printing of tickets for theatre and circus performances, classical music concerts and museums; the import of scientific and creative books and fiction, books and magazines written by citizens of Georgia, as well as the importation of Georgian classics published abroad; and services relating to the sale of, import, distribution, delivery and printing of periodicals and fiction.

There are no special tax rules or exemptions for creative individuals.

Construction of temples and churches as charities are tax exempt in compliance with *Article 172 of the Tax Code*. This category of buildings benefits more from the legislation than the restoration of cultural heritage for which the law was intended.

Under the *Tax Code of Georgia*, restoration and reconstruction work on monuments included in the UNESCO world heritage list is exempted from VAT (18%).

In spite of long debates and drafted bills, the *Law on Donations and Sponsorship* has not been adopted. To promote the film industry, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia initiated an amendment to the *Tax Code of Georgia* which will mean that producers that obtain funding from the National Film Centre will be charged income tax only after the release of a film. Under the previous regulation, the funds allocated from the state budget were charged tax before the release of a film, which hindered film producers in their use of the funds. Film producers have been also authorised to charge the 100% depreciation on the released film as an intangible asset. *Amendments to the Tax Code* came into effect on 1 January 2015 in the form of additions to paragraphs 65, 66, 67 of Article 309. From July 1, 2018, the income of a person with the status of a small business has been taxed at a rate of 1%, which promotes the activities of small entrepreneurs employed in cultural industries.

4.1.5. LABOUR LAWS

Article 14 of the Constitution of Georgia deals with two fundamental rights – “freedom” and “equality”. This norm applies to all areas protected by human rights and legitimate interests, including labour relations. In addition, Article 26 of the Constitution guarantees the right to form and join trade unions. Article 33 of the Constitution also recognizes the right to strike.

The *Labour Code of Georgia* was adopted on 25 May 2006. It abolished the *Law on Collective Agreements and Engagements*, which was used sometimes in labour relations with creative workers.

The 2006 Labour Code rejected the concept that the labour law is a law of protective nature and was assessed as a law customized to the interests of the employer. In this context, significant problems of non-compliance with international labour standards were identified.

At the end of 2010, as a result of the constitutional reform in the country, the status of the Labour Code was changed and it became an organic law (Organic Law of Georgia “Labour Code of Georgia” (4113-rs 17/12/2010)). The Labour Code of Georgia was significantly amended in July 2013. Many aspects of labour relations have been regulated in a new way.

According to Article 1 (2) of the Labour Code, “issues related to labour relations, which are not regulated by this law or other special law, shall be regulated by the norms of the Civil Code of Georgia”.

The Labour Code of Georgia recognizes a collective agreement as a source of regulation of labour relations. The Labour Code emphasizes the principle of autonomy of will of the subjects of collective labour relations and therefore, according to Article 41 (3) of the Labor Code, “the parties themselves determine the terms of the collective agreement”.

The *Labour Code of Georgia* (4113-rs 17/12/2010) supports the protection of fundamental human rights, fair remuneration, and labour safety standards.

In addition to this Code, labour issues are regulated by the *Law on Public Service*, which regulates the labour relations of public servants (including in the sphere of culture).

Under the *Law on Art Workers and Art Unions*, Article 8, paragraph 1, an art worker may work in a freelance capacity, be directly employed or work under another type of contract. However, today this law is idle.

In Georgia, there is a trade union for workers in the cultural sector but there is no trend of negotiations on agreements and contracts between employers and trade unions on working conditions.

There is no definite legislation to regulate labour relations in the sphere of culture.

2021 -2024

Challenges:

- Inadequate Legislation: The cultural sector lacks specific legislation to regulate labor relations
- Small Business Status Risks: Individuals with small business status bear almost all risks themselves, effectively excluding social protection and labour rights components

- Lack of Negotiation Trends: There is a trade union for cultural sector workers, but no significant trend in negotiating agreements and contracts on working conditions between employers and unions.
- Unlawful Dismissals: Illegal dismissals are a significant issue, contributing to high levels of self-censorship.
- No Minimum Wage: There is no legislated minimum wage, resulting in very low salaries in the culture and arts sector.

Human Rights Associations:

- In response to mass personnel changes within the Ministry of Culture in recent years, new human rights associations (non-commercial legal entities) have emerged to effectively defend affected individuals in court.

Judiciary:

- Courts generally review cases against the Ministry of Culture impartially, though there is public concern about the influence of a group of biased judges.

4.1.6. COPYRIGHT PROVISIONS

The main legislative act regulating copyright and related rights in Georgia is the *Law on Copyright and Related Rights (1999)*. In addition, Georgia is a member of:

- The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (since May 16, 1995);
- The Rome Convention for the Protection of Performers, Producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting
- Organizations (since 14 August 2004);
- The World Intellectual Property Organization Copyright Treaty (WCT) and World Intellectual Property Organization Performance and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) since May 20, 2002;
- The Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 14 June 2000.

As for the issues related to the infringements of copyright and related rights, they are regulated by the following legislative acts:

Code of Administrative Offenses of Georgia (Articles: 1571, 1572, 1573 and 239);

Criminal Code (Article 189);

Law of Georgia on Border Measures Related to Intellectual Property, which defines special mechanisms to prevent the import and export of counterfeit goods.

In Georgian legislation, relations on copyright in the sphere of intellectual property and moral rights relating to the creation of a scientific, literary and art work are regulated by the *Law on Copyright and Related Rights (1999)*.

Copyright – the integral / essential right of work / art is the homogenous right - which includes the moral rights, economic rights and related rights - of the author. This Law regulates the relations allied to the copyright of performers, phonogram and videogram makers, broadcasting and database makers. State policy in the protection of copyright and related rights is implemented and safeguarded by the National Centre for Intellectual Property, SAKPATENTI.

Copyright accrued within the creation of scientific, literary and art works is safeguarded under the Law. In relation to royalties, the state has established the following guidelines: reproduction of creative products is allowed where they have been legally published or are regarded as common property due to public distribution / awareness; the sum of royalties and terms of payment shall be established under the law, on the one side, and under the contract between the parties, on the other side. In circumstances where the royalty rights are unclear, either party can request a decision from SAKPATENTI.

The legislation determines copyright relating to on-air broadcasting.

The Law on Copyright and Related Rights (1999) separately defines the so-called Artist's Resale Right “Droit de suite” of the author of fine arts and photographic works, that means a right granted to artists or their heirs to receive a fee on the resale of their works of art. Authors can exercise their rights both individually and collectively through a property rights management organization.

Georgian Copyright Association (GCA) - This collective management organization was created by authors and neighbouring rights holders and has been functioning since 1999. GCA has more than 2000 local members.

Association is granted the authority to represent not only local authors and neighbouring rights holders but also foreign authors and neighbouring rights holders through the reciprocal representation agreements with foreign sister societies. GCA has established more than 200 agreements with foreign sister societies and represents more than 5 million authors and neighbouring rights holders in Georgia.

2023

As a result of amendments made to the Law of Georgia “On Copyright and Related Rights” in 2023, the rule of accreditation of The Collective Management Organization (CMO) was changed. Georgian legislation has been finalized and harmonized with international standards, full legal regulation of collective management of property rights in Georgia has been ensured, which in turn contributes to the proper functioning of property rights management on a collective basis, restoring the trust of users and rights' holders in the system.

Also, as a result of the adoption of the package of legislative amendments, the rules and conditions for the establishment of the CMO of property rights and its accreditation were described in detail. The body authorized to issue accreditation, as well as the functions, rights and obligations of the CMO of property rights, were defined.

Also, the purpose of the amendments to the law is to create a legal instrument for a certain group of persons (beneficiary, authorized person) through which, without the consent of the author or other copyright holder and subject to payment of royalties, the beneficiary will be able to reproduce the work in an accessible format, and the authorized person will be able to reproduce the work in an accessible format and distribute it only for use of beneficiaries. In addition, the beneficiary will be able to receive from the domestic or foreign authorized persons adapted formats of the printed works available locally and internationally.

This legislative initiative is based on the provisions of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, adopted by the World Intellectual Property Organization in 2013 (Marrakesh Treaty), and therefore, it is compatible with the best international standards.

In 2023, the Georgian Copyright Association (CGA) failed to meet the new accreditation conditions, while the Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPOA) passed the accreditation and at this stage represents the organization protecting copyright and related rights in Georgia.

Intellectual Property Owners Association (IPOA)- the mission is to develop the field of intellectual property in Georgia, to create an active system for the implementation of the rights of Georgian authors, performers, phonogram manufacturers and other holders of copyright and related rights, to protect their interests in accordance with up-to-date international standards. IPOA is an association created by Georgian rightholders to manage and protect their copyright and related rights on the territory of Georgia and abroad. Besides protection of Georgian rightholders, IPOA also represents the interests of many foreign holders of copyright and related rights on the basis of mutual representation agreements with similar organizations in other countries.

4.1.7. DATA PROTECTION LAWS

The provisions on data protection in Georgia are available within the *Law on Copyright and Related Rights*. The Law establishes the rights of authors and owners of software and databases, and enables the authorised users of original databases or their copies to make necessary changes for the normal operation of the customers' hardware without the consent of the author or a person who owns the copyright on the software and databases.

The *Law on Telecommunications (2005)* establishes the legal and economic principles for the operation of the electronic communication networks and resources all over Georgia. The Law establishes the principles of creation and regulation of a competitive environment in this sphere. The National Communications Commission of Georgia is the regulatory authority in relation to the *Law on Telecommunications (2005)*, *Law on Broadcasting (2004)*, and *Law on Independent National Regulatory Authorities (09.13.2002)*. The terms of reference of the Commission covers the drafting and adoption of relevant statutory acts.

