



# **EU ROADMAP FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY IN GEORGIA**

**2018 - 2020**

Approved by Head of EU Delegation and Heads of EU Member State Embassies in Georgia

*18 December 2018*

## **List of abbreviations**

CfP – Call for Proposals  
CEC – Central Election Commission  
CSOs – Civil Society Organisations  
CSO/LA – EU funded thematic programme Civil Society Organisations/Local Authorities  
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility  
DCFTA – Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area  
DEVCO – Development Cooperation Directorate of the European Commission  
DCG – Donor Co-ordination Group  
EEAS – European External Action Service  
EIDHR – European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights  
ENI – European Neighbourhood Instrument  
ENPARD – European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development  
EUD – European Union Delegation  
EVET – Employment and Vocational Education Training  
GNP – Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum  
GoG – Government of Georgia  
IDPs – Internally Displaced Persons  
LA – Local Authority  
MS – Member State  
NALA – National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia  
NHRSAP – National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan  
NGOs – Non-Governmental Organisations  
NSA/LA – EU-funded thematic programme Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development  
OGP – Open Government Partnership  
SRC – Sector Reform Contract  
USAID – United States Agency for International Development  
VET – Vocational Education and Training

## Executive Summary

An empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and is an asset in itself. Civil society participation in public policy processes fosters pluralism and can contribute to policies that are more effective, equitable and sustainable. Amongst others, civil society is also a watchdog over state actors, which becomes even more important when a ruling party holds a large majority. Therefore, support to and engagement with civil society in all of its diversity is an essential part of the EU's external relations.

The EU has been supporting Georgian civil society since its early development and will continue to do so in the future, both financially and politically, through defending and promoting the crucial role it plays in a democratic society.

The first Roadmap for the EU engagement with the Civil Society covered the period 2014-2017 and ensured broader EU engagement with civil society, providing clarity and predictability of the EU's country-specific actions. The Roadmap set out three main general priority areas for support (improvement of the enabling framework, supporting the CSOs involvement in policy dialogue and capacity development) which remain valid also now. The Roadmap addressed the problem of weak civic participation, with the particular aim to build capacity, linkages, experience and accountability, as well as to strengthen links between CSOs throughout Georgia.

The EU's goal remains to enhance the sustainability and accountability of CSOs as well as to ensure an enabling environment, improved policy dialogue between civil society and public institutions (especially with regard to budgetary and legislative processes) and stronger civic participation in all regions of Georgia. EU support also aims at developing civil society's capacity to be involved in all sectors covered by the Association Agenda.

The EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society for 2018-2020 describes the current status of civil society in Georgia, reviews priorities set out in the period covered by the previous roadmap and sets out new priority areas of future engagement along a sectoral approach based on the four Riga priorities<sup>1</sup>. The Roadmap is the result of EU Delegation and EU Member States' input, comprehensive consultations with civil society organizations in Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Telavi (the latter two representing two of the four focal regions<sup>2</sup> in the next EU programming exercise) and also through online consultations, as well as external assessments of indicators and of the enabling environment for civil society.

During the implementation of the previous roadmap, EU support to civil society has been mainstreamed in all EU assistance programmes and will continue to be. Relations between the EU Delegation, EU Member States and CSOs are generally based on mutual trust and include both financial and political support. Consultations take place regularly, in a formalized format for certain policy dialogues as well as ad-hoc on other measures and topics. Participation of CSOs in policy and decision-making has increased and is more systematic, including at local levels. However, many mechanisms are still not fully used, while others require further institutionalization. Further capacity building is essential to consolidate the culture of participatory approach. Trust needs to be re-built following the recent fall-out between certain civil society organizations and state institutions.

Capacity building for CSOs remains a permanent requirement for their development and sustainability, both on project management issues as well as on topics that are more technical.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/near-eeas\\_joint\\_swd\\_2016467\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/near-eeas_joint_swd_2016467_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The focal regions for deepened EU engagement are Kacheti, Racha-Lechkumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Imereti and Guria.

Networking and coalition building also remain credible and effective ways of participation in policy-making and development.

Finally, diversification of funding remains a priority, with innovative ways required for fund raising and partnership building with the private sector. A state funding concept should be considered, with increased transparency and predictability of the programmes; that could then allow some shift from predominantly donor driven actions to more specialised expertise of the CSOs. A variety of non-state funding mechanisms exist, such as individual and corporate donations, membership-based systems, individual and corporate volunteering, social entrepreneurship, cross-sector cooperation, community foundations, and social investments, but they are only marginally used.

The EU Roadmap for engagement with Civil Society for 2018-2020 sets out the following priority areas, along the four Riga priorities:

*General EU engagement with civil society – cross cutting topics*

**Priority 1: Provide wide-ranging capacity building for CSOs to perform multiple roles, in particular to engage in policy dialogues, act as watchdogs and as social entrepreneurs**

*Economic development and market opportunities*

**Priority 2 – Increase CSOs engagement in a more balanced and sustainable territorial development, including agriculture, rural development and food safety**

**Priority 3 – Enhance CSOs involvement in the promotion of the DCFTA's practical benefits at all levels of society**

*Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change*

**Priority 4 – Support CSOs in promoting energy efficiency, as well as the road safety and air quality, measures, and monitoring their implementation**

*Strengthening institutions and good governance*

**Priority 5 – Increase CSOs participation in the reform of the public administration and security sectors**

**Priority 6 – Support CSOs promoting and defending human rights**

*Mobility and People-to-People contacts*

**Priority 7: Increase CSOs engagement in skills development for employment and matching for labour market needs (EVET), as well as youth and culture**

As a general recommendation, EU and EU Member States general and thematic assistance should include or mainstream elements supporting CSOs involvement to complement stand-alone CSOs programs that cannot on their own develop an effective policy dialogue between CSOs and GOG and a strong civil society.

## **PART I – BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEXT AND PAST EU ENGAGEMENT**

### **I.1 THE STATE OF CS: BRIEF UPDATE ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

#### **Recent trends**

Recent research suggests a relatively low level of trust towards civil society organisations (CSOs) in Georgia. Data from Caucasus Resource Research Centre (CRRC)'s Caucasus Barometer<sup>3</sup> reveals that between 2008-2017 Georgians' trust in CSOs decreased from 35% to 23%<sup>4</sup>. An EU-funded study confirmed that citizens of Georgia have inconsistent attitudes towards CSOs. Meanwhile only 2% think that CSOs should not exist, around 50% believe that CSOs have a positive impact on the development of Georgia. On the other hand, many think that the Georgian government does not need to consider the stances of CSOs or that the government should control CSOs' work. Those who trust the EU reveal more positive attitudes towards CSOs.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Enabling environment**

Civil society in Georgia continues to benefit from a nonthreatening enabling environment in terms of legal and regulatory aspects. Registration of new CSOs is an easy and non-bureaucratic process, simple, fast and efficient. There are more than 26,000 “non-profit, non-commercial” organizations formally registered in Georgia, a country of just 3.7 million, but much fewer are active. It is difficult however to estimate the exact number of functional and financially viable CSOs, not least as the extremely complicated liquidation procedures discourage defunct organizations from closing. The majority of well-developed CSOs are concentrated in the capital city, Tbilisi, while regional CSOs capacities continue to be limited. Some watchdog groups have highlighted a steep increase in the number of registrations of CSOs in Georgia in the past year.

CSOs are able to function freely regardless of their activities or the opinions they express. The constitution guarantees the right of citizens to form associations and CSOs operate free of state control. Georgia's legal framework protects CSOs against unwarranted intervention in their activities. However, public statements directed against watchdog CSOs occurred with increasing frequency in the second half of 2018. This peaked during the electoral campaign period for the Presidential elections 2018 when CSOs were harshly confronted by members of parliament and government officials and accused of being politically biased and partisan after they had criticized the way the campaigns were taking place. Following the Mukhtarli case in June 2017, there also have been some concerns on Georgia as “safe haven” for foreign human rights activists.

The Parliament has been developing a state concept for civil society since 2015, but this has not been adopted by December 2018.

Numerous coordination mechanisms exist for government-civil society consultations. Their functioning has improved but sizable space for improvement remains. CSOs based in Tbilisi play a strong role in advocating and lobbying for human rights and governance issues, whereas CSOs at the regional and community levels tend to be more focused on service provision (education,

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<sup>3</sup> Caucasus Resource Research Centre - <http://www.crrccenters.org/2>; Caucasus Barometer - <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/datasets/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb-ge/TRUNGOS/>

<sup>5</sup> Attitudes of the Population of Georgia towards Civil Society Organisations, European Integration and Business Entities, 2018.

social, healthcare and community development). A number of well-resourced CSOs have international roots, working to support the continued development of civil society in Georgia.

