

Institutions of Georgia for governance on national minorities: an overview

Sordia, Giorgi

Arbeitspapier / working paper

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Sordia, G. (2009). *Institutions of Georgia for governance on national minorities: an overview*. (ECMI Working Paper, 43). Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI). <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-106951>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

**Institutions of Georgia
for Governance on National Minorities:
An Overview**

Giorgi Sordia

ECMI Working Paper # 43

September 2009

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MINORITY ISSUES (ECMI)
Schiffbruecke 12 (Kompagnietor) D-24939 Flensburg
phone: +49-(0)461-14 14 9-0 fax +49-(0)461-14 14 9-19
e-mail: info@ecmi.de Internet: <http://www.ecmi.de>

ECMI Working Paper # 43
European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)
Director: Dr. Tove H. Malloy

Copyright 2009 European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)
Published in September 2009 by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

ISSN: 1435-9812

Table of Contents

I. I. Introduction	4
1. Early institutional developments with regard to national minorities.....	6
2. The institutional set-up after the ‘Rose Revolution’.....	8
II. Executive Level Institutions Relating to National Minority Integration	13
1. The State Minister for Reintegration Issues (and the State Minister on Conflict Resolution Issues).....	13
2. The Advisor to the President on Civil Integration Issues and the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council.....	17
3. The Public Defender and the Council of National Minorities.....	21
4. The Ministry of Education and Science.....	22
5. The Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport.....	26
6. The State Minister for Diaspora Issues.....	27
7. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs.....	28
8. The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation.....	29
9. The Ministry of Interior Affairs.....	30
III. Legislative Level Institutions	32
Conclusion	35
Annex 1	
Executive Level Institutions Established after the ‘Rose Revolution’ but Abolished Due to Government Reshuffles	39
1. The Office of the State Minister for National Accord Issues.....	39
2. The Department of Inter-Ethnic Relations and Civic Integration at the Administration of the President.....	40
Annex 2	
Cabinet reshuffles after the ‘Rose Revolution’	41
Annex 3	
National minority relevant structures in Government established and/or abolished after the ‘Rose Revolution’	46
Annex 4	
National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration	47

I. Introduction

Since the ‘Rose Revolution’ in November 2003, significant reform has taken place in Georgia. The new Georgian government led by Mikheil Saakashvili, eager to push forward the process of reform and enhance the pace of integration with Euro-Atlantic structures and institutions, has taken a range of important steps to develop the institutional arrangement of government. A number of key ministries have been radically reformed, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Education and Science. Structural reform is also ongoing in many other ministries and state bodies.

As part of this process of reform, the civil integration of Georgian society, a term that takes in the inclusion and protection of national minorities, has been formally prioritised as a key issue for state consolidation. The importance of civil integration for building a strong and viable state is frequently emphasized by top decision makers, including the president, the speaker of parliament and others. Though at the practical level progress has been inconsistent at best, advances have been made in terms of the institutional arrangements for devising and implementing policy on civil integration.

The post-2003 administration has created various bodies whose remits covered minority issues. Initially (from 2004 onwards), the implementation of national minority policy was the duty of the State Minister for Civic Integration Issues but later, following the structural modification of the government in 2008, this responsibility was assumed by the State Minister for Reintegration Issues. Alongside these bodies, the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council under the auspices of the Presidential Administration and the President’s Advisor with responsibility for civil integration issues began to play an active role, especially from spring 2008 onwards. The fruit of this additional input was a highly important document – the National Concept on Tolerance and Civil Integration, adopted on 8 May 2009 by the government of Georgia along with an action plan of specific activities for the next five years.

At the same time, development programmes for several of Georgia’s regions are currently being drafted, including development plans for regions inhabited by national minorities. Georgia’s parliament has also ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of

National Minorities, taking effect from April 2006. Currently, preparations for the signing and ratifying of another highly important international agreement, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages—another of Georgia's commitments and obligations to the Council of Europe—are underway. Other recent legislation includes a law on the repatriation of deported Meskhetians, adopted by parliament in July 2007. In addition to these legislative steps to create a better framework for governance of minorities, a number of new bodies and services have been established within the executive structures, responsible for issues relating to civil integration, protection of national minorities and other issues connected to state policy on civic integration.

However, while progress on the development of policies on national minorities has been considerable if compared to previous governments, serious deficiencies are noticeable as regards practical implementation. While Georgia now largely seems to be fulfilling its commitments to the Council of Europe *de iure*—with a few notable exceptions, namely the signing and ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and a law on national minorities—there is still a long way to go to ensure that the treaties and other commitments are actually being effectively implemented. One of the serious obstacles for the government in actually implementing these treaties and laws is a lack of capacity in the state bodies responsible for integration, minority issues and related areas. The main problem that has emerged, particularly over the past two or three years, is the instability of these institutions, which are undermined by frequent changes in mandate or the establishment of parallel structures. Responsibilities are not clearly distributed among the institutions, hampering their smooth functioning. In addition, coordination between institutions is very weak and their efficiency is further hindered by low salaries and insufficient funds.

This paper aims to discuss the institutional set-up around civil integration and minority protection issues in Georgia since the 'Rose Revolution', and the study reviews the state structures relevant for governance and legislative practices on civil integration and minority issues. It seeks to provide an overview of the institutional problems that beset civic integration by presenting a brief outline of the history and responsibilities of the relevant state bodies and analyzing some of the problems in the current institutional arrangements. The research for this paper has been conducted by way of consultations and interviews with the representatives of the bodies concerned, both executive and legislative.

Use is also made of official documents, principally the mandates, constituting decrees, legal documents and regulations of the bodies covered by our research.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section examines the emergence of institutional structures for handling minority issues during Shevardnadze's rule and discusses the institutional changes and cabinet reshuffles after the 'Rose Revolution', reviewing all of the nine reshuffles since 2004. The second section describes the current mandates and activities of minority policy related bodies at the executive level of governance, while the third section presents some of the key activities and work of the legislative body in relation to minorities. The paper contains four annexes: one describing a few temporary bodies that existed for a short time after the 'Rose Revolution', two sets of tables that graphically outline the institutional development of the government bodies from 2004 to the present and the text of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration

1. Early institutional developments with regard to national minorities

The first steps in Georgia towards building sustainable institutions for minority governance were made during the rule of Eduard Shevardnadze (1992-2003). The first president of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, perhaps unsurprisingly, given that he both lacked government experience and based his leadership on a strongly ethnonationalist platform, had not made any efforts to create institutions devoted to minority governance. On the contrary, Gamsakhurdia's ethnocentric policies and rhetoric largely disenfranchised ethnic minorities, and in this period the regions inhabited by minority populations were politically isolated.

Hence, the formalization of political institutions started only after the regime change and Shevardnadze's coming into power in 1992. One of the first institutions to be set up was a special human rights service under the State Council. The State Council was a temporary consultative structure that had existed before the 1992 autumn elections and comprised members of the intelligentsia and leading members of political parties. The human rights service was headed by Alexander Kavsadze, a former security officer. Initially, the service was mandated to investigate all cases of major human rights violations committed during

Gamsakhurdia's rule, including violations of the rights of national minorities. The service continued to operate after the elections and existed until 1995. During this period, hundreds of cases of ethnically motivated rights violations were uncovered and recorded, most of them targeting Ossetians.¹ Another important development after Shevardnadze came to power was the commencement of work on a legislative framework in the field of national minority integration. The State Council of Georgia prepared a draft decree on national minority integration issues. Although it was never signed, the very drafting of such a decree indicated an aspiration on the part of the new Georgian political leadership to shift the direction of policy away from the ethnocentrism of the Gamsakhurdia regime and towards the building of a country based on tolerance and the rule of law.

Also in 1992, after the first parliamentary election under Shevardnadze's rule, a Committee for Human Rights Issues was established under the chairmanship of MP Giga Lortkipanidze, a distinguished film director. In 1995, a special government commission was created on Meskhetian issues headed by Vazha Lortkipanidze, State Minister. However, as former members of this body have stated, there was in fact a lack of real political will to resolve the issue and it may seem that the commission was chiefly deployed as a stalling tactic.²

Another institution devoted to national minority issues, the Human Rights Council, was established in 1997 under the Security Council of Georgia, and headed by Rusudan Beridze. It existed until 2002, and it included a special section covering national minority issues headed by Alexander Gerasimov. The Human Rights Council was very effective in gathering information on human rights and violations of the rights of minorities. By virtue of its affiliation with the Security Council and consequent status, the Human Rights Council was, for the period of its existence, the key government body for minority issues. It also served as an informal consultative body through which national minority organizations and government could liaise.

However, in spite of the change of policy, the attempts to establish structures and institutions with responsibility for minority issues and the fact that Shevardnadze officially

¹ Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, Republican Party of Georgia and former member of the State Council, December 2007.

² *Ibid.*

condemned the violence and intolerance of the Gamsakhurdia era, no consistent policies or longer term strategies for minority integration and protection were developed during Shevardnadze's eleven years in power after Georgian independence. Furthermore, when analyzing overall outcomes for national minority groups, the general situation in the country must also be taken into account. Economic development during this period largely took place in urban areas rather than in Georgia's regions. As a result, the process of marginalization of minority populations continued, and those regions compactly settled by minority populations, particularly Javakheti and parts of Kvemo Kartli, were left to care for themselves, often seeking support and assistance from neighboring Armenia and Azerbaijan. A large part of Georgia's minority population responded to the new political and socio-economic realities in the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union by emigrating, mostly to their kin states, as in the case of many Russians, Armenians, Azeris, Greeks, Ossetians and Jews. Others tended to assimilate, particularly Ossetians and the children of mixed marriages. These transformative processes had a profound impact on Georgia's national minorities, and while according to the last Soviet census conducted in 1989, 28% of the country's population was made up by persons belonging to national minorities, this figure had dropped to 16% by 2002.

2. The institutional set-up after the 'Rose Revolution'

The coming to power of Mikheil Saakashvili marked a significant change in Georgian politics. After the 'Rose Revolution', the government underwent a series of structural and staff changes. While reform of government clearly necessitated and justified such moves, the frequency of the changes is also a clear demonstration of the instability of the government. By August 2009, the cabinet had been changed no less than nine times and each reshuffle had been marked by either structural reorganization of ministries or cabinet member changes. The first cabinet after the 'Rose Revolution', approved 17 February 2004, consisted of fifteen ministries and four state ministries.³ The first post-revolutionary cabinet looked as follows:

³ The position of State Minister, or so called 'minister without portfolio' according to the Law on the Government of Georgia is established for the fulfillment of particularly important national objectives. The State Minister is a member of the Cabinet, though unlike a full-fledged Ministry, the Office of a State Minister has limited staff.