However, data protection is recognized as a major issue in Georgia. Some efforts to resolve problems in this area were made by the State Department on Information Provision which has drafted the *Bill on E-documents, E-signatures, E-agreements and E-commerce*.

Consequently, in 2017, the Law on Electronic Document and Electronic Trusted Services was adopted. (639-IIs
21/04/2017)

4.1.8. LANGUAGE LAWS

The official language of Georgia is Georgian. In the territory of Abkhazia there are two official languages – Georgian and Abkhazian.

Law on Official Language - 22/07/2015 / N 4084-RS /. The law enforces the constitutional status of the state language, establishes the legal basis for its use and protection, and regulates legal relations of the functioning of state and non-state languages.

The Constitution of Georgia obliges all departments, municipal services and users to use the Georgian language and all official versions of legislative texts must be published in Georgian. In order to promote integration of minorities and their participation in the state administration, the Ministry of Education and Science arranges intensive teaching of the official language.

The Constitution of Georgia provides for the equality of all citizens regardless of their national, ethnic, religious or language background. Freedom for citizens to use their native language and to practice their culture is safeguarded. In addition to the Constitution, the rights of minorities are specified in the *Laws on General Education, on Culture, and on Broadcasting*.

Under the Law on Broadcasting (Article 16, paragraph I), public broadcasting shall "place programmes in the languages of minorities, about minorities and prepared by minorities in accordance with their share in the total population". Accordingly, Georgian radio and TV have special news programmes in some languages (Abkhaz, Azeri, Armenian, Russian and Ossetian). In addition, there is special public broadcasting in the Abkhaz and Ossetian languages, which covers a part of Abkhazia and the total region of "South Ossetia". While Georgia has public schools in Azeri, Armenian and Russian, in Abkhazia and so-called South Ossetia the right of Georgians to study their native language is completely restricted.

4.1.9. OTHER AREAS OF GENERAL LEGISLATION

Laws providing financing	
<i>Law on the Budgetary System</i>	29.12.2004
<i>Law on the State Budget of Georgia</i>	2005
<i>The Tax Code</i>	<u>17.09.2010 /N3591-Ilb/</u>
The public laws that determine the legal status, rules of activity and terms of reference of the state institutions of various levels	
<i>Law on Structure, Authority and Procedures of the Government of Georgia</i>	11.02.2004./N3277-Ilb/
<i>Law on Public Service</i>	31.10. 1997/ N 1022 – Is /
<i>Law on Legal Entities under Public Law</i>	28.05.1999./N 2052 - Ibis/
<i>The Organic Law on Self Government</i>	16.12.2005/2304-rs/
<i>Law on Independent National Regulatory Authorities</i>	13.09. 2002 /N1666-Is
Others	
<i>Concordat- Constitutional Agreement between the State and the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia</i>	2002
<i>Law of Georgia on Innovations</i>	22 .06.2016, N5501-Ilis
<i>Law on <u>Electronic Communications</u></i>	02.06.2005/1514-Ilb/
<i>Law on Art Workers and Art Unions</i>	26.07.1999 /LHG, 24(31)
<i>Competition Law</i>	25/05/2012 /6148-Ilb /
<i>Gender Equality Law</i>	12/04/2010 (LHG, 18,)
<i>General Administrative Code of Georgia</i>	15/07/1999 / LHG, 32(39),
<i>Criminal Code of Georgia</i>	13/08/1999 / LHG, 41(48),

4.2. Legislation on culture

4.2.1. GENERAL LEGISLATION ON CULTURE

The legislative structure of the cultural sector in Georgia includes the following:

- Many laws and acts of legislation passed by the Parliament;
- Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Georgia;
- President's decrees, edicts, decisions and instructions of respective ministries and governmental agencies; and
- Decisions of local authorities.

The legislation on culture is continually reorganized, revised and refreshed, which requires a great number of new changes to the laws and instructions.

The laws determining the structures of cultural policy or declaration of principles

In order to guarantee the constitutional principles, the following laws in the cultural sector have been adopted:

The Law on Culture (1997) is guided by the Constitution and considers the centuries-old cultural tradition and world experience in the cultural sphere. The law is the legislative base for development of culture and protection and maintenance of cultural values in Georgia. Cultural heritage is defined as the main state priority in the *Law on Culture*.

The aim of the *Law on Culture* is to protect the rights of citizens in the sphere of culture; to determine legislative norms and principles for the use of cultural values and results of creative work; to determine the responsibility of individuals and legal entities for the maintenance and protection of cultural values; to ensure non-interference of the state in the creative process and free cultural activity of Georgian citizens; to promote the involvement of Georgian culture in the universal system of cultural processes and to carry out international obligations undertaken by the state.

According to the *Constitution*, this Law reinforces the right of an individual to carry out cultural activities and this is the integral and inviolable right of all citizens. All citizens of Georgia are entitled to carry out free creative and cultural work according to his / her interests and abilities.

State Role and Responsibilities: The law mandates active state involvement in cultural affairs, including financial and logistical support across cultural sectors. State authorities are obligated to create policies, fund cultural projects, and facilitate access to cultural resources such as libraries, museums, and archives. In times of economic change, state budget allocations for culture are to be adjusted to ensure sustainable support.

Citizen Rights and Responsibilities: Every Georgian citizen has the right to participate in cultural life without discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics. Cultural participation includes access to cultural venues, artistic expression, and the right to protect one's cultural individuality. Citizens are also

entrusted with the duty to preserve and respect cultural heritage, reflecting a shared commitment to the nation's history and values.

Protection of Cultural Heritage: The law defines cultural heritage broadly, encompassing both tangible (monuments, artifacts, historical sites) and intangible (traditions, language, folklore) elements. State and municipal authorities are tasked with identifying, protecting, and restoring cultural sites and objects. Cultural properties of national importance, particularly those under state ownership, are shielded from privatization, with stringent guidelines for managing privately owned cultural assets.

Independence of Cultural and Creative Activity: Artists and creative workers are granted protections against state interference, censorship, and monopolization of cultural content. While creative freedom is upheld, there are provisions to limit works that might incite violence, discrimination, or violate others' rights. Creative workers' rights take precedence over those of other cultural stakeholders, acknowledging their unique role in preserving and advancing culture.

Economic and Logistical Support: Financial support for cultural initiatives is integrated into the state budget, with additional incentives for private sponsorship and philanthropy through tax benefits. The law encourages public-private partnerships, albeit with a need for transparency and independence in cultural content. Essential materials, tools, and spaces for cultural activities are to be provided by the state to ensure that artists and cultural institutions have the resources necessary to thrive.

International Cultural Relations and Heritage Repatriation: The law promotes Georgia's integration into the global cultural community through exchange programmes, partnerships, and international collaborations. It also commits to the repatriation of Georgian cultural artifacts located abroad, recognizing these items as integral parts of national heritage. Cooperation with the Georgian diaspora is encouraged to strengthen cultural ties and support Georgian cultural centres internationally.

Municipal Authority and Regional Development: Local governments are responsible for implementing state cultural policies within their regions, funding cultural programmes, and safeguarding local heritage sites. They have the authority to establish and manage cultural institutions and oversee the maintenance of public cultural properties, including the placement of public artworks.

Minority and Marginalized Cultures: While the law underscores "national and common values," specific protections for minority and indigenous cultures within Georgia are underdeveloped. Expanding on this aspect could ensure equitable support for diverse cultural expressions and uphold Georgia's multicultural identity.

From a legal perspective, the "Law on Culture" of Georgia presents a well-structured framework for cultural preservation, promotion, and accessibility.

The legislation determines a creative worker as an author, reproducer or interpreter of cultural values in the development of the intellectual and creative process.

The re-established Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth plans to create the Code of Culture in 2021.

Table 3a: List of existing cultural legislation

Title of the act	Year of adoption
Laws setting out cultural policy frameworks or declarations of principle	
<i>Law on Culture</i>	12.06.1997.N 751 - Is
Laws establishing the scope, operation(s), governing structure(s) and procedures for funding cultural institutions	
<i>Law on Cultural Heritage</i>	08.05.2007./N 4708 – Is /
<i>Law on Architectural Activity</i>	14.04.1998. /1335–IIs/
<i>Law on State Supervision of Architectural and Construction Activity</i> (last amended in 2009)	14.11.1997. /N1105-Is /
<u><i>Concerning Spatial Organization and City Construction Basis</i></u> (last amendment 2011)	02.06.2005. /1506-Is/
<u><i>Law on Design</i></u>	04.05.2010. /3030-Is/.
<i>Law on Museums</i> (last amendment 2007)	22.06.2001. /990 – IIs/(
<i>Law on Professional Theatres</i>	24.04.2013. / 530-IIs/
<i>Law on State Support to National Cinematography</i>	05.12.2000. /N655- Is/
<i>Law on Creative Workers and Creative Unions</i> (last amendment 2011)	08.06.1999./2059–IIs/
<i>Law on Library Management</i>	11.06.1996./N 267 - IIs/
<i>Law on the Import and Export of Cultural Goods</i>	22.06.2001./N 985 - IIs/
<i>Law on Copyright and Related Rights</i>	22.06.1999. /2112–IIs/
<i>Law on Limitary Measures in Connection with Intellectual Property</i>	22.06.1999. /2159–IIIb/
<i>Law on Broadcasting</i>	23.12.2004. /780–rs/
<u><i>Law On National Archive Fund and National Archive</i></u>	29.12.2006. /4205-rs/
<i>Law on Official Language</i>	22.07.2015. /N 4084-rs /

Table 3b: International legal instruments implemented by Georgia in the cultural field