The Georgian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum comprises 185 members and organises regular meetings with the government as part of a structured dialogue process. Not all leading CSOs are members anymore, reflecting divergent views within the CSOs community. Part of this divide comes from the fact that those CSOs promoting human rights and good governance are more exposed to disagreements with the government whom they try to hold accountable; on the other hand, the CSOs more active in the regions and focused more on service provision exercise less of a role of watchdog therefore are less likely to enter into rows with the Government (but still face difficulties with local authorities).

Early 2014 also saw the adoption of the National Human Rights Strategy of Georgia 2014-2020<sup>6</sup>. This was a landmark publication complying with international standards. The strategy provides numerous entry points for civil society to reinforce the observance of human rights in Georgia.

In 2016, Georgia was elected co-chair and then chair in 2018 of the Open Government Partnership (OGP)<sup>7</sup> - a multilateral initiative that promotes transparency, empowers citizens, and strengthens governance through CSOs-government collaboration. Local CSOs are actively involved in the OGP process and CSOs participation is organized through the national coordination mechanism, the Open Government Georgia Forum, co-chaired by a CSO on a rotating basis. Accomplishments so far include the development of community centers, increased transparency and impartiality in public service recruitment, the introduction of political party financial declarations, growing public awareness of the electoral process, and increased efficiency and transparency of the public finance management system. In addition, surveillance data has been published on the website of the Supreme Court of Georgia<sup>8</sup>, as effect of OGP commitment. However, Georgia has made less progress on other commitments, including e-petitions, reform of freedom of information legislation, and access to government data. On 1 November 2018, seven CSOs suspended their participation because, in their view, their main recommendation to establish an independent anti-corruption agency was not included in the new OGP action plan 2018-2019, and the consultation process for the Action Plan did not allow sufficient time for CSOs' feedback.

With regard to the **breakaway regions**, after the 2008 war and the recognition of independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia, a new reality emerged for the CSOs operating in these regions. The environment is restrictive and CSOs seen as not following the de facto local authorities' line are subject to pressure, with pro-democracy groups especially singled out. In August 2013, South Ossetia amended its CSOs laws, requiring the groups to provide information to the government about the source of their funding and adopted a 'foreign agents law' similar to the one in Russia. This is not the case in Abkhazia and a number of active CSOs can operate, mainly on humanitarian, social and legal issues.

## Organisational and financial sustainability

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<http://myrights.gov.ge/en/About%20us/news/reports/About%20us/news/My%20Rights/Briefly%20on%20Human%20Rights/About%20us/My%20Rights/useful-links/Policy%20Documents/National%20Human%20Rights%20Strategy/>;  
[http://myrights.gov.ge/uploads/file-manager/HR\\_STRATEGYENG.pdf](http://myrights.gov.ge/uploads/file-manager/HR_STRATEGYENG.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> OGP Global Summit 2018: Tbilisi- <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/events/ogp-global-summit-2018-tbilisi>;

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.supremecourt.ge/eng?q=+telephone+surveillance+&x=0&y=0>

The majority of CSOs present clear mission and vision. However, they often do not engage in strategic planning as they lack the necessary resources, incentives, and skills to do so. In addition, strategic planning is inhibited by CSOs' dependence on foreign donor funding and the fast-changing operational context, especially in regions where CSOs face greater institutional and financial challenges. Financial viability continues to be a challenge for regional organizations, due to limited access to funding, networks, qualified professionals, limited familiarity with foreign call for proposals and other critical resources. Those urban financially stable CSOs can afford to offer the competitive salaries needed to attract and retain good staff. Regional CSOs, on the other hand, struggle with frequent gaps in funding that make it difficult for them to compete on the labor market.

The majority of **donors** prioritize program and activity funding over institutional strengthening. Limited access to institutional funding and organizational development opportunities produces an unhealthy dependence on what local CSOs refer to as "traditional donors." It also undermines CSOs' potential for constituency building and makes them more donor-driven. Donors normally solicit local CSOs input when determining funding priorities and CSOs normally have long adopted participatory approaches to program planning, in which they should actively involve their constituencies in both program design and implementation. In general, however, CSOs and the public believe that local organizations have a limited say in the selection of areas to be covered by future donor funding.

According to the 2016 CSO Sustainability Index (USAID)<sup>9</sup> the legal environment governing civil society is generally favourable, although it does not provide sufficient incentives or mechanisms to support CSO **sustainability**. Despite continuous lobbying efforts by CSOs — both individually and in coalitions — the legal environment has not changed significantly in recent years. More recently, the discussion on sustainability has been focusing on the need to increase the level of national public funding channelled through civil society organizations.

Despite the efforts of several CSOs and donors, only a limited number of social enterprises have developed in Georgia so far, partly due to the lack of an enabling legal environment.

CSOs can receive funds from international and national donors and government agencies. Private donations are limited due to absence of legislation.

An EU-funded study conducted in 2017 on **state funding** for CSOs in Georgia identified numerous state grant mechanisms to CSOs underpinned by several laws.<sup>10</sup> The study describes the legal framework, funding amount and grant mechanisms, as well as provides an overview of rather fragmented and even unknown information on public funding to CSOs in Georgia. This study has been used to stimulate discussions within the sector on ways to improve the legal and economic aspects of current public funding mechanisms. However, this study did not address the possible implications of public funding of the sector. In 2018 new study on "Public Financing of Civil Society Organizations: Considerations for Georgia"<sup>11</sup> was commissioned by the Europe Foundation supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Danish International Development Cooperation. The study revealed a number of gaps and

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI\\_Report\\_7-28-17.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> State Funding for CSOs - [http://civilin.org/pdf/State\\_Funding\\_for\\_Civil\\_Society\\_Organizations.pdf](http://civilin.org/pdf/State_Funding_for_Civil_Society_Organizations.pdf) (CSI, 2017)

<sup>11</sup> 2018 new study on "Public Financing of Civil Society Organizations: Considerations for Georgia"- <http://www.epfound.ge/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Report-CSO-Public-Funding-Final.pdf>

deficiencies that need to be addressed.

State funding continues to grow as a source of income for CSOs, a positive trend that began a few years ago when selected state agencies were authorised to award grants to CSOs. The list of authorized government offices is growing, yet the scale and scope of funding is still insufficient to significantly improve the sustainability of the sector. According to the Civil Society Institute (CSI), the state funding system lacks uniform legislative standards. Although the Law on Grants<sup>12</sup> does not allow local governments to award grants, local governments can award “program funding” to CSOs, which is technically identical to state grants. It is desirable for local CSOs that local governments be granted the legal authority to award grants as well. According to the data collected by CSI, the municipality of Tbilisi allocated GEL 3,126,250 (approximately EUR 1,150,000) to CSOs in 2017. Non-financial support from the local governments, such as the city hall providing premises for CSOs, could also be made more transparent and available.

Some government agencies, especially health and education offices, outsource different services to CSOs. The overall scope of these partnerships remains limited and does not affect the sustainability of the sector. In addition, many CSOs remain reluctant to accept funding from state sources, fearing that doing so will limit their ability to act independently, as well as damage public perception of them as independent actors.

A variety of **non-state funding mechanisms** exist, such as individual and corporate donations, individual and corporate volunteering, social entrepreneurship, cross-sector cooperation, community foundations, and social investments. A low level of popularity of these non-state funding mechanisms leads in practice to very limited use of such alternative funding sources.

The legislation related to CSOs funding is generally favourable but still needs some adjustments. The Civil Code of Georgia and other sectoral laws allow CSOs to apply various forms of non-state funding. The Law of Georgia on Volunteering<sup>13</sup>, adopted by the Parliament in 2016, notably simplifies the use of volunteer work by CSOs. The Tax Code of Georgia<sup>14</sup> generally does not differentiate between CSOs and business companies, but envisages preferential mechanisms for receiving and giving non-state funding. Nevertheless, the analysis of non-state funding mechanisms reveals the need for amending Georgian legislation and developing a state strategy; the experience of other countries however prove that legislative changes alone are not sufficient to change the practice – a concerted effort of the state is required to encourage individual and corporate charity. Public discussions on the limited but important role of individual and corporate charity should be launched.