Ministry of Interior,
Ministry of Security Issues,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Ministry of Defense,
Ministry of Finance,
Ministry of Economy,
Ministry of Justice,
Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation,
Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection
Ministry of Education and Science,
Ministry of Energy,
Ministry of Agriculture,
Ministry of Infrastructure,
Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport,
Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources,
State Minister for National Accord Issues,
State Minister for European Integration Issues,
State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues,
State Minister for Development of Small and Medium Business

The first cabinet lasted for only four months before it was reorganized on 10 June 2004. The Ministry of Infrastructure was abolished and the Office of the State Minister for Regional Management and Self-Government was created. Apart from such structural changes, three ministers lost their positions. Just seven months later, on 27 December 2004, the government underwent more substantial changes; three State Minister Offices—for Development of Small and Medium Business, for National Accord Issues and for Regional and Self-Government Issues—were abolished, and two new ones were added: the Office of the State Minister for Civil Integration and the Office of the State Minister for Economic Reform Coordination. Another significant change was the merger of the Interior and Security Ministries into one body. These structural changes were accompanied by significant staff turnover. Throughout the next four reshuffles (17 February 2005, 24 July 2006, 7 September 2007 and 22 November 2007), the cabinet preserved its structural form

and the number of ministries was not changed, though in total 14 ministers were moved to other ministries or dismissed.

The next reshuffle, which took place on 31 January 2008, marked the beginning of a new wave of structural reorganization in the cabinet. Two new State Minister posts were established, the State Minister for Regional Development Issues and the State Minister for Diaspora Issues, while two existing ones were abolished, namely the State Minister for Civil Integration Issues and the State Minister for Reform Coordination Issues. In addition, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation was transformed from a Ministry into a State Minister function. The most recent structural reorganization at the time of writing (August 2009) took place on 6 February 2009. Two new ministries were created: the Ministry of Penitentiary, Probation and Legal Assistance and the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, which replaced the abolished Office of the State Minister for Regional Development Issues. In addition, the Office of the State Minister for Refugees and Accommodation was reinstated as a full-fledged Ministry.

As of the reshuffle of 6 February 2009, the cabinet is comprised of 15 full-scale ministries and 3 State Ministers:

- Ministry of Education and Science,
- Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport,
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources,
- Ministry of Energy,
- Ministry of Agriculture,
- Ministry of Defense,
- Ministry of Interior,
- Ministry of Finance,
- Ministry of Economic Development,
- Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation,
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- Ministry of Justice,
- Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection,
- Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure,

Ministry of Penitentiary, Probation and Legal Assistance,
State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration,
State Minister for Diaspora Issues,
State Minister for Reintegration Issues.

As noted above, the frequent cabinet reshuffles are indicative of a certain weakness of government. This weakness is also reflected in the fact that none of the ministers appointed to the first cabinet in 2004 have survived to this day in their initial posts. Only two ministers from the first cabinet have preserved ministerial positions throughout the period since the ‘Rose Revolution’, namely Giorgi Baramidze, initially appointed as Interior Minister and currently serving as State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, and Nika Gilauri, initially appointed as Energy Minister and currently serving as Prime Minister.

The reduction of bureaucracy, creation of efficient public structures and promotion of reform: these are the goals with reference to which the government justifies its frequent reshuffles. The government, it is argued, is in constant search of better models and solutions and thus keen to test out young cabinet members and other government staff. However, in some cases, outside observers contend, ministries have been created and/or abolished as a result of the personal lobbying efforts of particular political interest groups and ministerial positions distributed based on political loyalty, or just because of certain political circumstances. The seventh reshuffle of 31 January 2008 was perceived as the most controversial in this regard, marked, many thought, by politically motivated appointments based only on loyalty to the ruling party. Particularly controversial was the appointment of two independent policy experts, Temur Yakobashvili and Ghia Nodia as respectively State Minister for Reintegration Issues and Minister on Education and Science. Both had been organizers of exit polls that were used to justify the controversial parliamentary election results in May 2008. In the same cabinet reshuffle, the establishment of the new State Minister’s Office for Regional Development Issues and the appointment of David Tkeshelashvili as State Minister were seen by many experts as pre-electoral maneuvering, since the new State Minister was a politician with extensive experience in conducting elections. Politically motivated appointments and government changes were especially in evidence during the first cabinet reshuffles. Experts often cite

as an example the establishment and subsequent abolishment of the State Minister's Offices for National Accord Issues and for Civil Integration as short-lived responses to immediate political circumstances: the first was created to appease supporters of former president Zviad Gamsakhurdia and support their integration into political processes, the second was intended mainly to promote the integration of Ossetians (see also Annex 1).

II. Executive Level Institutions Relating to National Minority Integration

1. The Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues (and the Office of the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues)

As mentioned above, special institutions devoted to dealing with national minority issues on the ministerial level were only introduced after the ‘Rose Revolution’. The most important early institution of this kind was the Office of the State Minister for Civic Integration Issues established in December 2004 (after the dissolution of the Office of the State Minister for Regional Policy Issues, see below). Zinaida Bestayeva, who is of Ossetian ethnicity, was appointed State Minister. This appointment was presented by the government as a step towards national accord and was presumably an attempt to express good-will towards Ossetians and other non-Georgian ethnic groups in the country.

The Office of the State Minister for Civic Integration Issues was mandated to develop and implement state policy on civil integration and national minority inclusion. It was also given the responsibility for drafting a legislative framework and normative acts concerning minorities. According to its mandate, the Office of the State Minister also was instructed to prepare recommendations and opinions for the government and prime minister on issues connected with civil integration. It was supposed at the same time to develop linkages with all the national minority communities residing in Georgia and to elaborate different (cultural, social and other) development programmes for them. Aside from national minority integration issues, the Office of the State Minister was also involved in drafting suggestions and recommendations on the resettlement of those who were forced to leave the country during the Georgian-Ossetian conflict of the early 1990s.⁴

Thus, the main focus of the State Minister for Civil Integration Issues was clearly on national minorities and civic integration issues. However, as it turned out, the activities of the State Minister’s Office were in reality almost entirely focused on the solution of issues concerning the resettlement of Ossetians from Northern Ossetia to their former villages in Georgia, leaving many other minority issues unaddressed. The State Minister’s Office managed to persuade several Ossetian families to return to Borjomi district, though this

⁴ Statute of the State Minister for Civil Integration Issues, approved in June 2004.

initial success was not consolidated by providing adequate living conditions and the project eventually failed, ending in the out-migration of the returned Ossetian families.

The State Minister and the Head of the Minister's Office explained the almost total neglect of the national minority component of their mandate by the fact that their office was not a fully-fledged ministry, and that the number of employees was limited (the initial seven staff members increased to just fifteen by 2006). Funding was also limited: at approximately GEL 200,000 per annum, the budget was barely enough to cover salaries, purchase office equipment and cover transportation expenses.⁵

Besides these factors, the ineffectiveness of the Office can also be explained by its symbolic character. From the on-set, it seemed clear that the appointment of a minister who herself belonged to a national minority was merely a token gesture, intended to represent the government's willingness to deal with minority issues and to gain minority trust on these questions. It is true that appointing a minister of Ossetian ethnicity may be an important symbolic act, but as the State Minister had poor political experience and little leverage in the government, she was unable to lead policy and build sustainable structures in the field. Lack of efficiency ultimately led to the abolishment of the State Minister's Office in November 2007.

After the abolishment of the Office of the State Minister for Civil Integration Issues, the sphere of national minority integration remained excluded from the executive until June 2008, when the responsibilities for civil integration and national minority issues were added to the mandate of the newly established State Minister's Office for Reintegration Issues (formed on 8 February 2008). This body emerged as the successor to the former Office of the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues, which existed until 31 January 2008.

The Office of the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues, headed initially by Giorgi Khaindrava and later by Merab Antadze was according to its mandate responsible for leading conflict prevention activities, though its actual activities were focused on negotiation with representatives of South Ossetia's *de facto* government and participation

⁵ Interview with David Pitskhelauri, Head of Administration of the Office of the State Minister for Civil Integration Issues, 15 March 2006.

in Joint Control Commission meetings over South Ossetia.⁶ The mandate of the Office of the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues did not include matters relating to national minorities. However, as the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti presents a region of potential conflict, the Office was occasionally involved in the area, notably participating in the elaboration of a state strategy for Samtskhe-Javakheti in 2005.

Like its predecessor, the new institution, the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues, was also mandated to deal with conflicted regions, though by changing the title and adopting a new term—reintegration—the government shifted the emphasis onto work towards integration or reintegration and away from conflicts as such, thus implying that breakaway regions are a part of the country in need of integration. From the very beginning, the Office was focused only on conflicted regions, as was outlined in the Office Statute as of 8 February 2008 (Article 1, paragraph 2): “Tasks of the apparatus of the Office include resolution of the issues related to reintegration of conflicted regions in the territory of Georgia as well as solving of religious, ethnic, political and other problems in said regions.”

The goal of national minority integration was only included in the mandate of the Office of the State Minister after the adoption of Amendment Decree #216 on 3 June 2008. This decree outlined the concrete functions and goals of the State Minister’s Office. It extended the mandate of the institution, making it the lead agency on government policy regarding civil integration and national minorities with responsibility for developing, coordinating and implementing relevant policy. The Amended Decree (General provisions, article 1, paragraph 2) states that the Office will “promote the civil integration of national/ethnic minorities residing on the territory of Georgia; conduct large-scale civil integration programmes”. The new statute also called for the establishment of representatives in regions inhabited by national minorities, stating that the Office must “within the framework of its competencies fulfill the functions of the Office of the State Minister through corresponding representatives in the regions compactly inhabited by

⁶ The Joint Control Commission (JCC) was set up as a peacekeeping mechanism based on the Sochi Agreement of 26 June 1992. The Commission consisted of four members with equal representation: Georgia, South Ossetia, North Ossetia and Russia. Georgia withdrew from the JCC in March 2008 demanding replacement of the North Ossetia representation with representatives of the EU, OSCE and the Provisional Administrative Entity of South Ossetia (the pro-Georgian administration for South Ossetia headed by Dmitry Sanakoyev).

national/ethnic minorities; as well as interagency cooperation with the government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, administration of the temporary administrative unit of the former autonomous region of South Ossetia and state representatives – governors and local bodies of self-government”.

