



STATE COMMISSION
ON MIGRATION ISSUES

2017 MIGRATION PROFILE OF GEORGIA

2017

TBILISI, GEORGIA



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As in the case of the 2015 MP, the State Commission on Migration Issues has relied on the experience and recommendations of international organisations, as well as local civil society and academia representatives involved in migration management-related activities, to further improve the MP development process and ensure that the document serves as a reliable resource for all stakeholders involved in the field of migration, whether they be from the fields of academic research, teaching, policy development or management.

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The European Union For Georgia



ICMPD
International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

¹ Members of the State Commission on Migration Issues: the Ministry of Justice (MoJ); the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA); the State Security Service (SSSG); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees (MRA); the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA); the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES); the Office of the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration (OSMEAI); the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD); the Ministry of Finance (MoF); the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat); the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI).

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations²

AA	Association Agreement
ACT	Analysis & Consulting Team
ATIP Fund	State Fund for Protection and Assistance of (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
Chevening	International Grants Programme of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Centers
CIPDD	Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EaP-RAN	Eastern Partnership Risk Analysis Network
EECA	Eastern Europe and Central Asia
ENIGMMA	“Enhancing Georgia’s Migration Management” (project funded by the European Union under the Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation Programme and implemented by ICMPD in the period 2014-2017)
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, which aims to support education, training, youth and sport development in Europe.
EU	European Union
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEL	Georgian Lari
GeoStat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GNI	Gross National Income
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers Association
HDI	Human Development Index
IBM	Integrated Border Management
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISET	International School of Economics (of Tbilisi State University)
Ltd	Limited Liability Company
MEV	Multiple Entry Visa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
MoF	Ministry of Finance of Georgia
MoLHSA	Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia

² On the SCMI website can also be found the Glossary on Migration (Georgian-language version) and the Glossary of Migration Related Acronyms, http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=129&clang=1 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

MoJ	Ministry of Justice of Georgia
MRA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia
MRDI	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
NAPR	National Agency of Public Registry
NBG	National Bank of Georgia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSMEAI	Office of the State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia
PSDA	Public Service Development Agency
RCMES	Readmission Case Management Electronic System
Rustaveli Foundation	Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation
SCMI	State Commission on Migration Issues
SSSG	State Security Service of Georgia
TEMPUS	Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies (2007-2013)
TIP Council	Interagency Council on Combating Trafficking in Persons
UMAS	United Migration Analytical System
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
VLAP	Visa Liberalisation Action Plan
WG	Working Group

General Country Information



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Georgia: Key Facts	
Area	69,700 Km ²
Land borders	1,839 Km
Bordering Countries	Armenia (224 Km)
	Azerbaijan (446 Km)
	Russia (894 Km)
	Turkey (275 Km)
Coastline	315 Km
National Currency	Georgian Lari (GEL)
GDP (at current prices)	34.0285 mln GEL (2016)
GDP per capita (at current prices)	3,864.60 USD (2016)
Population	3,718,200 (1 January, 2017) ³
Ethnic Composition (2014 Census)	Georgians - 86.8%
	Azeri - 6.3%
	Armenians - 4.5%
	Russians - 0.7%
	Other - 1.7%

³ Geostat, Main Statistics. Population, http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=152&lang=eng (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Capital	Tbilisi
Population of Capital	1,114,600 (1 January, 2017)
Official Languages	Georgian, Abkhaz (in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia)
Natural Increase Rate (per thousand population)	1.6 (2016) ⁴
Urban Population	57.2% (1 January, 2017)
President	Giorgi Margvelashvili
Prime Minister	Giorgi Kvirikashvili
Speaker of the Parliament	Irakli Kobakhidze

⁴ Geostat, Main Statistics. Population, http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=152&lang=eng (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Introduction

The 2017 Migration Profile of Georgia is the second informational and analytical document of its type elaborated in the frame of the State Commission on Migration Issues prepared according to the Medium Migration Profile (MMP) model. Its predecessor, the [2015 Migration Profile of Georgia](#), covered and contained statistical data and analysis of this data for the five-year period 2010-2014. The present document is the logical follow-up to the 2015 Migration Profile and is based on the past experience of Migration Profile (MP) development.