The limited popularity of non-state funding mechanisms lies partly with CSOs themselves, as Georgian CSOs have not thoroughly considered establishing membership-based systems and thus closer ties with the population. This is a result of massive dependence on international financial assistance since 1992. Consequently, studies show that a large segment of CSOs is not perceived as accountable to citizens.

**Relationship between businesses and CSOs** is yet another challenge. According to the CSO

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<sup>12</sup> <https://mof.ge/images/File/laws/B-Law-Law-on-Grants-ENG.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Law of Georgia on Volunteering 2016- <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/3132612/0/en/pdf> ;

<sup>14</sup> TAX Code of Georgia- <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/1043717/93/en/pdf>

Sustainability Index<sup>15</sup>, businesses perceive CSOs as politicized institutions and avoid cooperation with CSOs fearing tensions with the government. On the other hand, according to the most recent survey of CRRC<sup>16</sup>, only 20 out of 282 surveyed CSOs accepted business donation. A number of CSOs refuse to accept business donations, as they believe that businesses pursue only corporate interests. Still this relationship is essential for CSOs in order to understand benefits of collaboration in economic development and increased business climate and entrepreneurship as well as to develop a good understanding of where and how to engage in various policies, such as EVET.

**Philanthropy and corporate social responsibility (CSR)** remain underdeveloped in Georgia. Only 8% of 568 surveyed business companies have implemented any type of project in cooperation with CSOs, while one fifth are not even aware of the concept. Current legislation does not provide sufficient incentives to encourage philanthropy and civil society is itself divided on the best means to approach this issue. Although the last two Human Rights Action Plans include a chapter on corporate social responsibility, the concept is still nascent. It is hampered by the tendency of companies to support short term charity initiatives with high public relations value but low sustainability on the one hand, and the inability, as yet, of CSOs to package their initiatives in a style that would appeal to the private sector. Awareness raising among the business community on what corporate social responsibility means in the broader sense would be helpful. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)<sup>17</sup> can be a further driver, as companies will have to meet certain standards in fields relevant to corporate social responsibility, such as labour safety standards.

Only a handful of developed organizations are membership-based and collect membership fees.

## **Policy Dialogue**

Georgian civil society has proven to be instrumental in the democratic development of the country. There are a growing number of civil society platforms, an important one being the Georgian National Platform (GNP)<sup>18</sup> of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum<sup>19</sup>. In 2016 the GNP established four regional branches: Imereti, Samtskhe Javakheti, Shida Kartli and Samegrelo. CSOs in the agriculture sector participate in the Georgian Alliance for Agriculture and Rural Development (GAARD)<sup>20</sup>, a national civil society platform (established with EU support) which aims to empower rural communities, particularly smallholder farmers, and to reinforce their capacities for representing their interests in policy development and its implementation process. GAARD provides a platform for discussion and coordination to facilitate collaborative action amongst government and local stakeholders, such as local civil society actors, small farmers, vulnerable groups, etc. The enabling environment for CSOs in agriculture appears to be rather good, with the presence of a number of larger international CSOs often establishing effective partnerships with smaller local CSOs.

The Open Parliament Partnership was a successful example of partnership between the state and

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<sup>15</sup> CSO Sustainability Index- [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI\\_Report\\_7-28-17.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf);

<sup>16</sup> CSO Sustainability Index - <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-civil-society-organization-2017-regional-report.PDF> (CRRC 2018)

<sup>17</sup> DCFTA - <http://www.dcfra.gov.ge/en/home>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ei-lat.ge/g-pac.html?lang=en-GB>

<sup>19</sup> <https://eap-csf.eu/national-platforms/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.bridge.org.ge/en/projects/gaard>

CSOs. According to the parliament's 2017 annual activity report, it fully implemented thirteen and partially implemented eleven out of twenty-four commitments described in the Open Parliament Action Plan 2017. The Parliament is making certain efforts in engaging more with civil society, but these efforts need to be strengthened.

Civil society stakeholders are members of the National Vocational Education and Training (VET) Council<sup>21</sup>, the main consultative body in VET. The CSOs are involved in a policy dialogue on the VET strategy and Action; some of them are monitoring its implementation. In addition, CSOs were members of the EVET Council, established for steering the EU-Georgia Employment and VET (EVET) budget support programme within the framework of the four grant projects funded under the Grant Scheme of the EU-funded **EVET Programme**. A very good cooperation has been established with international and national CSOs, involved in a regular (every 6-month) monitoring of the grant scheme projects implementation. With the facilitation from the EU the CSOs have well established working relationships with the line ministries as line ministries representatives have been also involved in the monitoring process. However, there is a need for increasing CSOs engagement in the education policies development and monitoring process.

With regard to labour market, there is a positive trend of CSOs participation in policy making, which will further be strengthened by the upcoming EU funded Skills4Job programme. The sensitivity of the law on Occupational Health and Safety activated a lot of players and put it at the top of agenda of some generic CSOs and those working on human rights. It is to note the progress achieved in improving the legislative framework as regards judicial system and access to labour market, as well as ongoing public discussions on these changes. In the future, the Government and the Parliament as well as other state bodies shall be further encouraged to involve more CSOs in this process.

Also, a well-developed network of CSOs active in health sector, in particular HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C and other public health related topics, including trainings in primary healthcare, is active in the country.

Civil Society has been very vocal on issues relating to democracy, justice and human rights. Reacting to actual developments on a regular basis, CSOs issue statements calling relevant institutions such as Parliament and its committees and government institutions for certain actions. They act as watchdogs over state institutions and trigger political discussions or remind of outstanding issues. Frequently, surveys and research are conducted by civil society organizations, which facilitate evidence-based discussions.

Many CSOs are engaged in human rights topics, submit alternative (shadow) reports and take part in sessions of international mechanisms when reports are discussed. They have been actively involved in developing the National Human Rights Strategy and its Action Plans (NHRSA) and in monitoring, however not in a fully established methodology and procedures. Officially, several CSOs are represented in the Human Rights Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, which could be a valuable forum to discuss the NHRSA implementation, monitoring and other developments. However, this Council has not convened since 2015.

CSOs made significant advances in making their voices heard as they engaged and often shaped national discussions on some of the most critical topics in the country. For example, public debate

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<sup>21</sup> <https://bit.ly/2E1k5S4>

in Georgia in 2017 was focused on the country's strict drug prohibition laws, justice reforms, freedom of the press, constitutional and local government reforms and extreme air pollution, among other national topics.

A large number of civil society organizations are very active in the justice sector, and in particular in the judiciary area. A Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary gathers 40 CSOs, led by the most prominent ones. These CSOs have been very outspoken and critical about the judiciary reforms at times.

There have been emerging attempts by CSOs to engage with the Parliament and the Government on the promotion of an enabling environment for Social Enterprises. Policy dialogue on this topic with the government is however slowed down by the fact that no specific ministry has an overall mandate to coordinate policies on Social Entrepreneurship.

Many central and local government offices create joint working groups and convene consultation meetings with both international organizations and local CSOs. However, civil society at times expressed frustration that these consultations are not always in the spirit of real cooperation. For example, the parliament of Georgia invited CSOs to participate in the constitutional reform processes in 2017, but CSOs eventually left the consultations as in their view the parliament did not acknowledge CSOs' concerns and contributions. In contrast, the new Public Defender, approved by the parliament in 2017, was one of four candidates proposed by CSOs.

On the local level, the main obstacle to policy dialogue is the low level of autonomy of local authorities and the limited capacities of local authority staff, including limited follow up by new authorities after local elections. While dialogue mechanisms do exist, their success is limited due to late information about the opportunities for dialogue, low capacities of potential stakeholders in the process, lack of awareness of rights to participate in decision-making and the limited authority of local government. Where policy dialogue does take place, it is characterised by Tbilisi-based organisations engaging local authorities, but this leads to questions about their legitimacy in representing local communities. Some Tbilisi-based organisations have regional offices and there is a slowly growing number of competent CSOs in the regions. Positive examples of dialogue in the regions exist and these can be used to build upon.

Due to their limited capacity, engagement of CSOs in good governance and public administration reform remains de facto limited to major CSOs.

CSOs actively participated in the monitoring both of the local government elections in October 2017 and the 2018 presidential elections. According to the Central Election Commission, seventy-one CSOs were registered as election observers in 2017 and 62 in 2018, although some of these were registered by political groups.