The section on amended tasks and functions of the State Minister’s Office (Tasks and Functions, article 2) lists the following activities relating to national minorities and civil integration: promotion and coordination of social and economic activities connected with reintegration and civil integration on the territory of Georgia (article 2, paragraph c); development, coordination and implementation of the government’s civil integration policy; development of interagency, local, and regional cooperation; design and implementation of initiatives to promote the civil integration of national/ethnic minorities; supervision and implementation of drafted programmes (Article 2, paragraph d); research on issues connected with reintegration and civil integration as well as provision of recommendations, policy and strategy regarding current processes in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the former Autonomous Republic of South Ossetia and their presentation to the government (article 2, paragraph e); coordination of the activities of Georgian government structures with the aim of promoting reintegration and civil integration processes (Article 2 paragraph h); organization of a special fund to aid reintegration and civil integration as specified in the legislation; initiation, coordination and supervision of implementation of corresponding programmes (Article 2, paragraph k).⁷

In order to implement the tasks above and generally to lead national minority policy, the position of deputy state minister was established, with a dedicated staff. Elene Tevdoradze, former MP and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Civil Integration, was appointed deputy state minister on 3 June 2008. Her staff, currently comprised of six officials, is divided into two units under the Office of the State Minister, the Civil Integration Division and the National Minority Issues Division. Additionally, on the basis of article 1, paragraph 2 of the statutes, special advisors to the State Minister were appointed in Akhalkalaki (Samtskhe-Javakheti) and Marneuli (Kvemo Kartli) to

⁷ Decree of the Government of Georgia #130, 3 June 2008.

monitor civil integration and minority integration policy in regions with a concentration of persons belonging to national minorities.

The mandate of the Office of the State Minister was once again reviewed and slightly changed by Government Decree #216 of November 2008, though those sections regarding national minority integration were not significantly altered.

2. The Advisor to the President on Civil Integration Issues and the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council

Given the very weak position and ineffectiveness of the Office of the State Minister on Civil Integration Issues discussed above, the establishment of a special office of Advisor to the President on Civic Integration Issues in January 2006 was a promising step. The Advisor to the President, a post first held by Anna Zhvania, in practice had virtually the same responsibilities and duties as the State Minister on Civil Integration Issues, except that the issue of return of the Ossetian refugee population was not covered by the Advisor.

The importance and influence of the Advisor's position further increased after the appointment in April 2008 of Tamara Kintsurashvili, who had formerly acted as the Director General of the Public Broadcasting Service (the state TV and radio channel). The new Advisor was, by Presidential Decree #282 of 30 April 2008, appointed as chairman of the Tolerance and Civil Integration Council and mandated to coordinate work on the elaboration of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and a corresponding action plan that was to be presented by the Tolerance and Civil Integration Council by 31 October 2008. This Council, a consultative body under the Presidential Administration, was established in August 2005 under the formal leadership of Zinaida Bestaeva, the State Minister for Civil Integration Issues. However, from 2005-08, its actual work consisted only of one initial meeting and one further follow-up meeting.

The Council was modified in April 2008 by decree of the president, according to which the responsibility of coordinating the Council's work was assigned to the President's Advisor. The Council itself consists of several ministers, deputy ministers and civil society representatives, including the State Minister for Reintegration Issues, the State Minister for

Regional Issues, the Deputy Minister for Refugees and Resettlement, the Deputy Minister for Education and Science, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister for Culture, the Deputy Minister for Economic Development, the Public Defender of Georgia, a Member of the Board of the Public Broadcaster, the Chairman of the Liberty Institute, the Director of ALPE Foundation (civil society organization), the Director of the United Nations Association of Georgia, the Director of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Development and Democracy, the Director of the Civil Integration Foundation and the Head of the Armenian Union of Georgia.

The main function of the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council, as stipulated by the presidential decree ordering its establishment, is the “elaboration of a national concept of tolerance and civil integration and an action plan, as well as the provision of monitoring and coordination of its implementation.”⁸ According to the decree, the Council is also mandated to conduct a general assessment, which includes a study of international governmental, social and academic experience in the sphere. The Council is also “responsible for establishing dialogue with political, social, ethnic and religious groups; for studying the factors causing intolerance and discrimination and providing a systematic description thereof; for drawing up a complex programme of legislative amendments for the elimination of legislative deficiencies which produce or allow for discrimination; and for creating mechanisms to develop the potential of ethnic minorities”.

The main achievement of the Council so far has been the final adoption of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and Action Plan on 8 May 2009 by decree #348 of the Prime Minister of Georgia (see Annex 4).⁹ The adoption of the Concept constitutes a turning point. It is a highly significant decision and sets appropriate conditions for devising national policy on national minority integration and for building coherent mechanisms for diversity management.

The Concept document consists of a narrative section, describing the goals and main directions of the Concept and Action Plan, and a section setting out the programmes and

⁸ Order of the President of Georgia #639 on elaboration of a concept for civil integration and a national action plan, 8 August 2005.

⁹ The work on the national concept and action plan to promote civil integration and tolerance was supported by the National Integration and Tolerance Programme funded by USAID, and implemented through the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG).

activities under the Concept to be implemented by different state agencies and institutions in the coming five years, funded from the state budget. The Concept is based on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Constitution of Georgia. Its main goal “is to support the building of democratic and consolidated civil society that is based on common values, which considers diversity as a source of its strength and provides every citizen with the opportunity to maintain and develop his/her identity.”¹⁰ The Concept proceeds in six main directions, or spheres: rule of law; education and state language; media and access to information; political integration and civil participation; social and regional integration; and culture and preservation of identity.

The Concept was developed as a result of a broad participatory process and is based on the consensus of all stakeholders participating in the drafting process, both from national minority communities and national civil society organizations. This process validates the outcome. In its character the Concept is flexible and though it has been finally approved, it is still possible to make certain changes and amendments based on relevant recommendations.

The concept also defines the terms of implementation and monitoring. The Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues is responsible for technical coordination, progress monitoring, reporting and process facilitation, or as stated in the Concept:

...[I]mplementation of the Action Plan is coordinated by the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues. Governmental bodies responsible for implementation of the Action Plan, according to the policy developed by the State Minister for Reintegration Issues, present the report developed in frames of their competence by the 5th day of every month. On the 10th December of every year the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues presents its report on the implementation of the Action Plan by the relevant governmental bodies to the government of Georgia and the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council.

¹⁰ National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration, adopted on 8 May 2009 by decree of the Prime Minister # 348.

The Tolerance and Civil Integration Council is mandated to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan. The Concept's Action Plan has a five-year time frame and sets detailed activities and tasks to be implemented by different state institutions. Most importantly, it obliges the government to take account in its state budget of the financial requirements of action plan implementation: "the main financial source for the implementation of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and the Action Plan is the state budget".

However, though the Concept document itself covers all problematic aspects of national minority integration, its supplementary action plan does not quite match up. For instance, special activities regarding rule of law, which is described as one of the strategic directions of the Concept, are completely absent from the Action Plan. The objectives under the heading "Rule of Law" are listed as follows:

- a) Further harmonize Georgian legislation with international commitments
- b) Improve access of national minorities to the judicial system
- c) Ensure effective protection of national minorities against discrimination
- d) Raise awareness of public officials on the rights of minorities and anti-discrimination legislation".

In the absence of specified measures in the Action Plan for achieving these goals, their inclusion seems largely a symbolic gesture on the part of the government, an indication of goodwill but without any concrete commitments to improving the national legal basis for minority protection and inclusion.

Legal issues are indirectly addressed, however. The Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues will, in its coordinating role, have to conduct a legal framework analysis and, on this basis, recommend any revisions to the law required to secure the necessary and sufficient legal grounds for implementation. Furthermore, promoting legal awareness of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities is included as an activity in the Action Plan, again falling under the State Minister's Office.¹¹

¹¹ ECMI/DIHR Debriefing Note, 'Feasibility Study on Institutional Capacity Building of the State Minister of Georgia for Reintegration Issues', Mission to Tbilisi, Georgia, 11-16 May 2009, European Centre for Minority Issues/Danish Institute for Human Rights.

The effectiveness of the Concept document will depend on two critical factors, the development of a participatory mechanism and the establishment of a unit or team to coordinate implementation. Positive steps towards addressing these issues have already been formulated by the government. The Concept document stresses the necessity of improving minority participation in the decision-making process. To this end, the action plan envisages the establishment of regional national minority councils, though it does not specify their mandate or the scope of their activities. This issue became one of the main topics of discussion in the first working conference devoted to the general issues of the Concept document and Action Plan held on 19-21 June 2009 in Gudauri. According to the first brainstorming sessions and consultations, regional minority councils are to unify local national minority and other civil society organizations and monitor the implementation of the Concept and Action Plan at the regional level, ensuring the involvement of regional national minority representatives in relevant decision-making processes. The activities of the regional minority councils are likely to be linked to the local Governor's offices (i.e. the offices of the Plenipotentiary Representatives of the President) and to the central level Council of National Minorities functioning under the auspices of the Public Defender.

As regards the setting up of a concrete coordination facility, shortly after the above conference in June 2009, the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues established an intergovernmental working group, which includes the heads of various divisions of the ministries and state institutions involved in the implementation of the Action Plan. The work of the intergovernmental working group is facilitated by the Deputy State Minister for Reintegration Issues. Hence, while it remains to be seen how efficiently the Office of the State Minister and the new coordinating facility will move towards concrete implementation of the National Concept and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the first important steps to that end have been made.