The 2017 Migration Profile primarily describes the migration-related statistical data for the period 2015-2016, analyses this data with regard to its impact in different areas (demographic, economic and social), and consequently reveals the main trends and changes in the different migratory groups and flows. Similar to the 2015 Migration Profile, this MP is based predominantly on data obtained from Geostat, the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), as well as administrative statistics from various Georgian state entities. This 2017 edition of the Migration Profile also takes into account the main findings of research conducted on the initiative of public institutions, and local and international organisations during the period 2015-2016. Key findings, existing gaps and appropriate recommendations, formulated based on analysis of the abovementioned data, are presented in the conclusory part of this document.

As a rule, an MMP is prepared biannually, with a Brief Migration Profile (BMP) being developed during the period in between. The latter is elaborated twice a year by the SCMI Secretariat and provides more in-depth analysis of particular areas presented in the MMP. The Secretariat has already prepared two documents of this type: the first was dedicated to [migrant remittances to Georgia](#), while the second focused on [foreign students' influence on the Georgian economy](#).

In addition, it should be mentioned that the SCMI Secretariat has also elaborated the [Migration Profile Development Guidelines](#), which were an important subsidiary resource in development of the present document. The reader should also be informed that this 2017 version of the Migration Profile has undergone some structural changes and improvements which ease the reader's process of working on the document. The present MMP offers persons interested in the field a comprehensive picture of the country's migratory processes, which can be used for academic research and teaching as well as evidence-based migration policy planning and implementation.

Situation Analysis and Migratory Trends

It is difficult to single out the sole factor contributing to emigration and/or immigration from/to Georgia. Rather, these are various complex factors ranging from economic and societal to political and personal. There were periods in Georgia's recent history when emigration was mainly caused by political instability and security threats (internal armed conflicts). Since that time, economic and social factors have become more prominent in activating emigration processes. As well as the other factors promoting emigration, existing migratory networks play a significant role – and of course also support the emigration of Georgian citizens.

Economic reforms implemented in the country during the past decades, along with increased political stability and security, have fostered an increase in immigration flows. However, this has not reduced emigration levels, since compared to the main destination countries of Georgian migrants, the Georgian economy can offer citizens only limited opportunities for employment, remuneration, social assistance and quality of life.

To combat this situation and improve the well-being of the population, significant economic reforms have been (and are still being) implemented in Georgia, aimed at simplifying entrepreneurial activity and creating a more attractive investment climate. The Georgian economy has been expanding steadily for the past decade and further growth is anticipated in the coming years. According to Geostat data, Georgia's GDP in 2016 exceeded 14.3 billion USD, with GDP per capita amounting to 3,864.60 USD.⁵

Georgia's external trade turnover has also been increasing, supported by concessionary external trade regimes and the country's liberal trade policies. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the European Union entered into force in September 2014. It should also be mentioned that Georgia is the first country in the region to have signed a free trade agreement with China.

The positive effects of the economic reforms implemented in Georgia have been reflected in various international research articles and evaluations. For instance, in the World Bank's [Doing Business 2017](#) report, Georgia's ranking improved by seven positions, moving from 23rd to 16th place among 190 countries. In the Economic Freedom of the World 2016 report from the international think tank [Fraser Institute](#), Georgia held a leading position – 7th among 159 countries. According to [The Heritage Foundation's](#) Index of Economic Freedom 2017, Georgia improved its ranking by ten positions compared to the previous year and held 13th place out of 180 countries, with a "mostly free" status.

The tourism sector is also undergoing dynamic development. From 2010 to 2017, Georgia enjoyed one of the highest visitor growth rates in the world. The total number of international visitors in 2016 exceeded 6.3 million. In the same year, income from international tourism increased by 11.9%, while foreign currency inflow increased by 230 million USD, compared to the previous year.