## **EU engagement with civil society**

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) Riga Summit<sup>22</sup> in May 2015 identified four priority areas for engagement of the EU with its neighbors, namely economic development and market opportunities; connectivity and energy efficiency; strengthening institutions and good governance

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/05/21-22/#>;  
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21526/riga-declaration-220515-final.pdf>;

as well as mobility and people-to-people links<sup>23</sup>. They have been translated during the EaP Brussels Summit in November 2017 into 20 key deliverables<sup>24</sup> to be achieved by 2020, with increasing civil society engagement as deliverable number one to be reflected as a cross cutting issue in all areas. The EU Global Strategy in June 2016<sup>25</sup> confirmed the importance of deepening EU partnerships with civil society as well as sharpening the means to protect and empower civic actors, notably human rights defenders, sustaining a vibrant civil society worldwide.

The priorities and indicative allocations for financial assistance included in the Single Support Framework (2017-2020)<sup>26</sup> are connected to the overall policy objectives set out by the Association Agenda<sup>27</sup>. It also includes complementary support for civil society development (5% of the overall allocation of the Single Support Framework). Georgia also benefits from the EU's multi-country, regional ENI programmes<sup>28</sup> in this sector, in particular in the fields of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Global EU external assistance instruments, such as the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)<sup>29</sup> and the Civil Society Organisation – Local Authorities (CSO-LA)<sup>30</sup> component of the Development Cooperation Instrument also allow for sizeable interventions in Georgia.

The EU is the main donor in this sector. Other key donors include most EU Member States, in particular Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, but also the United States, Switzerland and Norway.

Sweden has from 2018 introduced Sida Guiding Principles<sup>31</sup> for engagement with and support to civil society, focusing on strengthening CSO development, including their transparency and accountability.

Germany is currently supporting the Ministry of Finance, the parliament and the State Audit Office to engage into a dialogue with CSOs, which have a watchdog function therefore increasing the social accountability of the state bodies. The World Bank and the IMF are also active in this sector.

As a general trend, there is a continued need for strengthening the capacity within civil society. In several areas the thematic and technical capacity is satisfactory. On an overall level, capacity building would need to put more emphasis on strengthening CSOs in their own right. Democratic governance, accountability and legitimacy remain relevant areas to prioritize.

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<sup>23</sup> Referred further as "Riga priorities".

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2017/11/24/> ;

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/31690/eap-generic-factsheet-digital.pdf> ;

<sup>25</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf) .

<sup>26</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/48497/georgia-single-support-framework-ssf-2017-%E2%80%93-2020\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/48497/georgia-single-support-framework-ssf-2017-%E2%80%93-2020_en) ; <https://www.gtai.de/GTAI/Content/DE/Trade/Fachdaten/PRO/2017/08/Anlagen/PRO201708105003.pdf?v=1>.

<sup>27</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/35934/eu-and-georgia-adopt-revised-association-agenda\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/35934/eu-and-georgia-adopt-revised-association-agenda_en)

<sup>28</sup> The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) - <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy/european-neighbourhood-instrument-eni>;

<sup>29</sup> European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR) - [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr\\_en.htm\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/finance/eidhr_en.htm_en);

<sup>30</sup> Thematic programme NSA-LA- [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/thematic-programme-non-state-actors-and-local-authorities-development\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/thematic-programme-non-state-actors-and-local-authorities-development_en);

<sup>31</sup> Sida's new guiding principles for the cooperation with civil society. Sida should a) explore the various roles of civil society within their context, b) balance support towards a pluralistic civil society and civil society as implementing organizations, c) provide aid and development effective support to the civil society, d) support civil society partners' efforts to strengthen their own development effectiveness, including their transparency and accountability, d) engage in continuous dialogue with civil society. Final document will soon be available at <https://www.sida.se/English/partners/our-partners/Civil-society-organisations>

An EU regional programme to strengthen and promote CSO's role as critical actors of governance, e.g. increasing CSOs' capacity to engage and advancing financial sustainability of CSOs, is under development.

Increased strategic donor coordination on support to CS is also pursued by the EU Delegation and EU Member States.

The EU Delegation is in close and regular contact with civil society organisations, including regular consultations, in particular in preparation of policy dialogues, such as annual subcommittees or the Human Rights Dialogue. Such consultations feed also into programming deliberations. Dialogue with civil society is frequently facilitated for the visits of high-level EU officials or European Parliament members.

The EU Delegation has been successful in streamlining support to and engagement with civil society in all its areas of engagements. This is expressed in financial support of EUR 32 million to more than 80 civil society organizations through more than 20 open calls for proposals in the period of 2014-2017. While there are numerous sectoral initiatives for civil society, general support to further develop the capacities and sustainability of civil society is ongoing.

On a structural level, the **Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative** has been funded with EUR 4 million over four years to increase the role and impact of the civil society in the political, economic, social and cultural development of a modern Georgia. The action aims at achieving more transparent state funding mechanisms, stimulating philanthropy and corporate social responsibility; a more positive perception of civil society, applying international standards of transparency and accountability towards all stakeholders; improved civic participation and active CSO role in local and national policy-making. The main target group of the action is the active CSO community around 1,000 CSOs, almost half of which are in the regions (450) and other 2,500 civil society actors including business entities, media representatives and volunteers and youth activists as well as national and local authorities (LA).

Furthermore, the EU is supporting the concept of **social entrepreneurship (SE)**. During the last 10 years progress towards SE sector development has been observed, with increased interest towards the concepts among all sectors. With official statistics missing an estimated 70-75 social enterprises are actively operating in the country. Many were initiated with the support of EU programs and they target areas such as employment of vulnerable groups, environment protection, revitalization of rural areas, education, cultural heritage and access to social services.

With the overall objective to promote accountability, enhanced governance, inclusive and sustainable growth at local level, grants have been awarded to civil society and local authorities under the Civil Society and Local Authorities envelope 2016 (EUR 2.55 million) in various areas to strengthen the links between local actors and civil society and to increase civic participation.

With regard to **rural development**, the ENPARD<sup>32</sup> programme started in 2013. The technical assistance support provided to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) and to the direct budgetary support to the Government of Georgia has been supplemented with the involvement of civil society organizations over the different phases of ENPARD. Formal dialogue between CSOs, public authorities and the EU takes place primarily within the quarterly ENPARD

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<sup>32</sup> ENPARD- <http://enpard.ge/en/>

Stakeholder Committee meetings. These meetings are co-chaired by the Ministry and the EUDEL involving all implementing partners. Numerous grants were awarded to CSO consortia with an overall amount of nearly EUR 30 million to support the development of business-oriented agricultural cooperatives in different regions of Georgia, to implement rural development measures and to develop livelihoods in disadvantaged rural regions of Georgia. CSOs play a key role in agriculture given their ability to facilitate activities on the ground, promote bottom-up approaches and work effectively with final beneficiaries, such as farmers in remote rural regions.

Under the same ENPARD, the EU supported a project (2013-2016) aimed at building the capacity of local CSOs in the area of **food safety and consumer rights**, and to enhance citizen understanding, awareness and participation in these spheres. In addition to raising public awareness on food safety related consumer rights, the project also increased transparency and effectiveness of public institutions charged with implementation of reforms and developed food safety monitoring and advocacy capacities of 13 CSOs and youth groups. The dialogue between public institutions and CSOs on food safety takes place within civic hall public fora where CSOs represent consumer's interests and where public-private dialogues with Food Business Operators also take place.

While the EU's engagement in **social affairs** in Georgia is rather limited, efforts towards contributing to the professionalization of social workers have been undertaken. This has included a mapping of CSOs active in the social field in Georgia, which resulted in a database with 107 CSOs, managed by the Georgian Association of Social Workers (GASW)<sup>33</sup>. A small grant programme benefitting five CSOs in Georgia was conducted as part of the EU funded project "Shaping Sustainable Social Change in Eastern Neighborhood Countries by Strengthening Social Workers and their Associations".

Except for the area of cultural heritage, CSOs engagement in **cultural policy** is quite limited. The EU supports Georgia's participation in the Creative Europe programme<sup>34</sup>. Cultural organizations benefit from teaming up with partners from all over Europe to get funding for cultural cooperation projects. Up to now, Georgia has 22 winners in the programme.

Civil society is involved in **social dialogue** related to EU assistance for DCFTA implementation. The Budget Support Programme on DCFTA/SME in 2014-2017 included regular consultation through two social dialogue groups involving civil society, namely the DCFTA Advisory Group and the Private Sector Development Advisory Council.