3. The Public Defender and the Council of National Minorities

In the past few years, the role of the Public Defender of Georgia in the protection and integration of national minorities has become markedly more important. The Public Defender, as one of the main guarantors of human rights protection in Georgia, has always

been concerned with the problems of national minorities, but the capacity for handling these issues was considerably enhanced when in December 2005, a specialized Council of National Minorities (CNM)—a permanent consultative body—was created. CNM brings together the majority of the minority organizations in the country, in particular those based in Tbilisi, and aims to develop consultation and cooperation between national minorities and the government.¹²

Having held numerous round tables and working group meetings with the participation of relevant state officials and interested civil society groups, CNM has become the main forum for discussion and dialogue between government stakeholders and national minority representatives. The consultative function of CNM was further developed when a memorandum for cooperation and understanding with the Presidential Administration was signed in June 2008. CNM consists of six working groups on the following issues: media and information, education and culture, legal issues, regional policy and integration, gender issues and youth issues. The working groups convene on an on-going basis according to their needs and meet with representatives of the corresponding state structures in order to put forward recommendations or discuss implementation issues. The main achievement of the CNM working groups so far has been the elaboration of a comprehensive set of recommendations for the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the National Minorities presented to the government of Georgia in May 2007.

The role of the CNM has been further strengthened after the adoption of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration (see above). As a national minority umbrella structure and the main consultative body on minority issues, CNM is seen both as one of the bodies involved in monitoring Action Plan implementation and as engaged in ongoing consultations with the government on issues related to minority integration and protection.

4. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

¹² The Council was established with ECMI facilitation and funding, and is also since 2006 supported by UNDP through its assistance to the Tolerance Centre of the Public Defender's Office, where the Council is anchored.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MES) plays a decisive role in the process of civil integration as some of the major problems that affect national minorities are linked with issues of language and education. One of the main impediments for the integration of national minorities in Georgia is their lack of knowledge of the state language; this is especially true for minorities settled compactly in the southern regions of the country. Hence, the policy of the MES towards minorities aims at enhancing the integration of minority populated regions in the educational sphere. In accordance with the Ministry statute of 2004, a Department for Programmes has been established, which “enhances the dissemination of the official language in the entire territory of Georgia by way of elaborating and accomplishing corresponding projects for civic integration” and at the same time “enhances the implementation of the state policy for the protection of national minority languages” (art 4.10).¹³

In order to achieve these goals the Ministry currently runs two programmes relating to national minority integration. First, there is the Civil Integration Programme, two main components of which focus on the elaboration of new study plans and standards, text-books and methodological recommendations for Georgian language and literature, and the provision of non-Georgian schools with text-books, Georgian books, newspapers and magazines. The second is a sub-programme within the State Language Programme “Defence of Linguistic Minorities of Georgia”, which focuses on the promotion of teaching in national minority languages. The programme also envisages the protection and development of less popular languages like Abkhazian, Udi, Assyrian and others. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the Ministry of Education and Science has formally institutionalized the protection of these smaller languages within its own structures by establishing an official Language Department, mandated to work on this issue. The main purpose of the department is to facilitate and encourage the teaching of the state language throughout the whole country with a special focus on minority populated regions. The department’s activities are conducted through so-called Language Houses established in district centres throughout the country, including in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli. However, so far very few practical measures have been taken to support the teaching of smaller languages, even though some smaller languages are under serious threat.

¹³ Statute of the Ministry of Education and Science, adopted on 21 May, 2004.

In addition, a project called “Future Begins Today” was implemented 2004-2006. In this project, teachers from different parts of Georgia were sent on a one-year contract basis to regions inhabited by minorities to work as teachers of Georgian language and literature, and the history and geography of Georgia in non-Georgian schools. This programme was designed to address the problem of a lack of access to education in the state language in minority regions. In Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts, for example, many schools up until 2004 did not offer teaching in Georgian at all due to a lack of teachers with knowledge of Georgian. In spite of this, in regions of compact residence of minorities, the programme “Future Begins Today” aroused mistrust. In 2005, the programme provided teachers who came from different parts of Georgia (the government unofficially calls them “missionaries”) with a salary of GEL 500 per month, which is much higher than the salaries of the local teachers. As a result, this initiative, though aimed at enhancing civic integration, aroused suspicions of discrimination towards minority teachers among both teachers and the wider community in these regions.

On the other hand, the opening of the Zurab Zhvania State Administration School in Kutaisi in January 2006 was undoubtedly a highly important step on the road to civic integration. The aim of the school is to offer current and prospective public officials (predominantly persons belonging to minorities) the possibility of continuing education at the central, regional and local level. The school also provides Georgian language teaching for minority representatives.

One of the Ministry’s new initiatives is to adopt a concept on multilingual education, which was already piloted with the assistance of Swiss organization CIMERA in 2006-08. The method of multilingual education envisages using two or more languages of instruction in schools, thereby enabling the proper learning and preservation of the native language and at the same time the acquisition of the state language. The Ministry, with the assistance of international experts, has elaborated a draft concept on multilingual education, which is to be adopted in the coming months. The adoption of the Concept will require further amendments to existing legislation, namely the Law on General Education, which stipulates that subjects such as history, geography and the social sciences must be taught in the Georgian language by the year 2010.

The practical implementation of national minority integration policy within the Ministry is the work of the Department for National and Regional Programmes, as mentioned above, and the Programming Division, responsible for the implementation of all Ministry programmes, including those related to national minority language protection and teaching. Additionally there is a specialized centre under the Ministry's National Curriculum and Assessment Centre, which is responsible for the elaboration, piloting and implementation of the national curriculum and the approval of new textbooks.

The Ministry of Education and Science is also one of the key institutions responsible for the implementation of special activities under the Action Plan of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration. The National Concept emphasizes the problem of poor knowledge of the state language among national minorities and considers this a major obstacle for national minorities, impeding their full participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. The National Concept sets five main objectives in order to tackle these and other problems in the sphere of education:

- a) Ensure access of national minority representatives to the pre-school education
- b) Encourage receiving secondary education by national minority representatives
- c) Improve accessibility of higher education for national minority representatives
- d) Support teaching of the state language
- e) Encourage public debate and civil integration in the field of education".

In terms of the practical implementation of specific projects under these objectives, several state institutions are involved, including the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Curriculum and Assessment Centre, the Teacher Professional Development Centre, the National Examination Centre, the Development and Reforms Foundation, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Parliamentary Alliance on Early Childcare, higher education institutions and local self-governments. Activities under the five-year time frame cover a wide range of issues not limited to the teaching of Georgian to national minorities. The Action Plan also envisages launching special development programmes for regions inhabited by national minorities, and specifically national minority schools, in order to ensure that local pupils are adequately prepared for entry into higher education institutions. The measures foreseen include optimizing multilingual teaching policy,

translating all relevant textbooks into national minority languages as well as encouraging national minority representatives to obtain foreign university grants and scholarships.

5. Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport

The protection of national minorities and minority development also feature in the strategic goals of the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport. The Ministry budget funds planned state programmes in this area. The strategy of the Ministry for 2007-2010 envisages the implementation of a total of six components, including a strategic component on the “development of cultures of national minorities”, aimed at the “protection, development, promotion and integration of cultures of national minorities of Georgia within a common cultural space”. This component focuses on co-financing cultural organizations and national minority projects and enhancing cooperation with the active diasporas in Georgia.

The Ministry has also created a special “State Programme for Supporting the Cultural Centres of National Minorities,” aimed at “supporting the protection, development, popularization, enhanced self-expression of minority cultures and their integration into the Georgian cultural environment, which according to the programme document includes issues of protection, development and promotion of the cultural identities of national minorities, enhancement of cultural dialogue among different nationalities and to support integration of national minorities within the Georgian cultural space through cultural centers.”¹⁴ The Ministry’s priorities comply fully with the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration, which sets following objectives for next five years:

- “a) Promote the formation of civil consciousness
- b) Support preservation of the cultural identity of national minorities
- c) Protect cultural heritage of national minorities
- d) Encourage tolerance spirit and support intercultural dialogue and contacts
- e) Ensure participation of national minorities in the cultural life of Georgia
- f) Extend the knowledge of the society on culture, history, language, and religion of national minorities and present them as cultural values of the country”.

¹⁴ For the national minority integration and development component of the Ministry’s activities see the official web site of the Ministry at. www.mcs.gov.ge

To achieve these goals, the ministry has prioritized several national minority cultural centres and organizations, which will be directly funded from the ministry budget. These institutions are: the D. Baazov Museum of History of Jews in Georgia, the Caucasian House—Centre for Cultural Relations of Georgia, the Centre for Azerbaijani Culture in Georgia, the Centre for Russian Culture in Georgia, the Association of Ukrainians Living in Georgia, the Tbilisi P. Adamian State Armenian Theatre and the Tbilisi Azerbaijani State Theatre. In addition, the National Concept and Action Plan envisages support for regional libraries, clubs and art schools, and the protection of the material and non-material cultural heritage of national minorities: the full registration and restoration of national minority cultural monuments and their restoration. One of the key components in the cultural sphere is expanding public awareness of national minorities in Georgia. Continued support will be given to three pre-existing media projects that cover national minority issues, namely the talk show “italiuri ezo” (the Italian yard), the documentary series “Multiethnic Georgia” and the radio show “chveni saqartvelo” (our Georgia).

6. The State Minister for Diaspora Issues

The activities of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues, whose office was established on 8 February 2008, are not directly linked to matters of relevance to national minorities, though it is one of the structural bodies mandated to deal with interethnic relations, with a particular focus on Georgians living abroad. Headed by archaeologist and historian Yulon Gagoshidze, the Office is meant to establish links with Georgian diaspora organizations. Before the creation of the Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues, these tasks were the responsibility of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, though the capacities of the Ministry in this sphere were rather limited: it focused principally on Turkey (where a significant Georgian speaking population lives close to the border as well as other groups concentrated in central and western regions) and Iran (where a group of Georgian speakers, descendants of persons deported in the seventeenth century, live in the Fereidani region of central Iran). Today, the Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues continues these activities for the most part as well as expanding the scope of its activity to Europe and the United States, where a considerable number of Georgians reside. The Office is also currently working on the elaboration of a state strategy on diaspora issues,

which will envisage the creation of Georgian diaspora organizations based on a single model and structure, and an information data base of Georgians living abroad. Another priority for the State Minister is the drafting of special legislation on diaspora issues, to be proposed for adoption by parliament.

7. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved in the sphere of national minority integration from the perspective of reporting to the relevant international treaty bodies. There is a Department for International Organizations in the Ministry, several divisions of which deal to some extent with minority issues, including the Council of Europe Division, the UN Division and the OSCE Division. These divisions, along with the Georgian missions to the relevant international organizations, are responsible for the preparation of all relevant procedures for reporting on certain international conventions. Relevant treaties include two Council of Europe conventions—the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and in the future also the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages—as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Georgia has so far joined all national minority related international treaties except for the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

8. The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation

The Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) was established by the government of Georgia in June 1992 after the emergence of a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) following the ethnic conflicts in Georgia in 1990-93. The Ministry was transformed into the Office of a State Minister during the 31 January 2008 cabinet reshuffle, but was reinstated as a full fledged ministry again after the reshuffle of 6 February 2009. The Ministry's general activities involve the registration of refugees and IDPs and addressing the question of their accommodation. The Ministry is also mandated to deal with the resolution of other problems relating to migration and accommodation for migrants. This responsibility is described in the general regulations of the Ministry as

follows: “The Ministry governs the sphere of social and legal protection, migration control and accommodation of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, displaced persons, repatriates and victims of natural disasters (ecological migrants) and other migrants; it is responsible for the status and development of the sphere of its concern. In order to carry out this assignment and to fulfill other required tasks, it formulates and implements a unified government policy”.¹⁵

The Ministry is not directly concerned with problems of national minorities; however, one of the principal activities of the Ministry indirectly influences the regions inhabited by national minorities. The Ministry is responsible for the resettlement of those affected by natural calamities in the mountainous regions of Svaneti and Ajara, the so-called ‘ecological migrants’ (eco-migrants), and for providing them with a place of residence. The resettlement of eco-migrants started back in the 1980s and since then some 25,000 of a total of around 60,000 eco-migrants have been settled in minority regions, particularly in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti. This influx has affected the ethnic demography in some districts of the region.¹⁶ In recent years, the ministry has created a database of the families affected by natural disasters and has made initial steps to develop a policy on assisting such families by providing new houses and accommodation.¹⁷

Another aspect of the Ministry’s functions that relates to minorities is the repatriation of persons deported in the 1940s. A Division for Repatriation has been established under the Ministry’s Department for Migration, Repatriation and Refugees. In 2005-06 the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, together with other bodies, participated in the elaboration of a draft law on repatriation. While it was the head of the Commission for Repatriation, Giorgi Khaindrava, at that time also the State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues, who took the lead on this issue on behalf of the government until his departure from office in July 2006, actual responsibility was again transferred to the MRA after his departure. Today, the Ministry is responsible for the process of repatriation of

¹⁵ 2006 Annual Report of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, p. 3.

¹⁶ Tom Trier and Medea Turashvili, *Resettlement of Ecologically Displaced Persons, Solution of a Problem or Creation of a New?* ECMI Monograph 6 (August 2007), http://www.ecmi.de/download/monograph_6_en.pdf.

¹⁷ 2006 Annual report of the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, p. 7, see also <http://www.government.gov.ge/docs/biuleteni-06/mra.pdf>.

deported persons; and at this stage for the processing of applications from prospective repatriates.

9. The Ministry of Interior Affairs

Following the 'Rose Revolution', the new government pursued the reform of the agencies and institutions charged with public security, including structural reforms and a staff reshuffle within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Major changes were made as part of the reform package: after the second cabinet reshuffle of 27 December 2004, the Ministry of Security Service was integrated into the Ministry of Interior; the National Bureau of Passport, Visa and Citizens Registration was transferred to the Ministry of Justice; the main Administrative Board of Highway Patrol was established; the Main Administrative Board of Traffic Police and the Transport Department was dissolved; the Financial Police was moved to the Ministry of Finance; internal troops (the Gendarmerie) were merged with the Ministry of Defense; the Border Guard Department was converted into a non-military law enforcement branch responsible for border control and immigration duties. These changes are seen as important steps towards the de-militarization of the Georgian police. At the time of writing (August 2009), the Ministry employed approximately 15,000 people, excluding border guard personnel.

The mandate and functions of the Ministry of Interior are not directly connected to minority protection, and the Ministry is not responsible for integration issues. However, the performance of local police departments especially in the regions of compact settlement of minorities significantly affects minority populations. Therefore, it is important that law-enforcement structures take into account the peculiarities of minority regions, particularly in terms of recruiting new staff, which is a very sensitive issue for national minority communities. Despite the fact that there is no special minority unit within the Ministry, positive changes can be noticed in terms of the attitude and willingness of the Ministry to address minority issues. As a first promising step, it is worth noting the Ministry's readiness to consult minority representatives on different issues of minority concern. For instance, in 2005 a special position of Advisor to the Minister on minority issues was established, though informally. The office is occupied by Kiriaki Yordanov, himself a member of the Greek community, who is responsible in particular for

analysing and suggesting solutions to problems in the multi-ethnic Kvemo Kartli region. The Ministry also occasionally consults on specific issues with representatives of the Council of National Minorities under the auspices of the Public Defender.

It is crucial for national minorities to have equal employment opportunities in different bodies and departments of government institutions. According to unofficial data on the Ministry from 2008, persons belonging to national minorities numbered eleven out of 260 newly recruited police patrol officers, i.e. 4.2%. Employment is granted on the basis of an examination in Georgian on relevant legislation. It is conducted in Georgian, but in certain cases, Russian language tests have been used for persons belonging to national minorities. Thus, the Ministry of Interior seems to be keenly aware of the need to take special measures to enhance inclusion of minorities into its structures.

The Ministry of Interior is also expected to establish a so-called “Community Policing” model, which is a new form of population oriented policing. The “Community policing” concept also envisages a minority-oriented component, which aims at building trust and confidence between police and society, including in minority regions.

III. Legislative Level Institutions

Several parliamentary committees are and have been, in one way or another, involved in national minority related activities. At least one of them, the Committee for Human Rights and Civil Integration is directly mandated to deal with a range of issues connected with national minorities. The Committee is responsible, for instance, for the monitoring of the legislative base on issues of promoting human rights and civic integration, and the elaboration of state policy regarding the promotion of human rights and civic integration.¹⁸

The committee was established in 1995, chaired during its first term by Konstantin Kokoev, representing the Ossetian minority community, who was succeeded by Elene Tevdoradze in 1999, chair for the two subsequent terms. Currently, the Committee is chaired by Giorgi Arsenishvili, appointed after the May 2008 elections.

As regards national minority issues, the Committee for Human Rights and Civic Integration was one of the most important bodies involved in the process of ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), prior to the passing of a resolution on its ratification by the parliament of Georgia on 13 October 2005. In particular, the Committee, along with various other committees such as the Committee for Foreign Relations, the Committee for European Integration, the Committee for Legal Issues and the Committee for Regional Policy, Self-Government and Mountainous Regions, prepared positive opinions on the FCNM and recommended its ratification to the parliamentary assembly. Previously, the Committee for Human Rights and Civic Integration had worked for several years on a State Concept for the Integration and Protection of National Minorities. This State Concept was, however, never approved. Just by elaborating the State Concept, the Committee had though prepared a legislative basis for the implementation of the Framework Convention, facilitating its adoption by parliament.

The Committee for Human Rights and Civil Integration and other relevant committees will also have to deal with the issue of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the signing and ratification of which constitute one of Georgia's as yet

¹⁸ Statute of the Committee for Human Rights and Civil Integration, approved by the Parliament in 13 June 2008.

unfulfilled commitments and obligations to the Council of Europe. Another unfulfilled commitment is the adoption by parliament of a law on national minorities. There is, however, little support in the Georgian parliament on this issue. Instead of adopting special legislation on national minorities, many members of parliament are inclined to amend existing legislative norms that deal with minority issues rather than drafting and passing a separate law.

With regards to minority issues, mention must also be made of the Parliamentary Committee for Regional Policy, Self-Government and High Mountainous Regions. This committee is tasked to work on the reform of local self-government. Though the committee is not engaged in minority issues *per se*, the reform of local self-government is an issue that raises lively interest in the regions inhabited by minorities and a coherent regional policy and decentralising reform may greatly influence the process of national minority integration.

Under the ongoing decentralisation reform process, the parliament of Georgia has ratified the European Charter on Local Self-Government. The main draft law defining regional policy was prepared, and in 2005 parliament adopted the Law on the Property of the Local Self-Government Units, based on which the property of the local self-governments and central authorities must be distributed. In addition, during its autumn session in 2005, the parliament of Georgia adopted the Organic Law on Local Self-Government, which defines the legislative, economic and financial basis of local self-government, as well as stipulating the establishment of local self-government bodies and guarantees of their activities.

Previous administrative-territorial arrangements, inherited from Soviet Georgia, were based on four levels of governance: local (*temi*), district (*rayon*) level, autonomous region/republic level and central level. Within the framework of the centralized system, all lower levels of the government bodies depended on the upper government bodies in terms of competence sharing as well as transfer and usage of resources. Georgia's new decentralization reform, by contrast, applies the single level system of local self-government. Cities that did not belong to any district in the past (self-governing cities) and municipalities—the amalgamation of different types of settlement (villages, boroughs,

towns)—are now taken as the units of local self-government. The local elections which took place on 5 October 2006 were the first elections held according to the new Organic Law. From the national minority perspective, decentralization reform was important because it was seen as both a better mechanism in general and as a tool for increasing minority political participation in the decision making process at a local level. The results of the 2006 local election and figures on the distribution of national minority members in local elected bodies show an increase in the level of participation of national minorities in comparison with previous years, though considering the overall percentage of minorities in the country their participation level is still disproportionately low. For instance, out of a total of 1716 members of *sakrebolos* (municipal councils) after the elections, 159 belonged to minority communities, making up only 9.27% of the total when minorities constitute 16.25% of the country's population.

In addition to the Parliamentary Committee for Regional Policy, Self-Government and Mountainous Regions, decentralization reform is also carried out by the State Commission on Effective Governance and Territorial Arrangement Reform—an inter-ministerial, consultative organ, established under the President of Georgia in November 2004—and its executive arm, the Centre for Effective Governance System and Territorial Arrangement Reform (CEGSTAR), established in March 2006.¹⁹

¹⁹ For more information about CEGSTAR, see: www.cegstar.ge.

Conclusion

The institutional structures in Georgia that since the 'Rose Revolution' have been directly or indirectly responsible for issues relating to national minorities have been reviewed above. While there is a state body formally responsible for issues relating to national minorities and civil integration (the first Office of the State Minister for Civic Integration Issues and, from 2008, the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues), there is also a Presidential Advisor responsible for civic integration issues, who heads a structure under the Presidential Administration established as a coordinating institution, the National Council for Tolerance and Civic Integration. In addition, four other Ministries are involved at different levels in various spheres directly concerning minorities: the Ministry of Education and Science, The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The legislative structure includes one parliamentary committee (the Committee for Human Rights and Civic Integration), which is directly concerned with minority issues and four other relevant committees (Regional Policy, Self-Government and Mountainous Regions, Foreign Relations, European Integration Issues and Legal Issues). Finally, there is the Council of National Minorities, which operates under the auspices of the Office of the Public Defender.