Title of the act	Year of adoption
<i>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948</i>	20.05.1999
<i>European Cultural Convention, 19 December 1954</i>	25.04.1997
<i>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966</i>	03 .08. 1994
<i>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Charter.</i>	7 .10.1992
<i>Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 14 November 1970; UNESCO</i>	04.02.1993
<i><u>Convention concerning the International Exchange of Publications</u> (Paris, 3 December 1958); UNESCO</i>	04.11.1993
<i><u>Convention concerning the Exchange of Official Publications and Government Documents between States</u> (Paris, 3 December 1958); UNESCO</i>	04.11.1993
<i><u>Convention against Discrimination in Education</u> (Paris, 14 December 1960); UNESCO</i>	04.02.1993
<i>Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Paris, 16 November 1972); UNESCO</i>	04.02.1993
<i><u>Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region</u> (Lisbon, 11 April 1997)</i>	01.12.1999
<i><u>Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the European Region</u> (Paris, 21 December 1979); UNESCO</i>	04.12.1992
<i><u>International Convention for the Protection of performers, producers of Phonograms and Broadcasting Organizations</u> (Rome, 26 October 1961)</i>	14/08/2004
<i>Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict; <u>The Hague, 14 May 1954</u> , UNESCO</i>	04.12.1992
<i>Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict; the 1999 Second protocol ; UNESCO</i>	2009
<i>Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; (Paris, 3 November, 2003), UNESCO,</i>	18.06.2008
<i>Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions; (Paris, 20 October, 2005); UNESCO</i>	01.10.2008

<i>Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage; Revised:</i>	01.08.2000; 14.10. 2000
<i>The Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production (updated) Rotterdam January 30, 2017.</i>	01.07.2019
<i>Bern Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works WIPO, 1986; Revised by the 1971 Paris Act</i>	16/05/1995
<i>The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Copyright Treaty of December 20, 1996(WCT WIPO, 1996);</i>	23/05/2001
<i>Geneva Convention for the Protection of Producers of Phonograms Against Unauthorized Duplication of their Phonograms (1971) .WIPO</i>	20.05.2002
<i>The WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty of December 20, 1996 (WPPT);</i>	23.05.2001
<i>The Brussels Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights i (TRIPS Agreement); TRIPS , WTO, 1995;</i>	14.06.2000
<i>The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society,</i>	08.10.2010
<i>Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information, 6 March 1993;</i>	14.07.1995
<i>UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, June 27,1995</i>	27.06.1995
<i>Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property of March 20, 1883, as Revised at Stockholm in 1967</i>	14.06.1993
<i>Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), as modified in Washington in 2001</i>	14.06.1993
<i>Nice Agreement Concerning the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Purposes of the Registration of Marks of June 15, 1957, as revised in Geneva in 1979</i>	28.02.2003
<i>The Madrid System for the International Registration of Marks relating Protocol , June 27, 1989</i>	20.08.1998
<i>The Geneva Act of the. Hague Agreement. Concerning the. International. Registration of. Industrial Designs 31/12/1967 (1999)</i>	23.12.2003
<i>Hague Agreement Concerning the International Deposit of Industrial Designs,31/12/1961</i>	01.08.2003
<i>Locarno Agreement. Establishing an International Classification for Industrial Designs(1968)</i>	

4.2.2. LEGISLATION ON CULTURE AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Cultural heritage in Georgia is regulated by the *Cultural Heritage Law* which was adopted on 27 June 2007. The purpose of this Law is to protect the cultural heritage of Georgia and to provide regulations in this sphere. Georgia is also keen to protect Georgian cultural heritage abroad. It transfers some powers of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth to municipal authorities. Questions concerning the status of immovable monuments of culture of Tbilisi are to be addressed by municipal authorities.

The *Cultural Heritage Law* (2007) defines the terms and general mechanisms that will protect the cultural heritage against any encroachment. Protection is provided to all immovable monuments, movable parts of immovable monuments, movable monuments as well as to the objects with monument signs and immovable monument protection zones in the whole territory of Georgia, irrespective of the form of ownership.

As compared with the old *Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage* (1999), the 2007 *Cultural Heritage Law* covers a wider range of activities, is more specific in determining the rights and obligations related to cultural heritage, and is more rigorous in the formulation of principles for establishment of monument status.

On 2 September 2005, the government of Georgia passed the Resolution on the Rules of the Issue of Permits for Execution of Works on Monuments of History and Culture and Archaeological Digs. Work carried out on monuments of history and culture is regulated at state level. The new revision of this Law is aimed at improving the application of this legislation.

The control of permits / requirements is provided through the *Law on State Control of Architecture and Construction Activity*. State supervision of compliance with the terms of permits / requirements in the heritage field is undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection.

New statutory acts reinforced and strengthened delimitation of responsibilities regarding protection and control of the monuments of history and culture.

The *Law on Museums* was passed on 22 June 2001 and takes guidance from the *Law on Culture* and the *Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage* (25.06.1999); the aims and purposes of the Law are to determine the basic principles of museum activity and use of museums; to provide state guarantees for museum activity; and to develop administration and financing principles for the system of museums. The Law determines categories of museums, regulates non-state involvement in museum activity and determines the rights and obligations of legal and natural persons in the sphere of museum activities.

The *Law on Import-export of Cultural Objects* was adopted on 22 June 2001, to determine the universal rules for importing and exporting cultural objects.

After the adoption of the Concordat (signed in 2000 with the church), the legislation regulating the heritage sector has suffered a legal vacuum as no laws and acts of legislation interpreting the principles determined in the Concordat and delimiting the rights on the property of the state and the church have been passed. The *Law On National Archive Fund and National Archive* regulates the activity of the National Archives. Drafting of the Cultural Heritage Code is underway.

4.2.3. LEGISLATION ON PERFORMANCE AND CELEBRATION

The *Law on Professional Theatres* was passed in 2013, which appears to be a hasty response to the *Law on State Theatres* of 2006.

The *Law of Professional Theatres* aims to:

- Providing legal safeguards for the creative freedom of theatrical activity;
- Preserving the identity of the national theatrical culture;
- Promoting the development of national theatrical art;
- Ensuring access to theatrical art.

The objectives of this Law are:

- To protect the legal safeguards of the activities of professional state, municipal, mixed and private theatres;
- To ensure the free creative activity of theatres;
- To promote the implementation of innovative projects;
- To pursue a consistent policy of state support for the theatrical arts;
- To ensure the professional development of theatre artists;
- To improve the material and technical basis of theatres and ensure social security guarantees for theatre artists;
- To contribute to the creation of audio, video and electronic versions of performances
- To ensure access for spectators to theatre performances;
- To develop international contacts.

The state is not permitted to interfere in or control the creative process in theatres.

The former Law on Public Theatres (2006) provided for the centralization of the management of theatre structures through concentration of responsibilities in a theatre director (supervisor / administrator). The theatre directors were solely accountable to the state authority for the general control of theatres, including administrative, economic, routine and financial control. The position of "art director" has lost its responsibilities as the legislation lacks the levers supporting and ensuring decision-making in the creative sphere. This provision has produced a discrepancy in the distribution of responsibilities between the director and art director and violated the rights of the latter.

In contrast, the *Law on Professional Theatres* (2013) excessively strengthens the powers of the art director, who will undertake both the creative duties and unreasonably extensive administrative, business, economic, and financial obligations that will result in irreversible management and staff problems in the future.

On 30/11/2023, **amendments to the Law of Georgia "On Professional Theatres" were adopted**, according to which the status of 'professional state theatre' is granted only to theatres/companies established by the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Georgia, and their charters, shall also be approved by the Minister of Culture and Sports of Georgia (hereinafter – the Minister). These changes further strengthen the centralized management and control of theatres by the state.

4.2.4. LEGISLATION ON VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS

There are no separate laws on the visual arts and crafts in Georgian legislation. The regulation of these fields of art is subject to the general law "On Culture".

4.2.5. LEGISLATION ON BOOKS AND PRESS

Publishing activities in Georgia are regulated by the *Law on Entrepreneurs* (02/08/2021 875-Vrs-Xmp). This law

regulates the legal forms of an entrepreneur, the procedures for their establishment and registration, and issues related to their activities. The control over entrepreneurial, and hence, publishing activities, is exercised by the *Law of Georgia on Control of Entrepreneurial Activity* (29/12/2006)

There are small benefits in the Tax Code to promote Georgian literature. These apply in particular to the import of scientific and creative books and fiction, books and magazines written by citizens of Georgia, as well as the import of Georgian classics published abroad; and services relating to the sale of, import, distribution, delivery and printing of periodicals and fiction.

The mandatory library copies (legal deposits) in Georgia are regulated by the *Law of Georgia on Legal Deposit* (01.08.2014 N2645-rs). This law defines state policy in the field of legal deposits and along with other laws of Georgia, creates the legal grounds for establishing a national bibliographic data bank; it also ensures the production and development of a Georgian national bibliography and the protection, preservation and availability of tangible documentary heritage.

Article 5 of this Law defines the types of legal deposits:

Printed documents (any publication that contains textual information - books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, music scores, geographical maps, atlases, etc.; periodical publications, almanacs, annuals; fact sheet publications - bills, booklets, programmes, etc; visual publications - posters, prints - plates, reproductions of works of art, calendars, labels, postcards, philatelic catalogues, etc.), that have undergone editorial and publishing review, and have authentic print design and are accompanied by notices of intended publication;

- Publications for partially or completely blind persons - publications produced by relief - dotted print or the Braille system, relief-graphic publications, audio books, large-print publications for persons with low vision, electronic publications for blind persons (adapted editions with the use of Braille displays and speech synthesizers);
- Audiovisual production - film, video, phonographic, photo productions and their combinations, produced and reproduced on any recording medium;
- Electronic documents - documents containing information stored in electronic - digital format which have undergone editorial and publishing review, and are accompanied by notices of intended publication and are circulated and distributed by means of an electronic medium;
- Unpublished documents - documents containing scientific research, research and development and technological studies (dissertations, abstracts, deposited scientific works);
- Combined documents - collections of multimedia documents produced on any recording medium (printed, audiovisual, electronic);
- Postage stamps.