**Public Finance Management** (PFM) has long been a major focal sector for the EU in Georgia. Involvement of civil society was initially hindered as the relevant government institutions were reluctant to engage with CSOs on highly technical issues. Nevertheless, civil society participates in the PFM Reform Coordination Council meetings. The Council reviews and adopts PFM Sector Strategies and Action Plans and monitors their implementation. CSOs can participate but do not have the capacity to sustain a highly specialized dialogue. Their participation in this technical forum will be further supported and strengthened by an additional project financed under the Neighborhood Civil Society Facility, which also envisages the establishment of a civil society

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.gasw.org/>

<sup>34</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/news/20150224-georgia-joins-creative-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/news/20150224-georgia-joins-creative-europe_en);  
<https://bit.ly/2QwtSXd>

budget monitoring coalition and which will provide capacity building and encourage public debate on current issues in PFM.

At **higher education** level, the EU supports the National Erasmus+ Office<sup>35</sup> (NEO, CSO itself by status). NEO is ensuring the regular engagement of CSOs in the successful application of the Erasmus+ programme in Georgia.

With regard to **vocational education training (VET) and labour market**, civil society was regularly consulted during the formulation of the new Skills for Jobs budget support programme.<sup>36</sup> The financing agreement on skills development and matching for labour market needs, worth nearly will start being implemented in 2019. The EU will help to deliver lifelong learning skills, entrepreneurial learning and entrepreneurship opportunities in four Georgian regions, including in Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia. The programme envisages a EUR 7 million envelope aiming at enhancing the employability of target groups in the regions and improving outreach to female and male beneficiaries and vulnerable groups.

The EU had a very intense dialogue with different CSOs about the developments and challenges in the **justice sector**, also in identifying the main directions of EU-Georgia cooperation programmes and calls for proposals in line with the priority sectors defined in annual and multiannual action plans, as well as with regard to the implementation of individual projects with CSOs.

In 2018, the EU allocated funds (EUR 2 million) to CSOs for **monitoring judiciary, prosecutorial, penitentiary and juvenile justice reforms**. The EU continues funding CSOs, which provide **rehabilitation and resocialization services to ex-prisoners and probationers**,<sup>37</sup> or legal aid to vulnerable groups of people (EUR 4 million in total). There are six ongoing projects with CSOs on rehabilitation and resocialization of ex-prisoners and probationers and one project with on monitoring penitentiary reforms.

With regard to **human rights**, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) programme has been implemented in Georgia by the EU Delegation since 2003. 160 projects have been implemented so far for a total amount of 13 856 126 EUR. EUR 3.44 million have been awarded for EIDHR projects since 2014. The projects have been supporting, inter alia, the operation of elderly resource centres in different regions including the provision of free legal aid to elderly and most vulnerable persons, the promotion of health rights of children with hearing disabilities. School teachers from regions of Georgia have been supported through trainings to promote cooperation between public schools and CSOs to reduce early marriages, child labour and school drop-outs.

Under the 2014 **Human Rights for All** programme<sup>38</sup> nine grants have been awarded to CSOs to support the most vulnerable groups and to strengthen public oversight (EUR 4.5 million). Actions include regional outreach on preventing domestic violence, supporting and enabling vulnerable women and women offenders and their children, strengthening protection mechanism and advocacy work.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://erasmusplus.org.ge/>

<sup>36</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/37923/eu-transfers-gel-140-million-eur-481-million-georgia-support-reforms\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/37923/eu-transfers-gel-140-million-eur-481-million-georgia-support-reforms_en)

<sup>37</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/17499/three-major-projects-launched-under-eugeorgia-justice-programme-eu4justice\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/17499/three-major-projects-launched-under-eugeorgia-justice-programme-eu4justice_en)

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/projects/human-rights-for-all.html>

Furthermore, **gender mainstreaming and women rights aspects** are integrated in the EU assistance programmes, in particular the news ones, e.g. Skills 4 Jobs and ENPARD. With the active support of EU Member States and other donors, in particular UN Women and UNDP, more concerns are voiced and publicly discussed. According to a recent study, 25%<sup>39</sup> of women in Georgia have experienced at least one form of gender-based violence. However, these figures may be much higher as the awareness and understanding of the domestic violence, sexual harassment and other forms of violence is still limited across the country. In this regard, the CSOs role is critical as they are those who can reach local communities and raise awareness. Therefore, it is important to stronger integrate gender related aspects in various sector programmes building on the success stories of EIDHR programme mentioned above and others. This would ensure continuous support not only to the people of Georgia but also to the CSOs and their capacity. An upcoming regional EU programme on gender, to start in 20-19, also represents a good opportunity for CSOs to engage.

Concerning the **breakaway regions**, the COBERM programme 2016<sup>40</sup> has been supporting confidence-building measures on different levels, including grass-roots initiatives and people-to-people contacts. Selected sub-projects include actions on human rights trainings for different target audiences, monitoring human rights and human security, gender-based violence etc. Civil society support is complemented with a programme under ENI (EUR 1.4 million in 2016). A civil society resource centre was established in Sukhumi and following capacity building activities 27 grants were awarded for projects focusing on social and educational issues, as well as human rights.

## **1.2 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE EU ENGAGEMENT SO FAR**

Societal resilience should be strengthened by deepening relations with civil society, notably in its efforts to hold governments accountable. Civil Society as a whole is very active in Georgia but would benefit from further support and better and more efficient use of financial resources in order to be able to continue playing its role in policy formulation and acting as a watchdog, in particular over the reform of the public administration and security sectors. Furthermore, the civil society organisations play an active role in preventing crime and potentially terrorist activities through their ground work on shaping the resilience of grass-root communities, in particular vulnerable groups. Civil society organisations play an important role in monitoring an effective and democratic civilian oversight over the security sector actors. The engagement of civil society organisations in the security policy domain strongly contributes to accountability and good governance: CSOs act not only as a government ‘watchdog’ but also as an index of public contentment with the performance of institutions and agencies responsible for public security and related services. Grants should be offered to civil society actors to monitor and evaluate the implementation of relevant policies, strategies and action plans of the security sector, or to conduct research, raise awareness, advocate for policy change or provide services to the population around security issues.

With regard to policy dialogue, the capacities of state institutions, including the Parliament and local authorities, to engage with civil society on an institutionalized and functional level need to

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<sup>39</sup> UN Women: National study on violence against women 2017 <http://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/03/national-study-on-violence-against-women-in-georgia-2017#view>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2016/08/22/coberm-iii-call-for-project-ideas-.html>

be strengthened. Authorities can be approached on this topic, but this often happens through informal instead of official channels. In addition, certain government ministries remain to be convinced of the usefulness of involving civil society in policy dialogue; this is particularly the case for highly technical ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance, which sometimes argues that civil society lacks the knowledge to engage in a meaningful discussion on complex issues such as the budget process. In other cases, insufficiently advanced planning hampers the consultation process as CSOs are left with too little time to make qualified inputs to policy debates.

International indicators such as the Open Budget Index<sup>41</sup> show that there is room for improvement regarding opportunities for the public to engage in the budget process (22 out of 100 points). Future actions should therefore also increase the capacity of actors to fully embrace a culture of participatory decision-making.

Organisational development of CSOs also remains an area in need of improvement. Issues as formulation and effective implementation of projects as well as financial management need to be addressed. Furthermore, sustainability of organisations is often understood only as financial sustainability, without enough attention paid to program and institutional sustainability. Some CSOs rely solely on grants, while some perceive trading as a way of generating supplementary revenue to be used for the implementation of the CSO mission. Other CSOs may have a social entrepreneurial approach which potentially allows for an expansion of activities as a self-sustained Social Enterprise. Regardless of the business model in play, capacity building of the organisation will be an essential component to ensure sustainability.

To further strengthen CSOs institutionally and to increase (sustainable and long-term) social impact through scaling of Social Enterprises, it is appropriate to introduce modern support methodologies built on tailored, systemic and long-term approaches, as it is seen in Venture Philanthropy, Social Investment and support for private sector entrepreneurs and SMEs.<sup>42</sup>

Whilst international CSOs often have the required capacity to implement the larger EU projects, it is important to continue promoting cooperation between international and locally based CSOs, as well as to provide targeted capacity building opportunities for local CSOs. In order to promote local CSO development and regional network building, EU calls for proposals regularly include the requirement to submit proposals by co-applicants, including local actors. At the same time, the EU has also supported the development of networks, such as the Georgian National Platform or regional hubs.