Hence, there are several bodies both at the executive and legislative levels in Georgia, which in one way or another are involved in the implementation of policies concerning minorities. The majority of these institutions were established after the 'Rose Revolution', which indicates that the government is committed to civic integration and minority rights protection in general, even though structural imperfections in the institutions and a lack of coordination hinder the creation and realization of a consistent policy. Until recently it was difficult to discern which of the many relevant institutions had lead responsibility for national minority issues and civic integration and what the general concept and goal was of the institutional arrangements in the field of national minority policy. According to its mandate, national minority policy was guided and implemented by the State Minister for Reintegration Issues but due to the initially low-levels of capacity of this Office and of its predecessor, the State Ministry for Civil Integration Issues, its supposed leading role was true only on paper.

Only after the very recent adoption of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and Action Plan, the document outlining state priorities and practical measures aimed at achieving integration, did it become clear how different structures are involved in policy development and implementation and which bodies are responsible for particular tasks. As a result of the adoption of the National Concept, the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues, formally the main executive structure responsible for national minority issues, gained key functions to coordinate the implementation of the activities listed under the Action Plan. The Tolerance and Civil Integration Council and the President's Advisor, who because of the institutional weakness of the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues previously acted as the driving force for the creation of state policy on minorities, are now assigned a more facilitative role and expected to perform the monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan. Meanwhile, the Council of National Minorities under the auspices of Public Defender seems to be ready to take on an expanded role. As the national minority consultative structure it is well-equipped to monitor Action Plan implementation and at the same time it can ensure that a national minority representation mechanism is in place to provide input into the process of policy development and implementation. In sum then, one of the most important achievements of the National Concept is to have unified all tasks and activities related to national minorities into a common drive for a single set of goals, when previously responsibilities and strategies were split among different institutions and developed without consultation or coordination. After the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group by the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues, the coordination problem amongst different ministries and bodies in regards to Action Plan implementation seems to have been adequately addressed.

To summarize, by adopting the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration, the government of Georgia, in theory, has established a coherent and adequate institutional set-up for the management of national minority issues. The successful realisation of its goals now depends entirely on whether and how effectively practical mechanisms can be built for active implementation and for interagency coordination in the implementation process. If this is not achieved, the resulting non-implementation of the Concept and Action Plan could result in severe frustration among the stakeholders concerned. The

national minority area has already suffered from the negative consequences of weak institutional management, also demonstrated over the period 2004-2008 when the handling of national minority issues and civic integration was characterized by mixed competencies, poor or no coordination and vague mandates for institutions.

Annex 1

Executive Level Institutions Established after the ‘Rose Revolution’ but Abolished Due to Government Reshuffles

1. The Office of the State Minister for National Accord Issues

This office was established on 13 April 2004. Guram Absandze, Minister of Finances during Gamsakhurdia’s government was appointed State Minister. The main aim of this body was to achieve national accord in Georgian society, and in particular to eliminate the negative effects of the civil war of 1991-93, which had polarised society and provoked a deep division between supporters of Gamsakhurdia and his opponents. The establishment of the office of the State Minister for National Accord Issues was an attempt to provide an institutional basis for this policy.

However, besides this principal aim and task, the functions of the office of the State Minister also covered, according to the regulations, other equally important spheres, among which were regional policy and policy on minorities. In order to accomplish its designated activities, the Office of the State Minister for National Accord Issues prepared various materials, including: “information on the success of measures conducted to determine and eliminate the reasons causing conflicts; studies and analyses of concrete cases of ethnic confrontations and timely reactions to them; studies of factors causing potential conflict situations and preparation of measures for their elimination; support for the establishment of a scientific research centre for sociology and conflict studies; and the elaboration of socio-economic projects supporting national accord and monitoring their progress”.²⁰

The Office of the State Minister for National Accord Issues consisted of two departments: the Department on Policy of National Accord in the Country and the Department of the Protection of the Interests of Citizens who Emigrated from Georgia. Among the aims of the former was to develop cooperation with national minorities and diasporas, social organizations, communities and private individuals; to work for the establishment of mutual respect and tolerance between different confessions based on the policy of national accord; to prepare programmes for rehabilitation of the regions and to coordinate their implementation with the broader process of building national accord.

As such, ethnic relations and minority issues occupied a significant place in the goals of this Office, although the main idea behind its establishment was to achieve internal Georgian accord between the followers of ex-president Gamsakhurdia and the rest of society. Despite the ambitious aims of the Ministry, however, no effective measures or activities were conducted concerning the integration of national minorities. The structure did not include any expert on inter-ethnic relations and conflicts. The entire office staff was comprised of followers of ex-president Gamsakhurdia, including the Minister, Guram Absandze, himself.

²⁰ Statute of the Office for the State Minister for National Accord Issues, approved by the Prime Minister on 13 April 2004.

The main achievement of the structure was the disarmament of the followers of Gamsakhurdia still hiding out in the forests of Samegrelo (Megrelia) and persuading them to sign the national accord declaration in the Church of Kashveti in January 2004, shortly after the new President was elected. After this the President failed to find other justification for the continued existence of the Ministry and it was closed in December 2004 (see below). Guram Absandze himself was appointed Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration for a period of time.

2. The Department of Inter-Ethnic Relations and Civic Integration at the Administration of the President

While the Office of the State Minister for National Accord Issues was formally closed, in reality it was transformed into a similar institution now placed under the auspices of the Office of the President at a departmental level. In February 2005, the Department of Inter-Ethnic Relations and Civic Integration was established, with Soso Lagvilava, the former Head of Office of the State Minister Guram Absandze, appointed as its Head. Most other positions in the Department were also filled by former staff from the State Minister's Office.

The function and structure of this department was somewhat unclear, as no written regulations defined its activities. The department thus followed unofficial, self-defined regulations. The actual activities of the department included meetings and consultations with representatives of minorities. As leading staff members of the department have noted, there were no funds in the budget for serious activities.²¹ The budget of the department only covered salaries, which accounts for the inefficiency of the institution. It was not responsible for the elaboration of any state strategy or programme. The only justification for the existence of the department was keeping Guram Absandze's followers and supporters in the cabinet, for they had participated in the 'Rose Revolution' and maintained a certain political influence in Samegrelo (Megrelia). The department was abolished in November 2006.

²¹ Interviews with Soso Lagvilava, Head of Department, and Manguli Khubua, Head of the Division for Interethnic Relations. Interview conducted on 23 January 2006.

Annex 2

Cabinet reshuffles after the Rose Revolution

1. First Cabinet established after the Rose Revolution 17 February 2004

	Ministries	Ministers	First reshuffle 10 June 2004	Second reshuffle 27 December 2004
	Prime Minister	Zurab Zhvania		
1	Ministry of Education and Science	Kakha Lomaia		
2	Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport	Goka Gabashvili		
3	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources	Tamar Lebanidze		
4	Ministry of Energy	Nika Gilauri		
5	Ministry of Agriculture	David Shervashidze		Shervashidze replaced by Svimonishvili
6	Ministry of Infrastructure	Tamar Skhulukhia	Ministry abolished	
7	Ministry of Defense	Gela Bezhuashvili	Bezhuashvili replaced by Baramidze	Baramidze replaced by Okruashvili
8	Ministry of Interior	Giorgi Baramidze	Baramidze replaced by Okruashvili	Okruashvili replaced by Merabishvili
9	Ministry of Security Issues	Zurab Adeishvili	Adeishvili replaced by Merabishvili	Ministry abolished, unified with Interior
10	Ministry of Finance	Zurab Nogaideli		
11	Ministry of Economy	Irakli Rekhviashvili		Bendukidze replaced by Alexishvili
12	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation	Eter Astemirova		
13	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Tedo Japaridze		
14	Ministry of Justice	Giorgi Papuashvili		
15	Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection	Gigi Tsereteli		
16	State Minister for National Accord Issues	Guram Absandze		State Minister's office abolished
17	State Minister for European Integration Issues	Tamar Beruchashvili		Beruchashvili replaced by Baramidze
18	State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues	Giorgi Khaindrava		
19	State Minister for Development of Small and Medium Business	Jambul Bakuradze		State Minister's office abolished

	Third reshuffle 17 February 2005	Fourth reshuffle 24 July 2006	Fifth reshuffle 7 September 2007	Sixth reshuffle 22 November 2007	Seventh reshuffle 31 January 2008
	Zhvania replaced by Nogaideli			Nogaideli replaced by Gurgidze	
1				Lomaia replaced by Miminoshvili	Minimoshvili replaced by Nodia
2					Gabashvili replaced by Vacheishvili
3	Lebanidze replaced by Papuashvili	Papuashvili replaced by Tkeshelashvili	Tkeshelashvili replaced by Chantladze		Chantladze replaced by Gamtsemidze
4			Gilauri replaced by Khetaguri		
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10	Nogaideli replaced by Chechelashvili		Alexishvili replaced by Gilauri		
11					Arveladze replaced by Sharashidze
12				Kheviashvili replaced by Subeliani	Transformed to State Minister
13					Bezhuashvili replaced by Bakradze
14	Papuashvili replaced by Kemularia		Kavtaradze replaced by Tkeshelashvili		Tkeshelashvili replaced by Gvaramia
15			Chipashvili replaced by Tkeshelashvili		Tkeshelashvili replaced by Kvitashvili
16					
17					
18		Khaindrava replaced by Antadze			State Minister's office abolished
19					

	Eight reshuffle 1 November 2008	Ninth reshuffle 6 February 2009
	Gurgenidze replaced by Mgaloblishvili	Mgaloblishvili replaced by Gilauri
1		
2	Vacheishvili replaced by Vashadze	
3	Gvaladze replaced by Khachidze	
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		Gilauri replaced by Baidurashvili
11		
12	Martiashvili replaced by Subeliani	
13		
14	Gvaramia replaced by Adeishvili	
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		