The ISBN, ISMN and ISSN Department exists at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia, which, in agreement with the ISBN and ISMN International Agency and the ISSN International Centre, issues international standard numbers to publishers and authors, renders control over assignment and maintenance of the numbers, actively participates in the organization and further development of the international network, and raises awareness of the standards of international agencies.

In case of ISBN assignment, printed products are exempt from VAT.

The *Law on Library Management* (11/06/1996) regulates the general issues of library organizations. It defines libraries as cultural-educational, scientific-informational institutions, whose main social function is to effectively and fully apply its funds and other library resources to benefit the users.

The universal library network includes public and non-public, local and departmental library networks. The library system covers the National Library, training libraries, public libraries, children's libraries, school libraries and special library networks.

The main library of the public network is the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia, and special libraries also operate in the republics of Abkhazia and Ajaria.

The public library network is established according to the territorial and departmental principles.

The lack of tax exemptions in the law prevents the development of private libraries. Instead, there are efforts to own the premises where the libraries are placed and thereby to stop their operation.

4.2.6. LEGISLATION ON AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

The *Law on State Support for National Cinematography* was passed on 5 December 2000. As well as determining the legal mechanisms for state support to national cinematography, the Law establishes the status of a national film, the legislative base for financing its production and distribution, the legal status of a respective organization operating in the film sphere and outlines the basic principles of state support for film-making. These basic principles are expressed in creation of guarantees for creative activity and creative freedom, in protection of copyright and concerning integration of Georgian cinematography in the world film process etc. The Law takes into consideration the *Laws on Culture and on Protection of Copyright and Related Rights*.

The *Law on Press and Other Mass Media* was passed on 10 August 1991 which declared freedom for the mass media (was valid until 2004).

The *Law of Georgia on Broadcasting* was passed on 23 December 2004, which was drafted with the expert support of the EU. The law defines the rules of broadcasting, rules and functions of an independent regulatory body in the field of broadcasting, terms of regulation of activity in this field, licensing rules and procedures in accordance with the principles of freedom of speech and freedom of expression and free entrepreneurship. The purpose of this Law is to formulate public broadcasting that is independent from state interference; to regulate the broadcasting activities in accordance with the principles of transparency, fairness and impartiality; to ensure the effective use of freedom of speech and opinion, stimulating a competitive environment among broadcasters, equality and independence of license holders, and effective use of frequencies.

This Law determines the obligations of public broadcasting to protect the public interest in the sphere of news, public and political, educational, cultural and sport programmes. Public broadcasters are also obliged by the Law to create some programmes that reflect the ethnic, cultural, language, religious, age and gender diversity of the population.

Provisions on protection of data are also available within the applicable *Law on Copyright and Related Rights* (22/06/1999/2112-Is), and the *Law on Limiting Measures in Connection with Intellectual Property* (23/06/1999/N2159-Is).

By the *Law of Georgia on Freedom of Speech and Expression*, (24/06/2004 / # 220), the state recognizes and protects freedom of speech and expression as invincible and supreme human values.

The Georgian National Communications Commission (GNCC) operates under the *Law on Electronic Communications* (2005) (amendment -20.11.2013 # 1591), *Broadcasting* (2004), *Independent National Regulatory Authorities* (2002), and on the *Independent Regulatory Commission* (2005).

Law on Independent National Regulatory Authorities -13.09. 2002 /N1666-Is. The purpose of this law is to create the stable legal basis and perfect institutional environment for the sustainable operation of the

national regulatory authorities in order to provide, in the various spheres of the economy, the balancing of interests of license holders and consumers, effective pricing and providing services and goods.

Law on Electronic Communications, 02.06.2005/1514-Ilv/. This law establishes the legal and economic basis of activity for electronic communication networks and facilities on the territory of Georgia, the principles of formation and regulation of the competitive environment in this sphere, the functions of the independent national regulatory authority (Georgian National Communication Commission), the rights and duties of natural persons and legal entities during ownership of electronic communication networks and facilities, their operation and service provision.

When the *Laws on Electronic Communications and on Broadcasting* came into effect, the legal status of broadcasting companies radically changed.

Under the *Law on Broadcasting* three types of companies were recognized – public, community and private.

The State Broadcasting Company was reorganized into a public television company and its status, content obligations, programme priorities and other issues were to be regulated by the *Law on Broadcasting*.

The GNCC performs the function of monitoring the execution of the *Law on Protection of Minors from Detrimental Effect*. The Commission also monitors compliance with the *Law on Protection of Copyright and Related Rights* in the broadcasting sector.

4.2.7. LEGISLATION ON DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES

The responsibilities of the state in the field of culture and creative services are declared in the Law on Culture.

Architecture, as one of the most important arts that combines cultural heritage, the creative industries and the construction business, requires a balanced and stable legal framework for support and development and is governed by the following package of laws:

- *Law on Architectural Activity (1998);*
- *Law on Cultural Heritage (2007);*
- *Law on State Supervision of Architectural and Construction Activity (1997);*
- *Law on Spatial Management and Urban Planning Principles (2005);*
- *Law on Environmental Protection (1996);*
- *Law on State Control of Environmental Protection (2005); and*
- *Law on State Ecological Assessment (1996).*

The Law on Architectural Activity was passed on 14 April 1998 to create and develop an adequate, eco-friendly, aesthetic environment and to promote architectural art in Georgia.

The environmental assessment of architectural design is carried out in compliance with the *Law on State Environmental Assessment*.

Together with the Architecture and Construction Inspection Agency, state supervision of the monuments of culture is undertaken by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection.

The significant *Law on Spatial Management and Urban Planning Principles*, passed on 2 June 2005, regulates the process of spatial management and urban planning in Georgia.

In the cultural sector, environmental protection is regulated by the general legislation regardless of the field – by the *Law on Environment Protection* and the *Law on State Control of Environmental Protection*.

The Law of Design (04.05. 2010 /3030-Is/) recognizes the inviolability of the right of ownership of intellectual property; it regulates the relations connected with creation, registration, use, legal protection of design and the rights thereof. The law is extended to the design which is registered under the procedure established by the law in the industrial property register by the National Centre for Intellectual Property - SAKPATENTI - or to which the international registration is extended.

The Law on Advertising (18/02/1998) regulates the legal relations arising during the production, placement and distribution of advertisements in the commodity (works, services) and financial markets of Georgia.

5. Arts and cultural education

5.1. Policy and institutional overview

The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth and the Ministry of Education and Science are the central government bodies responsible for arts and cultural education and training in Georgia.

The arts education system (similar to the general education system) consists of three main stages:

Stage I: primary education, including art schools (of music, fine arts, dance etc.). According to data from 2018, there are 258 such schools in Georgia.

Stage II: secondary vocational education, including art colleges (of art, music, dance, cultural education). In 2018 there were 26 art colleges in Georgia.

Stage III: higher education in culture is regulated by the *Law on Higher Education* which provides for specifics on art education in some issues. Today there are 12 institutions of higher art education in Georgia.

In 2004, after a long debate, the *Law on Higher Education* was drafted by the reformed Ministry of Education and Science. Following this Law, the first Universal National Exams were held in 2005. Difficulties have been created for art institutions, however, the unified system of assessment cannot cater for the specifics of practical art specialties. Consequently, discussions have been held between the Ministry of Education and Sciences and the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth to resolve the issues in arts education.

Delimitation of responsibilities of the two ministries is specified in the *Law on Higher Education (Chapter III, Article 2, paragraph 2)*. Under the *Law on Higher Education, Chapter 8*, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia is the central body for the formation and implementation of policies in education, art and cultural heritage.

However, the institutional and curriculum accreditation of an art institute of higher education shall remain within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Higher education in Georgia consists of three stages: bachelor programmes, master programmes and doctorate programmes. The National Examinations Centre is a legal entity of public law which ensures execution of Unified National and Joint Masters Exams and is authorized to carry out national assessments.

The first strategic goal of the Culture Strategy 2025, adopted in 2016, is devoted to raising awareness and education issues:

“Strategic Goal: Awareness Raising and Education

Goal: Culture and creativity is integrated across all levels of the education system and the public is aware of its importance.

1.2. Objective: Culture and creativity constitute an integral part of formal pre-school, general and non-formal education. They develop creative skills and enhance interest in culture among children and youth.

1.3. Objective: Higher and vocational educational institutions produce highly qualified professionals for culture and other related fields, create interdisciplinary programmes for students studying culture, technologies, business and other areas and develop academic research in collaboration with research institutions.

1.4. Objective: Professional training and life-long learning programmes fully meet the requirements of the contemporary labour market and contribute to the increasing competitiveness of culture professionals.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs includes 14 LEPLs of art education, including 4 higher education institutions.

2022-2024

Apart from the executive branch, the Parliament of Georgia, in particular its newly appointed Culture Committee (from 2022) plays an important supervisory role. In this regard, the Committee's role in the field of art education, arts education reform and the development of a package of legislative changes (not adopted as of November 15, 2024) is important.

In September 2023, the Culture Committee of the Parliament of Georgia established a special research group on "Inclusion of students with disabilities in state and private art education institutions". In December, a discussion of the results of the study was held which revealed a number of important issues. Important recommendations were developed, the main addressees of which were identified as legislative and executive authorities.

5.2. Arts in schools

The Ministry of Education and Science has elaborated the new programme for fine and applied arts and music to be taught within all the grades. Within the 1st and 2nd grades, art subjects are mandatory and in 3rd grade they are optional. The correlation of subjects in the fine and applied arts and music shall be equally distributed by terms in 8-10th forms.