According to the 2017 [Transparency International](#) report, in 2016 Georgia moved up in the [Corruption Perception Index](#) ranking by four positions, from 48th to 44th (among 176 countries), while maintaining its top position among the 19 countries of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region.

In terms of public spending on healthcare, Georgia holds a relatively high position in the world. In 2016, the share of healthcare and social assistance spending amounted to 6.1% of GDP.⁶ In 2014, in the frame of health insurance reform, a state universal healthcare programme was introduced to make healthcare more affordable to socially vulnerable populations.

According to the Human Development Index (HDI) of the UNDP which is calculated based on three principal

⁵ Geostat, Gross Domestic Product of Georgia in 2016, http://geostat.ge/cms/site_images/_files/english/nad/GDP%202016%20Press%20release_Eng.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁶ Ibid.

dimensions (life expectancy at birth, expected and mean years of schooling and GNI per capita),⁷ in the 2016 report,⁸ Georgia ranked 70th among 188 countries and belonged to the high human development country group. Despite this fact, poverty remains one of the main challenges in the country.

Summing up, we can say that with respect to both emigration and immigration, factors such as quality of life, education and healthcare, poverty and economic inequality play a more decisive role than political stability and security.

7 UNDP, Human Development Index (HDI), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

8 Human Development Report 2016, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

1. Emigration

Migration has always played an important role in Georgian history. Due to wars or conflicts sparked by the country's significant strategic and geopolitical location, population groups, either voluntarily or involuntarily, have constantly been migrating within the country or abroad.⁹ The country's most recent history is marked by several waves of emigration: 1. Before the 1950s, primarily forcible displacements (within the Soviet Union) were caused by political repressions; 2. In the period 1950-1990 migration of the Georgian population also principally occurred within territory of the Soviet Union; and 3. The mass emigration of the 1990s, which was the result of socio-economic hardship and military conflicts within the country.¹⁰ The latter migration wave mainly headed to Russia. However, the introduction by Russia in 2000 of a visa regime for Georgian citizens shifted the emigration flow from Russia to other countries (in particular Ukraine, the USA and various European countries). Since 2004, the emigration processes have become even more diverse both in terms of motivation of migrants and countries of destination. However, the absence of a mechanism for collecting reliable and complete statistical information regarding emigration prevents us from seeing the precise picture. The statistics presented in this chapter are somewhat fragmented and based on various sources and methodologies. It is essential that these methodological differences are taken into account when comparing and interpreting the data.

1.1. Overview of Emigrants

Since 2012, Geostat has published statistics (by gender, age and citizenship) about incoming and outgoing migration flows in the country. Geostat's data about net migration has varied in recent years.¹¹ The reasons for this variation maybe the changes in migration characteristics and the fact that during the period 2002-2012 Geostat changed its data acquisition source and emigrant definition methodology several times.¹² Since 2012, Geostat has been using the UN-recommended methodology. According to this methodology, **an emigrant is considered any person (regardless of citizenship) who satisfies the following two conditions:** 1. Left Georgia in the past 12 months and remained on the territory of another country for at least 183 days (can be the cumulative sum of several departures) and 2. Georgia was the person's usual place of residence, i.e. before leaving the country the person spent at least 183 days (including through a cumulative sum of several stays) in Georgia in the 12 months preceding departure.

According to the Geostat data for the past three years (2014-2016), the flow of emigrants from Georgia is increasing. In 2014, the number of emigrants amounted to 88,704 persons, among them 69,855 Georgian citizens. In 2015, a total of 95,965 emigrants left Georgia, the majority of them (67,452) Georgian citizens, while in 2016 the number of emigrants increased again slightly, reaching 98,288 persons (although the number of Georgian citizens among them did not grow, on the contrary, it fell, to 64,705). Based on this data it can be concluded that there is an increasing tendency towards emigration, although occurring as the result of foreign nationals rather than Georgian citizens leaving Georgia (see Table N1).

As can be observed from Table N1, emigrants, by citizenship, come primarily from Georgia's neighbouring countries – Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine – and many of these may be persons returning to their country of origin.