2. Ministries created and/or abolished after approval of first cabinet

	Ministries	Ministers	First reshuffle 10 June 2004	Second reshuffle 27 December 2004
1	State Minister for Regional Management and Self-Government	Zurab Melikishvili	State Minister's office created	State Minister's office abolished
2	State Minister for Civil Integration Issues	Zinaida Bestaeva		State Minister's office created
3	State Minister for Reform Coordination	Kakha Bendukidze		State Minister's office created
4	State Minister for Regional Development Issues	David Tkeshelashvili		
5	State Minister for Diaspora Issues	Yulon Gagoshidze		
6	State Minister for Reintegration Issues	Temur Yakobashvili		

	Third reshuffle 17 February 2005	Fourth reshuffle 24 July 2006	Fifth reshuffle 7 September 2007	Sixth reshuffle 22 November 2007	Seventh reshuffle 31 January 2008	Eight reshuffle 1 November 2008	Ninth reshuffle 6 February 2009
1							
2					State Minister's office abolished		
3					State Minister's office abolished		
4					State Minister's office created		Transformed to Ministry
5					State Minister's office created		
6					State Minister's office created		

3. Current Cabinet, 6 February 2009

	Ministries	Ministers
	Prime Minister	Nika Gilauri
1	Ministry of Education and Science	Nika Gvaramia
2	Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport	Nika Rurua
3	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources	Giorgi Khachidze
4	Ministry of Energy	Giorgi Khetaguri
5	Ministry of Agriculture	Bakur Kvezereli
6	Ministry of Defense	David Sikharulidze
7	Ministry of Interior	Vano Merabishvili
8	Ministry of Finance	Kakha Baindurashvili
9	Ministry of Economic Development	Lasha Zhvania
10	Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation	Koba Subeliani
11	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Grigol Vashadze
12	Ministry of Justice	Zurab Adeishvili
13	Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection	Alexander Kvitashvili
14	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure	David Tkeshelashvili
15	Ministry of Penitentiary, Probation and Legal Assistance	Dimitry Shashkin
16	State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration	Giorgi Baramidze
17	State Minister for Diaspora Issues	Yolon Gagoshidze
18	State Minister for Reintegration Issues	Temur Yakobashvili

Annex 3

National minority relevant structures in Government established and/or abolished after the “Rose Revolution”

Ministries and other bodies	Relevant structures within bodies	Established	Abolished
State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues	No defined structure	17 February 2004	31 January 2008
State Minister for Reintegration Issues	Division on National Minority Integration Division on Civil Integration	31 January 2008 31 January 2008	
State Minister for National Accord Issues	Division of Inter-ethnic relations	17 February 2004	27 December 2004
State Minister for Civil Integration Issues	Division of national minority integration	27 December 2004	31 January 2008
Administration of President	Advisor of the President Council of Tolerance in Civil Integration Department of Inter-ethnic relations	January 2006 August 2005 February 2005	November 2006
Public Defender	Council of National Minorities	December 2005	

Annex 4

National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration

I. Introduction

The National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and Action Plan were developed based on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ratified by Parliament of Georgia in 2005) and the Presidential decree №639 "On the development of the National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civil Integration" issued on August 8, 2005. Its main goal is to support the building of democratic and consolidated civil society that is based on common values, which considers diversity as a source of its strength and provides every citizen with the opportunity to maintain and develop his/her identity.

The National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and Action Plan are based on the Constitution of Georgia and the country's international commitments. In order to ensure broad social consensus all interested parties were given opportunity to participate in the drafting process of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and the Action Plan. Draft document was developed by the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council functioning under President of Georgia, which consists of the members of Parliament, Public Defender, representatives of national minorities, non-governmental organizations, Ministries, and other governmental bodies. Drafting process was accompanied by the ongoing consultation process with the National Minorities Council functioning under Public Defender. Civil Integration and Tolerance Council was also regularly facilitating meetings with the population of regions densely populated with national minorities and local non-Governmental organizations.

The National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration elaborates national strategy and objectives in six main directions: rule of law; education and state language; media and access to information; political integration and civil participation; social and regional integration; culture and preservation of identity. The Action Plan implies specific activities and programs according to strategic directions of the Concept that must be implemented in the next five years. Responsible for the implementation of relevant components of the Action Plan are specific governmental bodies, which are indicated in the document.

Implementation of the Action Plan is coordinated by the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues. Governmental bodies responsible for implementation of the Action Plan, according to the policy developed by the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues, present the reports developed in frames of their competence by the 5th day of every month. On 10th December of every year the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues presents its report on the implementation of the Action Plan by the relevant governmental bodies to the Government of Georgia and Civil Integration and Tolerance Council.

Implementation of the Action Plan is monitored by the Civil Integration and Tolerance Council, which, if necessary, will develop recommendations on the implementation of the Action Plan and will consider suggestions on changes and additions to the Action Plan.

Implementation of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration is not limited to regions traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of national minorities.

The main financial source for the implementation of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration and the Action Plan is the state budget.

II. Goals of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration

The National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration has following goals:

- a) Create an environment of tolerance and respect among every person living in Georgia.
- b) Provide every citizen of Georgia equal opportunities to avail of civil, political, economic and social rights.
- c) Create necessary conditions for effective participation of persons, who belong to national minorities, in every sphere of political, social, economic and cultural life of Georgia.
- d) Provide equal access of national minorities to every level of education and address special educational needs in the field of general education.
- e) Create necessary conditions for preservation and development of minorities' cultures and for protection of essential elements of their identity, including religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

III. Principles of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration

The National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration is based on the following principles:

- a) Equality of every citizen of Georgia, nondiscrimination and strengthening of the tradition of tolerance.
- b) Maintenance of balance between civil integration and protection of minorities' identities, voluntary participation in the civil integration process and unacceptability of forced assimilation.
- c) Right of minorities to freely choose whether or not to be treated as such.
- d) Right of persons belonging to national minorities to realize those rights and freedoms, both individually and collectively, which derive from the Constitution of Georgia and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.
- e) Effective participation of minorities in the decision-making process on issues directly or indirectly related to the protection and development of their identity.
- f) Ensure participation of the Civil Society Organizations in the process of monitoring the implementation of Tolerance and Civil Integration Action Plan.

IV. Main directions of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration

1. Rule of Law

The Rule of Law is one of the strategic directions of the National Concept for Tolerance and Civil Integration, which implies the implementation of following objectives:

- a) Further harmonize Georgian legislation with international commitments.
- b) Improve access of national minorities to the judicial system.
- c) Ensure effective protection of national minorities against discrimination.
- d) Raise awareness of public officials on the rights of minorities and anti-discrimination legislation.

2. Education and State Language

One of the most serious challenges for civil integration process in Georgia is the lack of knowledge of the state language among national minorities, which significantly impedes their full participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. Initially, it is necessary to encourage increased motivation of national minorities to study the state language and implement programs promoting integration of students with special educational needs. The following objectives are set:

- a) Ensure access of national minority representatives to the pre-school education.
- b) Encourage receiving secondary education by national minority representatives.
- c) Improve accessibility of higher education for national minority representatives.
- d) Support teaching of the state language.
- e) Encourage public debate and civil integration in the field of education.

3. Media and Access to Information

An important step in respect of access to information by national minorities has been taken by the Georgian Public Broadcaster, which since 2005 broadcasts news programs in national minority languages. According to the recent legislative amendments no less than 25% of the Public Broadcaster's programming budget must be spent on broadcasting programs in minority languages. Considering the low level of knowledge of the state language and predominantly Georgian language of broadcasting of Georgian media it is important to carry out specific activities to ensure that national minorities are duly informed. The following objectives are set:

- a) Ensure access to national broadcaster in the regions populated by the national minorities.
- b) Ensure accessibility of the broadcasting programs in minority languages.
- c) Ensure media coverage and participation of national minorities in the broadcasting programs.
- d) Support electronic and print media in minority languages.
- e) Support establishment of tolerance and cultural pluralism in the media.

4. Political Integration and Civil Participation

In order to raise the level of political integration and civil participation of national minorities, public service skills development trainings are being carried out in recent years; in municipalities traditionally or predominantly populated with national minorities, they are encouraged to participate in the public service recruitment process, and election materials and ballot papers are published in their native languages. Active involvement of national minorities in the political and social life of the country will largely depend on an increased level of knowledge of the state language, and on Government to encourage them, initially, to start working in the public service. The following objectives are set:

- a) Ensure equal electoral rights for national minorities.
- b) Improve minority participation in the decision-making process.
- c) Promote Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

5. Social and Regional Integration

In recent years there have been made important steps to ensure full participation of national minorities in the economic and social life of the country. In regions populated with national minorities infrastructure rehabilitation and other large-scale economic projects have been carried out. The following objectives are set:

- a) Further development of infrastructure in the regions populated with national minorities.
- b) Provide professional retraining of national minorities and encourage their employment.
- c) Encourage social and regional mobility of minorities.

6. Culture and Preservation of Identity

In order to encourage participation of national minorities in cultural life of the country and support their cultural heritage the state plans to make specific steps in different directions, which imply implementation of the following objectives:

- a) Promote the formation of civil consciousness.
- b) Support preservation of the cultural identity of national minorities.
- c) Protect cultural heritage of national minorities.
- d) Encourage tolerance spirit and support intercultural dialogue and contacts.
- e) Ensure participation of national minorities in the cultural life of Georgia.
- f) Extend the knowledge of the society on culture, history, language, and religion of national minorities and present them as cultural values of the country.