Innovations are envisaged in the New National Curriculum

Amendments made in the National Curriculum came into force from 2018-2024 academic years. A normative document was created with the involvement of more than 150 experts. The following priorities are included in the National Curriculum: literacy, media literacy, digital literacy, quantitative thinking, plural

lingual competency and social and civil skills. All of these topics will support the self-realization of schoolchildren.

The National Curriculum envisages teaching of new subjects as well

IT will be introduced as a separate subject from the first form. This subject will envisage two selective courses in XI-XII forms: one course covers the elements of informatics and programming and the second one covers developing of the concepts connected with design and multimedia.

In the following year, one more selective subject – world culture - will be taught in XI-XII forms. It is being piloted in 14 schools currently. The aim of teaching this subject is to assist youth in developing skills of behaviour in extreme situations.

Broadening the list of selective subjects is very important

Until recently, students were able to choose only 5 subjects. However, 40 subjects are being offered through the

new curriculum. Schoolchildren will be able to choose such subjects as mythology or 19th-20th century European literature, history of Georgian art, folklore ensembles, history of ballet, contemporary music, safety etc. Introducing these subjects will support competition among schools and develop several academic directions as the schools will try to offer interesting subjects to the schoolchildren.

5.3. Higher arts and cultural education

The higher education system in Georgia consists of three cycles:

- First cycle – Bachelor's Degree (240 credits);
- Second cycle – Master's Degree (120 credits); and
- Third cycle – Doctor's Degree (180 credits).

The following are the higher education institutions in Georgia:

- College
- Teaching University
- University

External quality assurance in Georgia is carried out through an accreditation process which is conducted by the National Education Accreditation Centre.

The state recognizes the qualification documents issued only by an accredited higher education institution or equated thereto. Today there are 12 universities and professional schools in Georgia:

- 4 universities dedicated to art;
- 3 specialized colleges of art;
- 3 general universities in which there are centres or faculties of arts; and
- 2 private institutions in which there are centres or faculties of arts.

In May 2005, Georgia acceded to the Bologna process. The new *Law of Georgia on Higher Education* obliges the institutes of higher education of Georgia to pursue the main priorities of the Bologna process, such as transferring to the three-step system of higher education, quality assurance and accreditation, European Credits Transfers and Storage (ECTS) system, mobility, involvement of students in the decision-making process, compatibility of curricula with the European system etc.

Since 2005, a new model entitled "Money Follows a Student" has been in operation. Two phases of institutional accreditation have also been carried out under the Universal National Examination system, which has secured assessment of entrants by the unified methods and elimination of corruption in this sphere. The cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Sciences with the civil community is in progress.

Under *Order N 407* of the Minister of Education and Sciences of Georgia of May 3, 2006, the national team for support of the Bologna process was established. The goal of this team is to set the concrete objectives for the effective implementation of the reforms under the Bologna process in Georgia and to promote the activities determined within the Bologna process.

In the autumn semester of 2006, several higher education institutions in Georgia introduced performance based indicators / targets, according to the Bologna process.

Among the institutes of higher art education, Tbilisi Vano Sarajishvili State Conservatory and Tbilisi State Academy of Fine Arts have transferred to the three-step system of education. In 2005-2006 the ECTS system was introduced as well. At Tbilisi Vano Sarajishvili State Conservatory, 23 curricula are built on the credit system and at Tbilisi State Academy of Arts – 24 curricula. In 2006 both institutes issued a new form of Transcript to Diploma to graduates. This form was approved under *Order N 149-e of the Minister of Education and Sciences of Georgia (05.04.05) On Approval of the Form for Transcript of the Higher Education State Certificate – Diploma*.

Shota Rustaveli State University of Theatre and Film has also been transferred to the tree-step system of higher education. The ECTS system has been introduced for the university students of the first and second years, with 114 curricula built on the credit system.

In 2007, the *Law on Higher Vocational Education* was adopted which creates the conditions for development of the higher educational system in the line of specialties attributed to practical qualifications. The higher vocational education system in Georgia is divided into artisan and artists' education, where the artisan education covers the applied specialties and artists' education – the art specialties.

The following is being developed:

- Art and Culture Education Roadmap and Action Plan
- Study of Out-of-School Arts Education Institutions and Action Plan.

2022-2024

In 2022-2024, significant pressure was exerted on critical representatives of the higher education and research institutions field:

"The document Culture for Democracy mentions the following anti-democratic examples:

"These are some instances of repressive politics:

Tbilisi State Conservatoire - punitive ordeal at the hands of the Ministry of Culture, demonstrative punishment of the rector, and replacement with a new agreeable candidate; violation of academic freedom by refusing the accreditation of significant programmes, suspending the institution's activities under the threat of losing accreditation. Violation of the institution's autonomy via correction and pausing the programmes and decision-making process, despite the huge protests of the sector, petitions and letters to the upstanding authorities which were neglected and resulted in the replacement of rector, board members and returning to soviet models.

Tbilisi State Conservatoire and the George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation filed a lawsuit against the violation of academic freedom and institutional rights. However, the court rejected the lawsuit."

This document created by initiative "Culture for Democracy" (19.08.2024)

5.4. Out-of-school arts and cultural education

In the reform process of higher and secondary education, there is a system of arts and music schools which provides continuing education for children with appropriate talent. According to 2005 data, there were 258 such schools in Georgia.

According to the new national curriculum for 2011-2016 a new optional subject – "World Culture" is being taught at the intermediary stage of public schools.

Under the initiative of the National Curriculum and Assessment Centre of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, teachers of world history in all 550 schools have passed training on the methodology of teaching of a new subject and on substantive matters.

The goal of teaching world culture is: to form a positive attitude of students towards cultural diversity and development of successful communication and tolerance in the diversified cultural sphere and so on.

The first strategic area of the Culture Strategy 2025, adopted in 2016, is devoted to raising awareness and education issues:

Chapter II: Strategic Goals 1: Awareness Raising and Education

1.2. Objective: Culture and creativity constitute an integral part of formal pre-school, general and of non-formal education. They develop creative skills and enhance interest towards culture among children and youth.

Tasks:

- Develop a comprehensive out-of-school cultural education system, including arts education: plan, develop and monitor application of standards for out-of-school culture/arts education; determine the status of the tutor working in out-of-school arts education institutions, set their certification guidelines, develop the ranking system of remuneration, etc.;

- With a view to establishing a diverse educational environment and building audiences for the cultural sector, facilitate collaboration between tutors and artists, cultural institutions and organizations within the framework of curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
- Ensure youth and child participation in the cultural and creative activities by means of developing youth cultural centres, summer schools, camps, etc. considering Child Care Standards;
- Based on needs analysis, provide conditions for on-site residences for students in out-of-school arts education institutions in order to ensure sustainability of arts education;
- Plan awards and scholarship schemes, grant programmes, etc. in schools (general formal, out-of-school education) for students and tutors to encourage innovation and creativity;
- Support the development of libraries in school and out-of-school educational institutions (e.g. provide vouchers for purchasing books, computers, audio and video technologies etc.).

Within the framework of the Culture Strategy 2025, promotion of children's integration was introduced in 2016-2017:

- Programmes of the Education Department of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia - 2000 children.
- Non-formal education programmes of the Georgian National Museum - 2000 adults, about 500 persons with disabilities.
- Otia Ioseliani's Sunday School in Tskaltubo - up to 200 pupils. Since 2014, the National Centre of Cinematography has been implementing the project "At Cinema School" with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia. The Cinema Corner, a new, digital, customer-oriented modern design online platform, which has a main goal of popularizing film education among young people, is also implemented with funding from Creative Europe.

Tbilisi History Museum conducts an educational cycle "Contemporary Art Map" for children.

5.5. Vocational and professional training

In 2007, the *Law on Higher Vocational Education* was adopted which creates the conditions for development of the higher educational system in line of specialties attributed to practical qualifications. The higher vocational education in Georgia is divided into artisan and artists' education, where the artisan education covers the applied specialties and artists' education – the art specialties.

Under the legislation of Georgia, a vocational educational institution/college is a legal entity that is authorized to conduct vocational education programmes, short-cycle educational programmes, vocational training programmes, vocational retraining programmes and state language training programmes in accordance with the legislation of Georgia.

As of May 1, 2020, there are 19 authorized state public/professional colleges in Georgia, of which only 2 are in the field of art.

- LEPL Gori Sulkhan Tsintsadze Music College
- LEPL Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University College of Media and Television Arts

6. Cultural participation and consumption

6.1. Policies and programmes

Before the Culture Strategy 2025 was created in 2016, there was no clear coordinated or strategically developed governmental programme for the promotion of participation in cultural life, and no state policy for extended civil participation or development / solidarity in the civic community.

There are some initiatives to promote the sale and distribution of season tickets by Zachariah Paliashvili State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet and project "Dmanisi" of the National Museum – which is a summer archeology camp for children.

Some activities organized by the state could be considered as promoting participation in cultural life e.g.:

- National holidays such as the Day of Independence on 26 May, Rose Revolution Anniversary, New Year etc.;
- Municipal and local holidays.

For the purposes of facilitation of active involvement of the public, particularly of the youth in the field of protection of national heritage, the National Agency of Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia carries out the following programs:

- Archaeology – The journey from finding artifacts to their restoration;
- Methods of one of the first branches of craftsmanship;
- How our ancestors lived – history of their garments, jewellery, things used in daily life and weaponry;
- From the Pagan Times to Christianity - touring through the ancient capital of Georgia-Mtskheta; and
- History of Art- general introduction

To involve the public, in particular youth, in cultural life, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia have launched a joint project "Field Trip to Theatres" in January 2015. This large-scale project of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia is aimed at getting school students interested in theatre. In the frames of the Project, all school-age children throughout Georgia will be able to visit theatres to examine the stage and technical spaces. The school students will learn about the theatre's history and archives; they will attend rehearsals, meet with theatre directors and actors and will even enjoy a 50% discount on tickets. In the first phase the project involves 11 theatres subordinated to the Ministry. Step by step, the intention is to involve all Georgian theatres.