9 Migration Textbook, 2017, Migration History, p. 107.

10 Ibid., pp. 110-115.

11 ICMPD, The State of Migration in Georgia, 2015, http://migration.commission.ge/files/enigma-state-of-migration_e_version.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

12 Ibid.

Table N1. Emigrants, by citizenship and gender (2015 and 2016)

2015				2016			
Country of Citizenship	Total	Male	Female	Country of Citizenship	Total	Male	Female
Georgia	67,452	37,711	29,741	Georgia	64,705	34,869	29,836
Russia	6,160	3,485	2,675	Russia	8,379	4,721	3,658
Turkey	3,631	2,796	835	Turkey	4,200	3,093	1,107
Armenia	3,331	2,006	1,325	Armenia	7,887	4,767	3,120
Azerbaijan	1,574	817	757	Azerbaijan	1,772	968	804
Ukraine	1,130	755	375	Ukraine	1,612	796	816
Iran	1,454	1,068	386	China	966	791	175
Kuwait	1,293	840	453	Israel	928	425	503
Iraq	988	770	218	USA	725	436	289
USA	916	556	360	India	710	535	175
China	783	601	182	Kuwait	640	424	216
Other countries	7,104	4,321	2,783	Other countries	5,596	3,323	2,273
Not stated	149	91	58	Not stated	168	107	61
Total	95,965	55,817	40,148	Total	98,288	55,255	43,033

Source: Geostat

Since the country does not collect information regarding emigrants' destination countries, it is hard to determine the destination states of emigration flows from Georgia. Nevertheless, this question can be answered with a certain degree of accuracy by combining the data from the population census conducted in Georgia in 2014 and UN DESA data analysis.

For the 2014 population census, Geostat followed UN-recommended methodology,¹³ which defines the usual place of residence as the location where a person has lived continuously for at least the past 12 months (excluding temporary absences due to vacations or business trips) or the place where a person plans to live for at least 12 months. According to the census methodology implemented in line with this recommendation, a person (regardless of citizenship) was considered an emigrant if s/he had left Georgia permanently or temporarily for a foreign country since 1 January 2002 and was absent from Georgia for over 12 months or was planning to stay abroad for longer than 12 months.¹⁴ As shown in Table N2 below, the largest number of emigrants are in Russia and Greece, followed by Turkey, Italy, Germany and the USA. More than half (55%) of emigrants are women, although the gender ratio varies significantly by current country of residence. For instance, the majority of emigrants in Greece, Turkey and Italy are women, while it appears that primarily men emigrate to Russia and Ukraine.

¹³ UN, Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, 2007.

¹⁴ Geostat, 2014 General Population Census, Main Results, http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site_images/files/english/population/Census_release_ENG_2016.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Table N2. Number of emigrants, by gender and type of settlement

Current Country of Residence	Both Genders	Gender		Type of Settlement	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
Russia	19,195	13,640	5,555	10,891	8,304
Greece	14,048	2,386	11,662	8,762	5,286
Turkey	9,922	3,262	6,660	6,120	3,802
Italy	9,612	1,373	8,239	6,756	2,856
Germany	6,259	2,808	3,451	4,831	1,428
USA	5,021	2,457	2,564	4,474	547
Spain	3,597	1,724	1,873	2,618	979
France	3,293	1,896	1,397	2,730	563
Ukraine	3,283	2,619	664	2,045	1,238
Azerbaijan	1,802	1,091	711	408	1,394
Other country	11,590	6,483	5,107	8,315	3,275
Not stated	919	443	476	615	304
Total	88,541	40,182	48,359	58,565	29,976

Source: Geostat, 2014 General Population Census

According to the 2014 census, 66% of emigrants lived in an urban area before departure, while 34% lived in rural areas. Table N3 shows the distribution of emigrants by their usual place of residence before leaving Georgia and by gender. As can be concluded from the data, the majority of emigrants had been living in the Tbilisi, Imereti and Kvemo Kartli regions. Moreover, among emigrants from the Imereti, Kakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti regions, the number of women significantly exceeds the number of men.