In order to support and strengthen smaller and local CSOs, which cannot benefit from direct grants due to insufficient administrative capacities, calls for proposals regularly include the requirement to implement sub-granting schemes. To facilitate the broader distribution of knowledge, skills and know-how concentrated in Tbilisi-based experienced CSOs to regional and local CSOs different means of networking and partnership among CSOs should be encouraged. Partnership projects as well as projects with substantial sub-granting component should be encouraged and should include intensive coaching/training of weaker partners by the more experienced ones. Also, institutional strengthening of umbrella organizations like community development coalitions and social enterprise alliance could be considered as a priority.

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/georgia-open-budget-survey-2017-summary.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> <https://evpa.eu.com/knowledge-centre/publications/venture-philanthropy-and-social-impact-investment-a-practical-guide>

Under the Civil Society complementary support facility<sup>43</sup> programme 2015 the EU Delegation designed a call for proposals offering operating grants to address the repeated request for funding mechanisms that could strengthen organisations both in terms of capacities and sustainability. The call was not met with the level of interest expected. A preliminary assessment hints at conditions that were not attractive enough, in particular, the limited funding of 30% of the annual programme of organisations and possibly the maximum period of implementation of one year. Hence, only three operating grants were awarded, which may not have had the desired effect on the organisation's sustainability.

During the consultation for the development of this roadmap, several usually highly technical areas (e.g. energy efficiency, WTO agreements, TBT, food safety/animal health issues, competition, IPR, public procurement, consumer rights, etc.) were highlighted where civil society may not be sufficiently capacitated to engage in policy dialogue or monitor government policies or where CSOs felt that they lacked access to relevant information.

The rapid expansion of the Georgian economy should not be made at the expense of the environment, therefore CSOs should be more involved in energy efficiency measures as well as those fighting against air, soil and water pollution, and supporting waste management, the sustainable management of biodiversity, ecosystems and natural resources at central, local and regional level.

CSOs should be more engaged in youth policy monitoring and implementation as well as advocating policy measure for youth engagement. The focus should stay to reach the most vulnerable youth and Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETS), which would increase the scale of impact of the intervention. On regional level, the EU supports several initiatives under the EU4Youth programme which aims at equipping youth with entrepreneurship skills and help the most vulnerable youth to become change-makers. It is still challenging to have efficient policy dialogue on youth due to frequent changes of interlocutors on the government side, therefore engaging CSOs in this regard is crucial.

The Tripartite Commission<sup>44</sup> is functioning in Georgia with employers and employees being represented, and regular meetings are taking place. However, the voice of the CSOs is still weak. The Government and the Parliament are also making steps to involve CSOs into discussions (hearings in Parliament are organized and attended by some CSOs, meetings with the GoG to discuss new legislation), but further efforts needs to be taken to prepare better grounds for discussions (e.g. Regulatory Impact Assessment or similar assessments shall be presented to the CSOs when discussing the legislation) and more consistent follow up of such discussions (the CSOs often do not receive feedback on their specific comments).

One important lesson learnt for ENPARD, as expressed by the beneficiaries of the farmers' grant schemes, is that while agricultural support is vital for them, it is also important to address other social and economic needs to truly improve their livelihoods. On this basis, the adoption of the EU LEADER approach to rural development (ELARD)<sup>45</sup> as an integral part of the programme is allowing the beneficiary population, including local authorities, businesses and communities to establish local strategies and plans that reflect the particular needs of each targeted municipality,

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/east-south/stay-informed/projects/neighbourhood-civil-society-facility>

<sup>44</sup> <http://gtuc.ge/tripartite-commission-social-partnership/>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.elard.eu/>

and to assist in the implementation of relevant projects to address these needs with sub-granting schemes.

Furthermore, although the ENPARD Stakeholder Committee is a platform that has been working quite well, sustainability may become an issue once the EU funding stops. Other avenues and platforms for cooperation and dialogue need to be established and/or strengthened. Also, the civic hall meetings taking place between public institutions and CSOs on food safety matters need to be strengthened. The meetings need to be organised more frequently and the format of such meetings needs to allow for constructive dialogue. These meetings should also ensure greater participation and geographical coverage outside of Tbilisi. For this, the number of civic halls should be increased and more meetings should be held outside the capital. Participants should be given sufficient advance notice to prepare for the meetings.

The 2016 establishment of the Private Sector Development Advisory Council and the DCFTA Advisory Group as part of the Advisory Council on Georgia's Trade Related Issues were positive steps from the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. Both contributed to institutionalise public-private dialogue, thanks also to the involvement of civil society and business community in the process.

Grant for CSOs should aim for creating legal and institutional platform for engagement in policy planning and monitoring at local and regional level. Together with the local interest groups, CSOs would also implement those territorial development measures that do not fall under the scope/mandate of national and regional/local authorities. There is agreement between the EU and the Government of Georgia that the next phase of cooperation should include support for socio-economic development of focal regions (Kakheti, Imereti, Guria, Racha-Lechkhumi) to improve living standards and conditions of the population through an inclusive, smart and sustainable socio-economic development, increased competitiveness and minimised imbalances. EU assistance should assist Georgian authorities in their works towards a more balanced territorial development aiming to create new centres of gravity apart from Tbilisi and Batumi. Expected results should include fulfilment of integrated territorial development issues in focal regions and building national and territorially based system for effective policy implementation – with the CSOs playing an important role in both.

It is recommended to improve the coordination and monitoring of the implementation process of the National VET strategy, including through the National VET Council (NVETC)<sup>46</sup>, a quadripartite body established in 2012 and composed of representatives of the four target sector Ministries (MoES, MoLHSA, MoSYA, MoESD), employers, trade unions and civil society.

The phasing out of Global fund (the largest donor supporting the HIV/AIDS preventive and treatment measures) from 2020 amidst the absence of large scale donors in the health field creates the risk of a deterioration of the HIV/AIDS situation in the country. Availability of adequate funding for the HIV/AIDS preventive and treating measures are vital for keeping the low-prevalence status by country and the CSOs may play a role in this process, at least on the preventive side.

As also highlighted in a human rights USAID report on inclusive policy planning, CSOs should be supported in providing consistent and high quality work, facilitated through prioritisation, as a

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<sup>46</sup> <https://bit.ly/2E1k5S4>

selective approach can produce higher and evidence based specialisation. Working in coalitions rather than following an individual approach would increase credibility.<sup>47</sup>

The EU has been supporting CSOs that deal with rehabilitation and resocialization services. Those are also partly funded by the state. Gradually, EU funding should phase out and these services should be fully supported by the government.

Lastly, civil society would benefit from a more positive perception of their work by the citizens of Georgia. It is recommended to reflect better the CSO sector into the national statistics so that the role of CSOs is visible.<sup>48</sup> Above-mentioned capacity building, cross sector partnership development and stimulation innovative approaches could lead to a better image of and trust into civil society.

### **I.3 RELEVANT REFERENCES AND SOURCES TO DEEPEN THE UNDERSTANDING ON THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND EU ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY**

- Two ongoing external assessments are: (1) EU support to Rule of Law in Eastern Partnership Countries in 2010-2017, and (2) EU Justice Programme in Georgia in Oct. 2015 – July 2018. Once finalized, these two evaluations can provide useful insights into the state of civil society and EU engagement.
- ENPARD Final Evaluation (<http://enpard.ge/en/final-report-evaluation-enpard-1/>) – This is a final evaluation of the entire Programme and includes a section on the evaluation of work undertaken by all the CSO Consortia.
- Each year, the Europe Foundation publishes an independent assessment of government reform efforts in food safety<sup>49</sup>. This assessment usually includes a specific section assessing the engagement of civil society in the processes.
- Study financed by Europe Foundation – "**Situation Analysis of Civil Society in Georgia 2016**"<sup>50</sup>;
- **Businesses in Georgia: Attitudes towards Corporate Social Responsibility and Civil Society Organizations** – Study conducted within the EU funded project "Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative"<sup>51</sup>;
- Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative – project baseline study<sup>52</sup>;
- **Attitudes of the Population of Georgia towards, Civil Society Organizations, European Integration and Business Entities** - Study conducted within the EU funded project "Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative"<sup>53</sup>;

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<sup>47</sup> Towards inclusive Human Rights policies in Georgia: Efficient CSO Engagement in policy planning, implementation and monitoring' – USAID, 2017

<sup>48</sup> Attitudes of the Population of Georgia towards Civil Society Organisations, European Integration and Business Entities, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.epfound.ge/programs/current-programs-activities/european-integration/5832-2/>;