The Culture Strategy 2025 has highlighted the areas of "Raising awareness" and "Promoting public access to culture".

In 2017-2019 in the strategic area "Development of Cultural Infrastructure and Facilitating Public Access to Culture" the following was implemented:

- Integration of persons with disabilities

- Project “Inclusive Education in Georgian Museums”
- Projects involving persons with disabilities - exhibitions, performances, concerts and other cultural events
- Promoting ethnic minorities- events within the framework of the programme “Diverse Georgia”
- Activities in the regions along the administrative border separating line (Rukhi, Anaklia, Orsantia, Nikozi, Ditsi)
- Promoting the involvement of internally displaced persons in cultural life

Promotion of operation of 12 art schools in the areas of compact settlements of IDPs is underway. In these schools, 69 teachers are employed and 700 pupils attend. Various project groups run in schools: felt making, ceramics, painting, knitting, folk instruments and more.

Since 2020, Covid- 19 has contained and slowed down the process of cultural consumption and participation in cultural life.

In 2021, the Minister of the newly established Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth announced 12 priorities of the Culture Promotion Programme. The 8th priority is accessibility of culture. In 2021, the Ministry funded the following sub-programmes in the framework of this priority:

1. Supporting children's access to books;
2. Classical music, Georgian concerts and folklore in the regions - promotion of regional projects;
3. Professional theatres of the capital in the regions - promotion with tour expenses;
4. Facilitating the implementation of individual creative projects/initiatives in the regions, including at the occupation line;
5. Concerts of classical music in open and alternative spaces (schools, museums, libraries);
6. Cultural projects/events for Georgian Sunday schools operating abroad;
7. One creator (actor, artist, writer, art critic, etc.) per village;
8. Developing a concept for the sale of creative and publishing products.

6.2. Trends and figures in cultural participation

For the past 30 years no systematic research and polls in the sphere of culture have been held in Georgia due to the extremely dramatic and dynamic political life aggravated by the socio-economic crisis. The exception was the sociological research carried out on focus groups for the Conception of Development of Culture and Tourism in Tbilisi, held by the Fund for Culture Salvation under the order of the Service of Culture and Sport of Tbilisi Municipality in 2004.

As the research was targeted only at the detection of specific urban trends, nationwide data on participation of various social groups, distinctive by gender, age or educational level, in cultural activity, is not available.

Data on culture from the LEPL The National Statistics Office of Georgia is not useful either as in the majority of cases cultural information was compiled with education or recreation, entertainment or even religion data. The differential indicators in the sphere of culture cannot be separated.

Unfortunately, in 2020-2021 the amount of statistical data on culture has further decreased.

However, the general trends of participation are as follows: the trends of cultural participation, which had been constantly growing since 1995, reached a peak in 2003. In 2004-2005 participation figures have stopped growing and have decreased in some spheres. In general, the trend of participation is much lower than in the 1980s. There are many reasons for the low figures: living standards are lower; comparatively lower range of cultural services, obsolete in some cases (as in museums and libraries) and even disappeared.

Over a period of 18 years the number of public libraries in Georgia reduced from 8 000 in 1990 to 824 in 2008. This decrease is most notable in the regions. However, for the last five years, the situation has stabilized to some extent.

Due to serious financial problems, local museums, archives and libraries are not able to maintain their infrastructure, to purchase new displays, publications, equipment etc. At the same time, in the past ten years, the number of professional theatres has increased, although this increase took place at the expense of small theatres such as "Sardapi" or mobile repertory companies based on enterprise principles.

There are some research studies and opinions on the monitoring of the participation of representatives of national minorities in the cultural life of the community, carried out by the Public Movement "Multinational Georgia".

Table 4: People who participated in or attended a certain cultural activity during the last 12 months in Georgia (in % of the population -2018-2020)

	2018	2019	2020
Activities largely subsidized by the state			
Theatre	582 681 (15.62%)	614 616 (16.50%)	125 644 (3.38%)
Opera performances	N/A	N/A	N/A
Folk performances	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Concerts of classic music	N/A	N/A	N/A
Libraries	N/A	N/A	N/A
Museums	2 114 666 (56.69%)	2 253 225 (60.51%)	309 900 (8.33%)
Monuments	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cultural centres	N/A	N/A	N/A
Activities without large public subsidies - information not available			

Source(s): National Statistics Office of Georgia

Table 4 a: Data on cultural participation in Georgia, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2020

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Public and universal libraries (quantity in units)	2 208	2 056	---	-	-
Book lending (in million copies)	N/A	0.3	2.2	3.1.	-
Museums (quantity in units)	101	111	118	207	249
Visitors of museums (in thousand)	376.6	412.5	730.1	1335.941	309.9
Theatres (quantity in units)	37	46	44	49	52
Spectators of theatres (in thousand)	508.2	256.0	359.9	554.5	125.6

Source: State Department for Statistics of Georgia.

There is no information available about people who participated in or attended a certain cultural activity without large public subsidies in Georgia (over 3 years (2021-2024))

There is no information available about people who have carried out artistic activities.

Statistics on culture consumption and participation are not available from 2021.

6.3. Trends and figures in household expenditure

According to data from 2016, the share of culture in household expenditure is 1.1%.

Source:

UNESCO "Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS) for Georgia", 2017; EU-Eastern Partnership Culture and Creativity Program; <http://observatory.culturepartnership.eu/en/article/cdis-georgia> No information about household cultural expenditure by expenditure purpose is currently available; the studies of household cultural expenditure by expenditure purpose have never been undertaken in Georgia.

6.4. Culture and civil society

Within the last 30 years the network of former cultural houses and clubs of the Soviet period has been trimmed down. In general, these centres of culture have been privatized and only a small number have preserved their main profile; the institutions of culture (clubs, centres and houses of culture) that are accountable to the local bodies of administration and self-government have legal NGO-status although they receive state-municipal financing.

Unfortunately, no statistical data is available as these cultural houses and clubs were always under the control of the regional or municipal authorities, which provide no detailed reports on cultural data.

Public art creation is a priority in Georgia. Accordingly, this is reflected in the strategy, programmes, etc.

The strategic areas of the Culture Strategy 2025, approved in 2016, include "Access to Culture and Cultural Diversity"

Goal: Culture is accessible to all members of the society and the freedom of cultural expression is safeguarded.

2.1.Objective: Culture is made accessible to all, including the communities in mountainous regions, municipalities adjacent to the state borders, occupied territories and across the dividing lines of occupied territories.

2.2.Objective: All members of the society, including vulnerable groups, youth and minorities are actively engaged in cultural life and have access to cultural infrastructure and resources.

The Ministry of Culture supports the amateur arts and people's creativity via programmes, for instance in relation to support for young artists and folklore.

The amateur arts in Georgia are divided into two groups: a) folklore and b) all other art-forms. There is a strong affection among the population for folk songs and dances in which Georgians hold great pride. The culture of preservation, study and development of folklore in Georgia has been raised to the professional level. Moreover, the Georgian vocal polyphony of folksongs and carols is regarded as important at the international level.

Consequently, many villages and towns have their own folk ensembles, which reflects the diversity of Georgian music folklore and, on the other hand, supports continued interest in the training of young people in this field. Large ensembles often have groups for young people where the future generations of singers are encouraged. Folklore ensembles are also popular among the national minorities.

The government support in this area is high and is being implemented through the National Folklore Centre (created in 2004). The Centre is commissioned with and devoted to restoration and demonstration of the present vital ethnic culture and life. The main mission of the Centre is to research, preserve, develop and popularize the non-material cultural heritage. The Centre implements the state folklore policy nationwide and promotes the restoration of broken ties between the villages, regions, districts and the central authorities.

For systematization and quality enhancement of the folklore activity in Georgia, a study of the creative level of active folk collectives and the creation of a database was commenced through Certification of Folklore Ensembles in 2011. The archive of the State Folklore Centre was created.

The State Folklore Centre carries out strategic projects:

- 2007-2009 -The project "Computerization of Archive Records and Georgian Collection of Wax Cylinders" provided the transfer of unique Georgian folk songs stored in the record library of the National Central Archive of Georgia to digital format.
- 2007-2010-The project "Folklore Expeditions in the Regions of Georgia and In Artvin Region of the Republic of Turkey"
- 2007-2010 -Master classes for choreographers and Georgian folk song performers.
- The educational booklet "Georgian Folk Song and Performance" was also produced.

The festival – "Art-Gen" has been held annually since 2003 and its main purpose is promoting samples of folklore and various old traditions, folk handicraft in the regions of Georgia and widening knowledge among the general public.

The crafts sector is not as widely developed. In comparison with the performing arts, the craft field requires special programmes of support for preservation and maintenance. This is especially important against the background of the critical socio-economic situation in the countryside where ceramics, carpet weaving, embroidery etc. are practised.

All other types of amateur arts are less popular than folklore and are mainly urban based. Recently, groups for teenagers in large cities have become more involved in modern genres of amateur art related to new technologies and social development – multimedia, graffiti, e-music. This subculture is still developing and does not receive state support, though some municipal initiatives related to mass culture deal with this type of amateur art, although only in the performing arts.

There are 5 legal entities of public law in the field of folklore. The staff employed in these organizations totals 346 persons, with the average salary of 797 GEL.

The state budget expenditure in the field of folklore amounted to:

- In 2015 – 4 203 968 GEL;
- in 2016 – 3 970 000 GEL.
- In 2021 – 378 000 GEL. (State programme "Support of Georgia Folk")

State support has decreased greatly since 2020.

2020-2024

Since 2022, discriminatory policies have been implemented against NGOs and LEPL/public institutions that do not actively demonstrate loyalty to the new Ministry of Culture and Sports/the Minister, which has affected the overall cultural landscape and consequently caused civil society to be critical of the cultural policy.