Table N3. Number of emigrants, by usual place of residence before leaving Georgia and gender

Usual Place of Residence before Leaving Georgia	Both Genders	Male	Female
Tbilisi	27,956	12,368	15,588
Autonomous Republic of Ajara	3,994	2,308	1,686
Guria	1,408	553	855
Imereti	20,298	7,974	12,324
Kakheti	7,271	2,985	4,286
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	2,243	813	1,430
Racha-Lechkumi and Kvemo Svaneti	489	271	218
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	6,897	3,848	3,049
Samtskhe-Javakheti	2,769	1,524	1,245
Kvemo Kartli	11,099	5,752	5,347
Shida Kartli	4,117	1,786	2,331

Source: Geostat, 2014 General Population Census

According to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) data, in the foreign-born population category Russia accommodates most of the emigrants from Georgia. Large number of persons born in Georgia are also present in Greece, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan. According to the same source, since

2000 the number of people born in Georgia has considerably increased in both the USA and the EU countries, while their number has decreased in Israel and Russia (see Table N4). Similarly, according to the same source, in 2015 (compared to 2000) the number of persons born in Georgia and currently living abroad had fallen by over 100,000 people. It should also be highlighted here that it would be inappropriate to compare UN DESA and Geostat data, given that they calculate the number of emigrants using different methodologies.

Table N4. Georgian emigrants, by selected country of residence (2000-2015)

Country of Residence	Type of Data	2000	Type of Data	2005	Type of Data	2010	Type of Data	2015
Russia	B	625,743	B	539,318	B	441,793	B	450,221
Greece	B	71,047	B	78,132	B	85,216	B	83,388
Ukraine	B	73,621	B	67,270	B	64,185	B	64,399
Azerbaijan	B R	61,708	B R	58,561	B R	53,614	B R	51,141
Armenia	B R	46,779	B R	30,942	B R	25,767	B R	40,897
USA	B	10,528	B	15,424	B	20,511	B	24,456
Germany	B	10,482	B	16,302	B	22,122	B	22,884
Cyprus	B	6,950	B	10,173	B	16,310	B	17,026
Italy	B	317	B	6,271	B	12,224	B	12,226
Israel	B R	21,123	B R	14,988	B R	9,034	B R	9,317
Spain	B	523	B	4,926	B	9,792	B	8,760
Belarus	B	8,827	B	8,705	B	8,583	B	8,507
France	B	1,424	B	5,304	B	7,011	B	7,584
Turkey	B R	6,065	B R	6,249	B R	6,439	B R	6,536
EU-28		100,813		133,494		168,542		171,030
Total		967,810		886,964		810,207		838,430

Source: UN DESA, 2015. Includes the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Estimates refer to 1 July of the reference years, namely, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015.

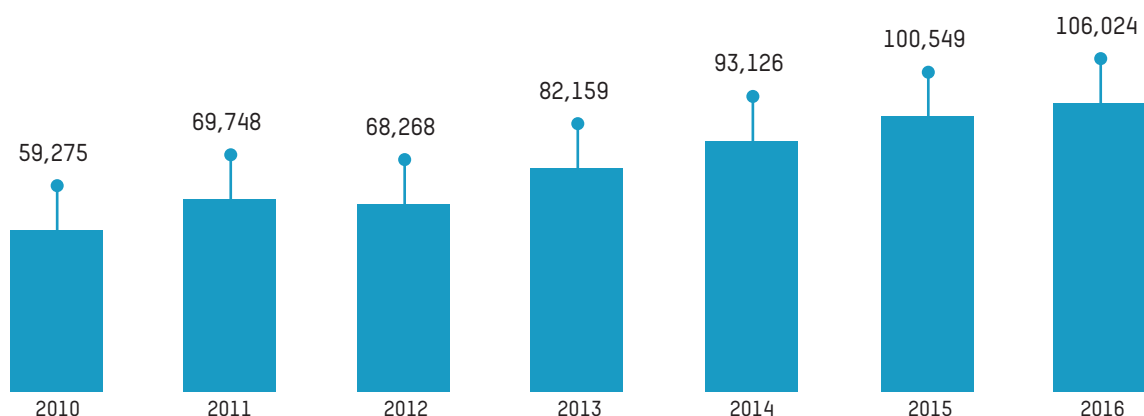
Type of data: foreign-born population (B), UNHCR refugees (R).¹⁵