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.epfound.ge/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Situation-Analysis-of-CSOs-in-Georgia.pdf>;

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<sup>52</sup> For further details please contact "Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative" team;

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- **State Funding for Civil Society Organizations 2017** , Best practice research - Study conducted within the EU funded project "Georgian Civil Society Sustainability Initiative"<sup>54</sup>;
- USAID Civil Society Index 2016<sup>55</sup>,
- EIDHR Evaluation Report<sup>56</sup>
- ‘Towards inclusive Human Rights policies in Georgia: Efficient CSO Engagement in policy planning, implementation and monitoring’ – Report by USAID (Rusudan Mikhelidze), 2017: <http://www.humanrights.ge/admin/editor/uploads/pdf/EWMI%20PROLoG%20Final%20Report%20Rusudan%20Mikhelidze.pdf>
- The Caucasus Research Resource Centres (2017). „Trust towards CSOs“ <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb-ge/TRUNGOS/>
- Evaluation of four Georgian CSOs, procured by the Embassy of Sweden: <https://www.sida.se/English/publications/160910/evaluation-of-four-ngo-implemented/>
- [The European Commission and the Government of Georgia High-level meeting of 21 November: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/54225/high-level-meeting-continues-bring-georgia-and-european-union-closer-together\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/54225/high-level-meeting-continues-bring-georgia-and-european-union-closer-together_en)

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<sup>54</sup> [http://csogeorgia.org/uploads/library/250/State\\_Funding\\_for\\_Civil\\_Society\\_Organizations-eng.pdf](http://csogeorgia.org/uploads/library/250/State_Funding_for_Civil_Society_Organizations-eng.pdf);  
[http://csogeorgia.org/uploads/library/249/State\\_Funding\\_Mechanisms\\_for\\_CSOs\\_in\\_Georgia\\_eng.pdf](http://csogeorgia.org/uploads/library/249/State_Funding_Mechanisms_for_CSOs_in_Georgia_eng.pdf);  
[http://csogeorgia.org/uploads/library/251/State\\_funding\\_Reform\\_Policy-eng.pdf](http://csogeorgia.org/uploads/library/251/State_funding_Reform_Policy-eng.pdf);

<sup>55</sup> [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI\\_Report\\_7-28-17.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf);

<sup>56</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eidhr-evaluation-final-report-exec-sum\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/eidhr-evaluation-final-report-exec-sum_en.pdf);

## PART II – EU STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN TO ENGAGE WITH CSOs

Key challenges and opportunities	Priorities for EU engagement with CS	Targets of EU engagement with CS	Actions/Activities (analysis, policy dialogue, financial or non-financial support)	Indicative means (programmes/instruments)
<b>General EU engagement with civil society – cross cutting topics</b>				
<b>Priority 1: Provide wide-ranging capacity building for CSOs to perform multiple roles, in particular to engage in policy dialogues, act as watchdogs and as social entrepreneurs</b>				
<p><b>Opportunity:</b></p> <p>There is still space and need for further CSOs engagement to ensure more effective civic participation in the policy dialogues and public debates at central and local level and to strengthen accountability and transparency mechanisms</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b></p> <p>Insufficient level of institutionalisation of policy dialogue, public debates and consultation, especially at local level</p> <p>Weaknesses in CSOs institutional, administrative and organisational capacities</p> <p>Limited technical and thematic expertise</p> <p>Donor dependency and insufficient diversity of funding mechanisms</p> <p>Weak participation of women and youth CSOs, CSOs representing various marginalized groups</p> <p>Limited social entrepreneurship</p>	<p>To strengthen CSOs role in decision making process at local and national level through different means (policy dialogue, implementation, watchdog, advocacy and lobby campaigns).</p> <p>Promote collective action through supporting partnerships between CSOs, local authorities, businesses and media, in particular on specific themes</p> <p>Enhancing CSO accountability and transparency towards their members and raising public perception toward civil society</p> <p>To enhance the enabling environment for financial diversification of CSOs funding and innovation through supporting actions to raise funds by partnering with private sector, carrying out social enterprise initiatives, own assets, getting government funds, donations/philanthropy.</p> <p>To increase EU MS donor dialogue about more efficient aid support to strengthen civil society</p>	<p>More capable, transparent, accountable, effective and financially independent and sustainable CSOs by 2020, in particular empower small and medium sized CSOs</p> <p>Enabled institutional framework is promoted through supporting the reform of the national database registration</p> <p>CSOs accountability towards to citizens (downward accountability) is improved by 2020</p> <p>CSOs have substantially increased the number of sources of funding by increasing its % in the annual budget vs aid funding, and by revising aid modalities, such as short term project support vs institutional capacity building and core support, and including more membership-based CSOs</p>	<p><b>EU-Government Policy dialogue</b> at sector level and/or Political Dialogue to promote engagement with civil society; financial support to CSOs. Calls for proposals include regional coverage, diversification of CSOs and women &amp; youth participation as criteria for selection</p> <p><b>Financial support</b> (CfP, core funding) to projects aimed at supporting participative processes, projects and capacities to enhance CSOs accountability and transparency as well as sustainability; partnership between local CSOs and with international ones, local authorities, businesses and media; Actions aimed at enhancing the capacity development of local officials to engage CSOs in decision making process and of the Local Action Groups; promote capacity-building for media professionals; facilitate positioning of women’s organizations; strengthen non-partisan, policy-relevant and evidence based analytical capacities within the CS</p> <p><b>Communication</b> to enhance the visibility of CSOs actions;</p>	<p>Capacity building measures for CSOs funded under EU bilateral and regional programmes (CSSP/ ENI/ CSO-LA/ EIDHR/ EED), as well as EU Member States;</p> <p>Civil Society Sustainability Initiative project</p> <p>Under the 2019 programme further support to the civil society development and sustainability is envisaged</p> <p>Generally, all programmes include civil society funding and/or various engagement opportunities (mainstreamed support)</p>

Key challenges and opportunities	Priorities for EU engagement with CS	Targets of EU engagement with CS	Actions/Activities (analysis, policy dialogue, financial or non-financial support)	Indicative means (programmes/instruments)
<b>Economic development and market opportunities</b>				
<b>Priority 2 – Increase CSOs engagement in a more balanced and sustainable territorial development, incl agriculture, rural development and food safety</b>				
<b>Priority 3 – Enhance CSOs involvement in the promotion of the DCFTA's practical benefits at all levels of society</b>				
<p><b>Opportunity:</b> In full economic development, consolidation and DCFTA implementation, the private and state sectors need the engagement of the civil society at all levels to ensure inclusive, green and sustainable growth (in line with the Green Economy Concept launched by the PM in July 2018) and to reap better the benefits of the DCFTA</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b></p> <p>Poverty and unemployment remain high in the country</p> <p>Regions have different territorial, social and economic characteristics</p> <p>Significant disparities between urban and rural areas, in terms of incomes and living standards</p> <p>Limited CSO capacities, engagement in and understanding of regional/local/rural</p>	<p>To enable CSOs to participate more directly in improving the living standards and conditions in all regions; Fostering CSOs participation in planning and implementation of regional/local development strategies and various mid-term planning</p> <p>To increase awareness within civil society about challenges and benefits of balanced and inclusive economic development and their roles in supporting it within the framework of DCFTA</p> <p>To strengthen civil society's role in providing information and support to small and medium size enterprises and participating in public-private dialogue and partnerships;</p> <p>To increase dialogue between businesses and civil society in order to understand benefits of collaboration in economic</p>	<p>Strengthened capacities of CSOs in promoting socio-economic development of regions and their presence in the planning and implementation of regional/local development strategies</p> <p>Georgian civil society are more actively informed and supporting DCFTA through improving the information of civil society about DCFTA related issues by 2020</p> <p>More active CSOs engagement in sector private-public policy dialogue, public debates and public-private partnerships, at least in the main economic development sectors targeted by the EU focal sectors (i.e. rural development, food safety, private sector development)</p> <p>Improved awareness of SPS/food safety matters amongst producers, food business operators, CSOs and the general public (consumers at large)</p>	<p><b>Financial support:</b> Support CSOs initiatives to promote equal opportunities for women and men as well as minorities' and marginalized groups' to take an active part in regional development matters; foster minorities' and marginalized groups' participations in planning and implementation of regional/local development strategies; Strengthen CSOs along the DCFTA implementation process and along the implementation of the SME strategy for Georgia; Further enhance formal engagement of CSOs in rural development at all levels</p> <p><b>Non-Financial Support (e.g. facilitation):</b> Involvement of CSOs in Local Action Groups and in the Inter-Agency Coordination Council (IACC) for rural development; Involvement the CSOs in the functioning of Regional Consultative Councils functioning for the selection of projects to be financed from the Regional Development Fund;</p> <p><b>EU-Government Policy dialogue</b> to ensure social dialogue on DCFTA implementation continues; The established DCFTA Advisory Group</p>	<p>EU funded regional programme - Support to EU-Georgia Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and Small and Medium size Enterprises (SMEs)</p> <p>Incoming EU support programme for Integrated Territorial Development</p> <p>4 CSO projects targeted at DCFTA implementation</p> <p>East Invest III to support dialogue between sectoral business associations</p> <p>The activity is spread over the regions; DCFTA Information Centres created in 2017 become regional hubs for interaction with civil society on economic development</p> <p>Current ENPARD II</p>