7. Financing and support

7.1. Public funding

7.1.1. INDICATORS

Expenditures allocated by the state in the field of culture shall be determined within the Law on the State Budget of Georgia.

The Law on the State Budget of Georgia for 2021 allocates the funds for culture, art, sport, youth policy and other activities through the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth.

GDP for 2021 is calculated as GEL 53 443 000 000. Public cultural expenditure is GEL 191 997 470. In 2021, the public cultural expenditure in percentage of GDP is 0.35% respectively.

Table 5: Public cultural expenditure per capita in Georgia, in GEL, 2001, 2010 and 2021

Year	State expenditure	GDP	% of GDP	Population	Expenditure per capita
2001	29 435 600	6 647 100 000	0.44	4 401 400	6.68
2010	96 583 700	28 118 900 000	0.34	4 401 300	21.9
2021	191,997,470	53 443 000 000	0.35	3 728 600	51.49

Source: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

* In 2000-2003: Ministry of Culture. From 2004-2010: Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sports. Since 2010: Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection, Since 2018: Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport Since 2021: Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth.

In comparison to other European countries, public cultural expenditure per capita in Georgia is very low:

- GEL 51.99 (or 14.30 EUR) in 2021, respectively, or 0.35 % of GDP in 2021;
- GEL 21.9 (or 8.7 EUR) in 2010, respectively, or 0.46 % of GDP in 2010;
- GEL 6.68 (or 4 EUR) in 2001, respectively, or 0.44 % of GDP in 2001.

An increase in per capita expenditure is related to the general growth of GDP.

The total budget of Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia was:

- In 2018– GEL 149 379 900 (fact)
- In 2019 - GEL 170 378 400 (fact)
- In 2020 - GEL 104 746 400 (target)

However, only GEL 13 243 600 was spent on culture in 2020 (fact).

This was due to the crisis caused by Covid-19, whereupon the budget was significantly reduced.

Noteworthy is that from 2018 to March 2021, the cultural sector was a part of the joint Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia. Information on the funds spent on culture individually is not available. The budget of the newly established Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia was defined only for 2021 -GEL 22 454 000 (target) and for 2022- GEL 41 374 000 (target).

7.1.2. EXPENDITURE ON GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Table 6. Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2021

Level of government	Total expenditure in national currency	Total expenditure in EUR*	% share of total
State (central, federal)	191,997,470	54,847,848.57	100%
Regional (provincial, Länder, etc.)	N/A	-----	-----
Local (municipal, incl. counties)	N/A	-----	-----
TOTAL	191,997,470	54,847,848.57	100%

Note: * * Ministry of Finance, <https://www.mof.ge/4536> ; Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, 2021.

The table shows the expenditures of the central government only.

Other statistics on cultural expenditures are not available at the municipal level for two reasons:

- Most of these statistics have not been collected (except in a few large cities).
- Unlike government agencies, municipal structures have no obligation to publish these statistics

Data for local budgets are not available.

2021-2024

The state budget by sector for 2022-2023 is available only in a combined format - Recreation, culture and religion. There is no separate data on culture.

EXPENDITURE BY FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT (Mln. Lari)

Recreation, culture and religion	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
General Government	530.9	673.3	873.5	963.5	N/A
Central Government	299.9	396.3	509	505.5	N/A

Note: * * Ministry of Finance <https://www.mof.ge/en/4886>

Funding of the Ministry by years (Mln. Lari)	2022	2023	2024
Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth	45,147.4	52,128.0	50,832.0

Note: * * Ministry of Finance

7.1.3. EXPENDITURE PER SECTOR

Table 7: Direct state cultural expenditure and transfers (central level)*: by sector, 2021, in 1000 of national currency- GEL

Field/Domain/Sub-domain	TOTAL		of which: Direct expenditure** (of government or its agencies)	of which: Transfers**	
	in 1000	in %		to levels of government	to other NGOs, companies, individuals
I. Cultural Heritage	42,724,500	22.28	42,724,500	N/A	N/A
<i>Historical Monuments</i>	19,825 000	10.37	19,825 000	N/A	N/A
<i>Museums</i>	12,239 000	6.37	12,239 000	N/A	N/A
<i>Archives*</i>	5,900 000	3.07	5,900 000	N/A	N/A
<i>Libraries**</i>	90, 000	0.04	90, 000	N/A	N/A
<i>Intangible Heritage / Folk Culture</i>	4,670,500	2.43	4,670,500	N/A	N/A
II. Visual Arts	450,900	0.22	-	N/A	450,900
<i>Fine Arts / Plastic Arts</i>	400,900	0.2	-	N/A	400,900
<i>Photography</i>	50,000	0.02	-	N/A	50,000
<i>Architecture</i>	N/A	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Design / Applied Arts</i>	N/A	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
III. Performing Arts	44,018,500	23	44,018,500	N/A	N/A
<i>Music</i>	6,485,000	3.46	6,485,000	N/A	N/A
<i>Theatre, Music Theatre, Dance</i>	37,533,500	19.54	37,533,500	N/A	N/A
<i>Multidisciplinary</i>	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A
IV. Books and Press	2,610,000	1.2	2,610,000	N/A	N/A
<i>Books***</i>	2,610,000	1.2	2,610,000	N/A	N/A

<i>Press</i>	N/A	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
V. Audiovisual and Multimedia	77,988,000	40.61	77,988,000	N/A	N/A
<i>Cinema</i>	8,788,000	4.57	8,788,000	N/A	N/A
<i>Television</i>	69,200,000	36.04	69,200,000	N/A	N/A
<i>Sound recordings</i>	N/A	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Radio</i>	N/A	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Multimedia</i>	N/A	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
VI. Interdisciplinary	19,848,000	10.33	19,848,000	N/A	N/A
<i>Socio-culture</i>	2,027,940	1.05	2,027,940	N/A	N/A
<i>Cultural Relations Abroad</i>	1,710,190	0.89	1,710,190	N/A	N/A
<i>Administration</i>	N/A	-	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Cultural Education****</i>	16,110,400	8.39	16,110,400	N/A	N/A
VII. Not covered by domain I-VI	4,357,040	2.26	4,357,040	N/A	N/A
<i>Research in the field of culture</i>	148,000	0.07	148,000	N/A	N/A
<i>Reduction of damage from Covid - 19</i>	3,423,100	1.78	3,423,100	N/A	N/A
<i>Innovation projects</i>	415,940	0.21	415,940	N/A	N/A
<i>Creative Georgia</i>	370,000	0.2	370,000	N/A	N/A
TOTAL	191,997,470	100	191,997,470	N/A	N/A

Source: State Budget of Georgia, the Ministry of Finance. <https://www.mof.ge/4536>

Note: The data for sectors is only available for the national budget; the data for municipalities is not available.

*Archives (within the budget of the Ministry of Justice).

**Libraries (National) (within the budget of the Parliament of Georgia).

***Books (within the budget of the National Centre for Georgian Books)

****TV and Radio (direct financing from state budget).

The figures in the table reflect only the central budget expenditures.

Other information on cultural funding is sporadic; apart from individual large cities, information is not available at the local government level.

Information on cultural transfers by sector is also unavailable.

At the beginning of 2021, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia was divided into two - the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth. The latter has not made its budget public as of December 2021, and information on it is available only from the consolidated state budget.

Therefore, the funds according to the sectors are given mainly according to the consolidated state budget and some programmes announced by the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth.

The data in the table are taken from the Law on the State Budget for 2021 published by the Ministry of Finance.

The ratio by sectors is mostly similar in recent years. The greater amount of funds in the audiovisual sector is due to the growing budget of the state broadcaster.

The EXPENDITURE PER SECTOR for 2022-2024 is not available.

7.2. Support programmes

7.2.1. STRATEGIES, PROGRAMMES AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

Until 2004, the state supported artists through art unions. During the Soviet period, indirect support to artists was available in the form of space for studios and low rent for shops, distribution of tools and materials, etc. This type of indirect support is no longer available.

At the state level, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection provided funds for competitions for professionals working in several fields (e.g. theatre, cinema, publishing, music, etc), for general cultural actions (reproduction, transmission, etc.) and extra-cultural actions (education, IT, etc.).

Up to 2012, the Presidential National Programme supported folklore, music seasons/events and ballet arts (in 2009 this programme amounted to 25 890 000 GEL). There are no special programmes to provide pensions or health contributions for freelance artists.

The IV strategic area of the "Culture Strategy 2025", adopted in 2016, is devoted to increasing Funding of Culture.

"Strategic Goals: The sustainability of cultural funding is safeguarded; diverse and transparent funding mechanisms are introduced and employment in cultural sector is attractive.

4.1 Objective: Culture is funded from all budgetary levels; from diversified sources - innovative funding and stimulation measures are introduced, there is greater motivation for the private sector to allocate funds for culture; funds are distributed transparently and efficiently.

4.2 Objective: The State helps the creation of employment opportunities for the specialists of culture and the arts; supports the provision of convenient working conditions for them and, considering the specifics of cultural professions, respectively develops social protection mechanisms"

However, there are still no changes: social safeguarding mechanisms have not been introduced, there is no diversification of financing, and there is no improvement in working conditions. In 2021, the State programme "Reduction of damage from COVID-19" amounted to 3 423 100 GEL.

7.2.2. ARTIST'S FUNDS

Georgia does not have special funds or public procurement programmes for artists. Other information is currently not available.

7.2.3. GRANTS, AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS

A special programme of state awards in literature, art and architecture, as well as a programme for the support of gifted youth, now operates in Georgia.

Art workers' awards are as follows:

- Order of Honor; and
- Medal of Honor.

These awards are given for exclusive achievements in various fields of culture and art. The candidates are nominated by the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth.