Action Plan

Education and State Language

OBJECTIVE #1	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Ensure access of national minority representatives to the pre-school education	1.1	Development and piloting of pre-school teaching programs oriented to educational needs of national minorities	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009-2014	
	1.2	Development of a special program in the regions with significant national minority population to increase the level of preparedness to go to school. Raising awareness of parents on pre-school education and specific programs.	Parliamentary Alliance on Childcare at the early age; Ministry of Education and Science; Local self-governments; National Curriculum and Assessment Center	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #2	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Encourage receiving secondary education by national minority representatives	2.1	Translating National Curriculum and facilitating implementation trainings	Ministry of Education and Science; National Curriculum and Assessment Center	2009	
	2.2	Translating textbooks into national minority languages according to the teaching languages of the schools	Ministry of Education and Science; National Curriculum and Assessment Center	2009-2014	
	2.3	Targeted assistance to national minority schools in implementation of reform activities – development and implementation of relevant programs	Ministry of Education and Science	2009-2014	
	2.4	Optimizing multilingual teaching policy, piloting and implementation	Ministry of Education and Science; National Curriculum and Assessment Center; Teacher Professional Development Center	2009-2014	
	2.5	Publishing of the magazine “Mastsavlebeli” [A Teacher] in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages	Ministry of Education and Science; Teacher Professional Development Center	2009-2014	

	2.6	Translating “Teacher's handbook” (in three parts) and other auxiliary resources into Armenian and Azerbaijani languages	Ministry of Education and Science; Teacher Professional Development Center	2009-2014	
	2.7	Targeted professional trainings for teachers and representatives of school administrations	Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #3	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Improve accessibility of higher education for national minority representatives	3.1	Elaboration of the preparatory-integration course concept in the higher education institution, its piloting and implementation	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia; National Examination Center, Higher education institutions	2009-2014	Legislative changes and first flow in 2009
	3.2	Elaboration and implementation of “Social Grants Program” and other targeted programs	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009-2014	
	3.3	Sending national minority representatives abroad to study on Bachelor's and Master's programs	Development and Reforms Foundation	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #4	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Support teaching of the state language	4.1	Implementation of Georgian as a second language teaching program in non-Georgian language schools	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia; OSCE	2009-2014	
	4.2	Elaboration and development of Georgian language textbooks and teaching resources	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009-2014	
	4.3	Training for Georgian language teachers from Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli non-Georgian language schools (special professional vouchers for teachers to study “Georgian as communication language” and “Georgian as a second language”)	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, Teacher Professional Development Center	2009-2014	Already on voucher funding
	4.4	Elaboration and implementation of extracurricular educational and civil integration oriented programs and projects	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009-2014	

	4.5	Programs for assisting teenagers and adults in learning state language	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009-2014	In partnership with non-Governmental organizations
	4.6	Planning and implementation of events to recruit Georgian language teachers in the regions	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009	
	4.7	Software, internet programs, web portals and educational games for studying Georgian language	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009	

Action Plan

Media and Access to Information

OBJECTIVE #1	Name of the program/Activity	Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Ensure access to national broadcaster in the regions populated by the national minorities	Rehabilitation of GPB's coverage system	Georgian Public Broadcaster	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #2	Name of the program/Activity	Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Ensure accessibility of the broadcasting programs in minority languages	1) TV news programs	Georgian Public Broadcaster	2009-2014	
	2.1.1	Moambe in Abkhazian (frequency: once a week)		
	2.1.2	Moambe in Ossetian (frequency: once a week)		
	2.1.3	Moambe in Armenian (frequency: once a week)		
	2.1.4	Moambe in Azerbaijani (frequency: once a week)		
	2.1.5	Moambe in Russian (frequency: once a week)		
	2) Radio news programs	Public Radio FM 102.4	2009-2014	
	2.2.1	News program in Abkhazian (frequency: daily)		
	2.2.2	News program in Ossetian (frequency: daily)		
	2.2.3	News program in Armenian (frequency: daily)		
	2.2.4	News program in Azerbaijani (frequency: daily)		
	2.2.5	News program in Russian (frequency: daily)		

	2.2.6	News program in Kurdish (frequency: daily)			
OBJECTIVE #3	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Ensure media coverage and participation of national minorities in the broadcasting programs	Talk show “Italiuri Ezo” [the Italian Yard]		GPB, UNA, within the frames of USAID-supported National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia program	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #4	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Support electronic and print media in minority languages	1) Periodicals published within the frames of a Support to Literature Program:		Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport of Georgia	2009-2014	
	4.1.1	Armenian newspaper “Vrastani”			
	4.1.2	Azerbaijani newspaper “Gurjistan”			
	4.1.3	Russian newspaper “Svobodnaya Gruzya”			
OBJECTIVE #5	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Support establishment of tolerance and cultural pluralism in the media	1) Series of documentaries - Multiethnic Georgia		GPB, UNA, within the frames of USAID-supported National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia program	2009-2014	
	2) Private Show Chveni Sakartvelo [Our Georgia]		Public radio FM 102.4	2009-2014	

Action Plan

Political Integration and Civil Participation

OBJECTIVE #1	Name of the program/Activity	Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Ensure equal electoral rights for national minorities	Translate ballot papers in minority languages	Central Election Commission of Georgia; International Organizations		
OBJECTIVE #2	Name of the program/Activity	Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Improve minority participation in the decision-making process	<p>1) Conclude memorandums of mutual cooperation between the Ethnic Minorities' Council under the Public Defender of Georgia and the following ministries:</p> <p>a) Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues; b) Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia; c) Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure; d) Ministry of Justice; e) Ministry of Internal Affairs; f) Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia; g) Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation; h) Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia</p>	Executive Government	2009	
	<p>2) Conclude memorandums of mutual cooperation between the Regional Ethnic Minorities Council and Governors offices in the following regions:</p> <p>a) Governors Office in Kvemo Kartli; b) Governors Office in Samtskhe-Javakheti; c) Governors Office in Kakheti; d) Governors Office in Imereti; e) Autonomous Republic of Adjara.</p>	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure; Civil Integration and Tolerance Council functioning under President	2009	

OBJECTIVE #3	Name of the program/Activity	Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Promote Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	Print and distribute Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	Office of the State Minister for Reintegration Issues; Civil Integration and Tolerance Council functioning under President	2009-2014	

Action Plan

Social and Regional Integration

OBJECTIVE #1	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Further development of infrastructure in the regions populated with national minorities	1) Samtskhe-Javakheti road rehabilitation project		Millennium Challenge Georgia Foundation	2006-2010	
	1.1.1	Rehabilitation of road and transportation network in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions			
	2) Energy infrastructure rehabilitation project		Millennium Challenge Georgia Foundation	2006-2010	
	1.2.1	Rehabilitation of the damaged sections of North-South main pipeline			
	3) Regional infrastructure development project		Millennium Challenge Georgia Foundation	2006-2010	
	1.3.1	Improvement of municipal services			
OBJECTIVE #2	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Provide professional retraining of national minorities and encourage their employment	1) Presidential program for rehabilitation of vocational education centers		Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2006-2009	
	2.1.1	Rehabilitation of several vocational education centers in the regions densely populated by national minorities			
	2) Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration and retraining of public servants		Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009-2012	
	2.2.1	Support involvement of representatives of national minorities in public sector			

	3) Implement vocational education policy and programs that will be oriented to the needs and peculiarities of the regions densely populated by national minorities	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	2009-2014	
	4) Making small production a profitable agribusiness. Agribusiness development project:	Millennium Challenge Georgia Foundation	2006-2011	
2.4.1	Primary production			
2.4.2	Establishing service centers for farmers			
2.4.3	Small scale processing			
2.4.4	Creation of a production chain			
	5) Georgia's regional development fund's projects: Investing in small and medium-size plants	Millennium Challenge Georgia Foundation	2006-2011	

Action Plan

Culture and Preservation of Identity

OBJECTIVE #1	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Support preservation of the cultural identity of national minorities	1) Assistance program to the cultures of Georgia's national minorities		Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport of Georgia	2009-2014	
	1.1.1	Supporting LEPL (legal entity of public law) Davit Baazov Georgia's Jews historic and ethnographic museum			
	1.1.2	Supporting the activities of Georgia's cultural relations center - the Caucasian House			
	1.1.3	Supporting the activities of LEPL Mirza Patali-Akhundov's Azerbaijani cultural museum			
	1.1.4	Supporting the activities of the Russian cultural center of Georgia			
	1.1.5	Supporting LEPL Tbilisi Petros Adamiani State Drama Theatre			
	1.1.6	Supporting LEPL Tbilisi Azerbaijani State Drama Theatre			
	2) Provide assistance to regional libraries, clubs and art schools				
1.2.1	Supporting Baghlojiani musical school in Kvareli	Kvareli council	2009-2014		

	1.2.2	Supporting a musical and art school, 14 clubs (ten of them is Armenian) and 4 libraries (two of them is Armenian) in Akhalkalaki	Akhalkalaki council		
	1.2.3	Supporting a musical school, 21 libraries (18 of them is Armenian) and 20 clubs (18 of them is Armenian) in Ninotsminda	Ninotsminda council	2009-2014	
	1.2.4	Supporting a musical school, 18 libraries (11 of them is Azerbaijani, 4 of them is Armenian) and 4 rural clubs in Marneuli	Marneuli council	2009-2014	
	1.2.5	Supporting a musical school, a library (for the Armenian population) and a cultural house in Tsalka	Tsalka council	2009-2014	
	1.2.6	Supporting Eredvi musical school and 18 libraries (five of them Ossetian) in Gori	Gori council	2009-2014	
	1.2.7	Supporting 19 libraries (one of them is Azerbaijani) and one club in Gardabani	Gardabani council	2009-2014	
	1.2.8	Supporting 9 libraries in Bolnisi (two of them is Azerbaijani)	Bolnisi council	2009-2014	
	1.2.9	Supporting 4 libraries in Dmanisi (one of them is Azerbaijani)	Dmanisi council	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #2	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Protect cultural heritage of national minorities	1) Protection of material and nonmaterial cultural heritage of national minorities:				
	2.1.1	Registration and inventory of cultural monuments of national minorities	Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport of Georgia	2009-2014	
	2.1.2	Monuments' restoration	Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport of Georgia	2009-2014	

	2.1.3	Program for supporting pantheons in Tbilisi and care of cultural monuments: Protection and care of pantheons in Tbilisi, including those of Armenian writers and public figures	Tbilisi City Hall	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #3	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Encourage tolerance spirit and support intercultural dialogue and contacts	1) Introducing Tolerance as a subject in the secondary school curriculum		Ministry of Education and Science; Federation “Save the Children”	2009-2014	
OBJECTIVE #4	Name of the program/Activity		Implementing organization/ Partner	Timeframe	Remark
Extend the knowledge of the society on culture, history, language, and religion of national minorities and present them as cultural values of the country	1) Talk show “Italiuri Ezo” [the Italian Yard]		GPB, UNA, within the frames of USAID-supported National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia program	2009-2014	
	2) Series of documentaries - Multiethnic Georgia		GPB, UNA, within the frames of USAID-supported National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia program	2009-2014	
	3) Private Show Chveni Sakartvelo [Our Georgia]		Public radio FM 102.4	2009-2014	