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<p>development and food safety</p> <p>Limited capacity of Georgian administration at regional levels</p>	<p>development and increased business climate and entrepreneurship;</p> <p>To involve CSOs in food safety projects to increase awareness of food safety with consumers and different stakeholders</p>		<p>and Private Sector Development Advisory Council meet regularly, develop the respective action plans and implement them;</p>	<p>and ENPARD III grants for rural development;</p> <p>Planned ENPARD IV programme – Rural Development and Food Safety components which envisage CSO engagement</p>

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<b>Connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change</b>				
<b>Priority 4 – Support CSOs in promoting energy efficiency, as well as the road safety and air quality measures and monitoring their implementation</b>				
<p><b>Opportunity:</b> Civil society contribution to connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change is crucial given their direct link to their constituencies and the communities they represent</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b></p> <p>The rapid expansion of the Georgian economy should not be made at the expense of the environment</p> <p>Insufficient CSOs involvement in energy efficiency measures as well as those fighting against air, soil and water pollution, climate change-induced hazards, and supporting waste management, the sustainable management of biodiversity, ecosystems and natural resources at central, local and regional level</p>	<p>To support CSOs to engage actively in EU focus sectors where CSOs presence is rather limited (i.e. energy efficiency, road safety and air quality)</p>	<p>Increased CSOs capacity to participate in policy sector dialogues, implement and monitor energy efficiency initiatives as well as those related to road safety and air quality.</p> <p>By 2020, CSOs are mainstreamed in EU focal sectors in Georgia where the presence and participation of Civil society organisations is limited.</p>	<p><b>Financial Support:</b> Participation in EU calls for proposals organised in the sector; Support projects aimed at CSOs in monitoring the implementation of relevant projects in the regions and in communicating with local populations to promote/explain ongoing reforms promoted by the EU; grants or project components devoted to Capacity-building for CSOs on concepts and principles in the sector (promotion of energy efficiency, promotion of better waste management, improved road safety and air quality, climate change adaptation)</p> <p><b>Non- Financial support (e.g. facilitation)</b> CSOs invited to conferences and steering group meetings organised in the framework of EU-funded actions; Regular policy dialogue with involvement of CSOs among others in the framework of EU Green Week, EU Sustainable Energy Week, EU Mobility Week; Improving the capacity of information systems and networking of CSOs to reflect gender and marginalized groups' participation in energy efficiency, environment and climate change activities</p> <p><b>EU-Government Policy dialogue</b> to advocate for the participation of CSOs in sector policy dialogue, policy implementation etc.</p>	<p>EU-funded Covenant of Mayors demonstration projects</p> <p>EaP Road Safety Cooperation Framework</p>

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<b>Strengthening institutions and good governance</b>				
<b>Priority 5 – Increase CSOs participation in the reform of the public administration and security sectors</b>				
<b>Priority 6 – Support CSOs promoting and defending human rights</b>				
<p><b>Opportunity:</b> CSOs engagement is central to ensure effective civic engagement and accountability of public administration and security sectors to citizens, as well as the wider rule of law</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b></p> <p>Given the sensitivity and complexity of undertaking major reforms in the public administration and security sectors, the role of the CSOs in monitoring the process and holding those accountable is crucial</p> <p>Local authorities should be better empowered to perform inclusive and sustainable local development policies</p> <p>Human rights need to be further promoted and protected in Georgia at all levels (in particular women, youth, children and other</p>	<p>To strengthen the role of the civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the public administration and security sectors reforms, as well as overseeing relevant institutions, and in general the Rule of Law</p> <p>To strengthen CSOs competences and capacity to improve cooperation amongst CSOs and between CSOs, Government institutions and business, at national, regional and local levels</p> <p>To enhance the capacities of Local Authorities to conduct inclusive and transparent policy-making on the local level within their field of competences, and to involve their constituencies in consultations and public debates to ensure that citizens are aware of and participate in local affairs and receive adequate services;</p> <p>To promote an enabling environment for the promotion of fundamental freedoms through supporting human rights defenders most at risk and CSOs in activities</p>	<p>Strengthened role of the civil society in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the public administration and security reform sectors</p> <p>Human Rights organisations are better positioned and better equipped to better protect human rights</p> <p>Increased the numbers and coverage of service delivery in drug rehabilitation</p> <p>A more developed civil society in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia</p>	<p><b>Financial support:</b> Thematic call for proposals for advocacy actions, Capacity building measures for civil society on specific areas of security sector oversight; In Abkhazia, a Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) is being implemented;</p> <p><b>Policy dialogue</b> through budget support instrument, through national policy platforms on PAR, anticorruption, OGP (supported by PAR programme) to strengthening the dialogue between the Security Sector institutions and CSOs</p> <p><b>Non-Financial support:</b> A Civic Resource Centre was created which is actively used by civil society;</p>	<p>Grant Cfp “Strengthening the role of civil society organisations in the implementation of the reforms of the public administration” to be launched under programme "support to PAR in Georgia" 2018-2021</p> <p>Under the thematic programme “Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities 2014-2020” call for proposals - Support to Local Authorities in Georgia (consortia LA and CSOs)</p> <p>European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (ongoing 2016-2017 and incoming 2018 - 2020)</p> <p>Incoming EU funded Security Sector Programme (SAFE)</p> <p>1.4 m EUR for the 2016 Civil Society Support Programme (ongoing until June 2019)</p> <p>2019 Civil Society Support Programme</p> <p>COBERM III (ongoing until end</p>

<p>vulnerable/marginalised groups)</p> <p>Service delivery in drug rehabilitation and prevention activities should be enhanced</p> <p>There is shrinking space for civil society activity in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and limited funding</p>	<p>related to human rights violations</p> <p>To support CS in its own right from a Human Rights Based Approach</p> <p>To ensure rights of minority/disadvantaged groups</p> <p>To strengthen CSOs as service deliverers on crime and drug prevention and drug treatment</p> <p>To strengthen CSOs capacity in South Ossetia and Abkhazia to address the most pressing needs of the local communities and to facilitate confidence-building measures and cross-ABL contacts</p>			<p>2018)</p> <p>COBERM IV (under preparation)</p>
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<b>Mobility and People to People contacts</b>				
<b>Priority 7: Increase CSOs engagement in skills development for employment and matching for labour market needs (EVET), as well as youth and culture</b>				
<p><b>Opportunity:</b> further support to skills development and matching for labour market needs</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b> A first phase of EU support in the EVET sector has laid the basis but further support is need to maintain and consolidate the achievements</p> <p>Insufficient CSOs engagement on youth and cultural policies</p> <p>Lack of understanding culture and creative industries as a vector for inclusive economic growth and development</p>	<p>To engage CSOs in monitoring the implementation of ongoing and planned projects/initiatives skills development and labour market/employment reforms.</p> <p>To support advocacy measures promoted by the CSOs in the fields of youth, culture and and gender equality</p>	<p>VET sector is consolidated with strengthened role of the CSOs in monitoring the implementation of VET reforms</p> <p>CSOs have enhanced their engagement in youth and culture related activities</p>	<p><b>Financial support:</b> Calls for proposals for capacity Building measures, watchdog actions, grants scheme to monitor VET policies and reforms; advocacy measures about youth and culture policies, raise awareness on and gender equality</p> <p><b>Non-Financial support</b> to facilitate the sharing of the best practices; visibility through communication</p>	<p>Call for proposals planned under AAP 2017 Skills Development, matching for Labour Market Needs programme</p> <p>ERU4youth, Skills4Jobs, Erasmus+</p> <p>Creative Europe, upcoming regional programme on Culture</p>