The following awards are given by the Committee for State Awards in literature, art and architecture:

- Shota Rustaveli State Award (once in three years); and
- State Award of Georgia (annually).

Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth gives the following awards in drama and music – for vocal ensembles, opera and Estrada singers and folklorists.

In addition to the State Awards, there are awards given by the Union of Theatre Workers, by the Artists' Union; by the Music Society.

Notable awards instituted by private organizations

- “Saba” - an annual literary award was founded in 2003. The founders of the award are TBC Bank and the Pen Centre. “The winners of the “Saba” prizes are awarded for their special contribution to the development of literature. The award fund amounts to 52 thousand GEL, which is awarded to the winners by TBC Bank.
- “Duruji” – this annual theatre prize was initiated and supported by businessman Lasha Papashvili in 2008. The number of nominations varies.

A special prize is awarded to the best young director by the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia. The age nominees must not exceed 35 years.

The legislative basis of the grant support system is the Law on Grants (331. 19-20, 30/07/1996) which regulates economic and legal relations connected to the issue, receipt and use of grants.

Mobility supporting state structures

- Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth has a small travel grant programme for artists.
- Ministry of Education and Science – in 2014 the International Centre for Education was established, which awarded academic scholarships for Georgian citizens willing to study abroad.

Strategic documents supporting entrepreneurship

- “Culture Strategy 2025” - Goal 1.1 in the context of awareness raising and assessment development, as an example of an instrumental approach, envisages 'the elaboration of mechanisms for promotion of the creative industries', such as “creative incubators” and start-ups. Goal 6.2. determined the foundation of the State Promotion Programme “Creative Georgia”, also 'implementing special programmes for development of business skills in the culture sector and creative skills', and in the business sector: support for creation of “creative incubators”, which will offer a special space and relevant services to creative industries, including start-up businesses.

Top National Organizations to support startups are:

- LEPL Creative Georgia established in 2017, a legal entity of public law (LEPL) under the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth.
- LEPL Georgia's Innovations and Technologies Agency <https://gita.gov.ge/>, Technology park <https://gita.gov.ge/geo/static/45/teknoparki-tbilisi> ; Founded in 2014. Among other directions it promotes the development of creative industries.
- “Startup Georgia” – the Innovative Business Promotion Programme was founded by JSC Partnership Fund in 2016. Its purpose is to support the development of startup businesses in Georgia.

7.2.4. SUPPORT TO PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATIONS OR UNIONS

The *Law on Creative Workers and Creative Unions* regulates relations between artists' unions and the government, provides governmental subsidies for support of those organizations as legal entities under public law and guarantees their participation in the development of cultural programmes and decision-making. However, it was only until 2000 (prior to the Rose Revolution) that the state budget of Georgia assigned governmental funding to the main cultural unions of national significance – the Artists' Union, Writers' Union, Composers' Union, and Theatre Workers' Union. From 2001 until 2003, governmental funding was assigned to the Writers' Union only and, since 2004, state subsidies to art unions have been stopped. However, the state and municipalities support associations and organizations indirectly by financing events, festivals and exhibitions which are arranged by the unions.

Georgian art unions are:

- Artists' Union of Georgia;
- Designers' Union of Georgia;
- Writers' Union of Georgia;
- Composers' Union of Georgia;
- Architects' Union of Georgia;
- Union of Cinema Workers of Georgia; and
- Union of Theatre Workers of Georgia.

After the Rose Revolution the art unions, which represented a rather powerful authority in the Soviet period, found themselves almost on the level of newly established NGOs, though they still obtain some capital and human resources to maintain and rehabilitate their function of support to artists. Legislative

amendments have enabled this once powerful ideological structure to change in order to meet the needs of the contemporary free community. However, these unions need some indirect but effective measures for state support and, through the unions, for support of artists.

Under Georgian law, art unions are trade associations, with the status of a legal entity under public law, which unite at least 5 creative workers in literature or art.

Membership is voluntary and aims to support members' artistic development, advocate for their rights, and promote Georgian culture.

Unions operate independently under their statutes, which dictate membership terms, rights, and responsibilities. The law distinguishes between national unions, local unions, and international unions, allowing unions to expand their operations across regions or internationally. Creative workers have access to social insurance and pension plans per general Georgian legislation, though no specific or enhanced benefits are stipulated under this law.

Unions may receive financial support from the state or local governments, though such funding is tied to specific programmes rather than unrestricted financial support. The law mandates state oversight of the unions' financial activities to ensure legal compliance, but unions are otherwise granted autonomy.

The government guarantees property rights for unions and can facilitate partnerships with foreign entities to support Georgian cultural outreach.

The entrepreneurship aimed at profit-making in concrete cases specified by the law (*Law on Nonprofit Organizations*) may be subsidiary in the support of the activities of nonprofit organizations. However, this provision is idle and creative unions are suffering a financial crisis.

The legislation in this sphere is adequate however there are some problems in the execution of the acts of legislation and their administration. The *Tax Code* provides no benefits for art unions.

Recently, Georgian real estate has become the object of active interest from investors. This interest has led the state to sell the assets of some creative unions. In spite of their protests and attempts to restitute their property through the court, the unions have not been successful. One example is the sale, by the Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, of the holiday home for composers located in the resort-city of Borjomi (reported by the news agency Reuters), with a starting price of 4.5 million USD.

2020-2024

No major changes have taken place in recent years. Despite the new Culture Strategy 2025, the situation remains unchanged:

The trade union system in Georgia is weak and ineffective, and cultural sector unions play a minimal role in protecting the rights of artists and cultural workers.

Creative unions lack the financial, institutional and infrastructural capacity to effectively fulfil their stated goals. In addition, these unions rarely commission or provide legal services, nor do they conduct awareness-raising campaigns.

7.3. Private funding

It should be noted that there are currently no private funding statistics and it is not possible to provide data and trends of financial donations to culture.

The only major charity fund is the Cartu Foundation. The independent foundation Cartu Group (the owner is Georgian billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili) has published its expenses for charitable activities it supported from 2005 to 2010. Ivanishvili allocated a total of 1 156 081 151 GEL through the charitable funds "Cartu", "Foundation for Protection and Rescue of Historical Monuments" and the Association "Atus". The areas supported were culture, art, sport, medicine, science, education, agriculture and socially vulnerable people.

Table 8: Expenses of charitable institutions, in GEL, 2005-2010

Year	Institutions	Domain	Expenses	Total
2005	International charitable fund "Cartu"	Culture sphere	16 585 793	27 095 202
		Construction of churches	10 090 382	
	Foundation for Protection and Rescue of Historical Monuments	Restoration of 15 monuments and churches	419 027	
2006	International charitable fund "Cartu"	Construction of St. Trinity Cathedral	9 280 000	157 768 892
	Foundation for Protection and Rescue of Historical Monuments	Construction of 69 historical monuments and churches	2 349 883	
	Association "Atu"	Construction and rehabilitation of recreation and cultural-entertainment objects, construction of education objects	146 139 009	
2007	International charitable fund "Cartu"	Construction of St. Trinity Cathedral, charitable financing of culture and art spheres	181 916 475	184 734 569
	Foundation for Protection and Rescue of Historical Monuments	Restoration of historical and cultural monuments, 81 churches	2 818 094	
2008	International charitable fund "Cartu"	Charitable financing of culture	170 223 837	174 421 999
	Foundation for Protection and Rescue of Historical Monuments	Restoration of 113 churches	4 198 162	

2009	International charitable fund "Cartu"	Social aid to the honoured art workers	4 438 065	25 660 774
		Reconstruction of J. Kakhidze Music Centre	4 681 100	
		Reconstruction of S. Janashia State Museum of History	1 431 400	
		Reconstruction of Al. Griboedov Russian Drama theatre	1 338 300	
	Foundation for Protection and Rescue of Historical Monuments	Rehabilitation of 133 historical monuments	4 340 403	
		Complex restoration of medieval architecture and painting monuments	4 480 606	
		Construction of Natanebi concert hall	4 950 900	
2010	International charitable fund "Cartu"	Financing of culture and art sphere	18 089 169	22 335 673
	Foundation for Protection and Rescue of Historical Monuments	Restoration-rehabilitation of 212 historical churches	4 246 504	

Source: <http://www.ambebi.ge/sazogadoeba/43340-2005-2010-tslebshi-bidzina-ivanishvilma-qvelmoqmedebaze-1-156-081-151-lari-dakharja.html#ixzz4xBonje9N>

Most cultural activities (e.g. exhibitions, publications, concerts, festivals, creation of performing arts etc.) are conducted with funds allocated from state and municipal budgets, and a large share from Georgian private funds is allocated for cultural heritage (e.g. with the support of the International Charity Foundation "Cartu" a large number of monuments of cultural heritage have been restored. In particular, according to the 2017 report of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection, the Cartu Foundation allocated 7 593 324 GEL for 15 monuments of cultural heritage, while in the same period the Ministry spent 3 562 000 GEL on 46 monuments.

In 2017, the restoration-rehabilitation of 24 monuments was completed, and out of a total of 36 700 000 GEL spent on this activity, only 7 000 000 GEL was allocated from state funds and 29 700 000 GEL was allocated by the Cartu Foundation).

The information about the forms of cooperation between the state institutions and the Cartu Group (any official agreements or project contracts) is not available. No other information is currently available about Cartu donations.

Also, there are small donations for specific projects from banks and businessmen such as the "Saba" awards by TBC bank and "Duruji" awards by businessman Lasha Papashvili.

Georgian legislation has not yet developed sponsorship and charitable funding concepts and only church construction is exempted from tax.

The current state subsidy system is insufficient for the development-oriented cultural activities. Financial sources are not diversified; there is no sound strategy for a new financial model.

Information on private foundations is not available.