1.2. Regular Emigration

1.2.1. Schengen Visa Applications

The seven years from 2010 to 2016 saw a growing number of Schengen visa applications to consulates of Schengen countries located in Georgia. In 2016 (compared to 2010), the number of applications almost doubled (see Diagram N1). Overall, these consulates issued over 87,000 visas in 2015, and more than 92,000 in 2016. The majority of these were single-entry visas. In 2015, the share of multiple-entry visas in total number of issued visas constituted 25.8%, with this share increasing to 32.6% in 2016.

¹⁵ The 2015 Migration Profile, which was based on 2013 data, contained number of "foreign citizens" (C) as type of data for some of the countries. Since 2015, the database has been updated and is now based only on B and/or R type of data, which accounts for the discrepancies between the 2015 profile and the present MP in the data for the years 2000, 2005 and 2010. <http://bit.ly/1W6TR0n>, Total migrant stock at mid-year by origin and by major area, region, country or area of destination, 2000-2015, (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Diagram N1. Total number of applications for Schengen visas (2010-2016)

Source: European Commission¹⁶

The number of both Schengen visa applications and Schengen visas issued to Georgian citizens increased in 2015 and 2016 compared to 2014. Moreover, the share of Schengen visas not issued to Georgian citizens (including MEVs) remained almost unchanged – at around 12%.

In 2016 (compared to 2014), there was an increase in the number of visa applications to the consulates of the Netherlands, Greece and Latvia (see Table N5). The Dutch consulate still has the highest visa refusal rate (21%), although it also has the highest share for MEVs (62.3%) in total number of visas issued. In 2016, the consulates of Germany (3.4%), Poland (5.6%) and Latvia (5.6%) had the lowest visa refusal rates. The Greek consulate has the lowest rate (5.9%) for issuing MEVs and the second highest (after the Dutch consulate) visa refusal rate (16.4%).

Table N5. Types of visas and issuance rates, by Schengen state consulates in Georgia (2015 and 2016)

Schengen State Consulate	Number of Uniform Visas Applications	Total Number of Uniform Visas Issued (including MEVs)	Number of MEVs Issued	Total Number of Limited Territorial Validity Visas (LTVs) Issued	Number of Uniform Visas not Issued	Refusal Rate for Uniform Visas	Share of MEVs in Total Number of Uniform Visas Issued
2015							
Czech Republic	6,704	5,518	605	2	1,184	17.7%	11.0%
Estonia	2,260	1,914	567	0	346	15.3%	29.6%
France	7,680	6,972	2,423	0	634	8.3%	34.8%
Germany	17,326	16,672	2,950	2	652	3.8%	17.7%
Greece	12,367	10,508	670		1,859	15.0%	6.4%
Italy	13,274	10,990	3,078	5	2,279	17.2%	28.0%
Latvia	7,671	7,300	1,040	1	370	4.8%	14.2%
Lithuania	3,126	2,489	1,000		589	18.8%	40.2%
Netherlands	21,715	17,034	7,858	1	4,286	19.7%	46.1%
Poland	4,793	4,451	1,796		342	7.1%	40.4%
Switzerland	3,633	3,195	513	5	433	11.9%	16.1%
Total	100,549	87,043	22,500	16	12,974	12.9%	25.8%

16 European Commission - Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, <http://bit.ly/2mw0fmr>, Visa statistics for consulates 2016 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

2016							
Czech Republic	7,286	6,190	499		1,091	15.0%	8.1%
Estonia	2,002	1,706	732	3	293	14.6%	42.9%
France	8,359	7,779	2,423		512	6.1%	31.1%
Germany	16,603	16,041	5,228	1	561	3.4%	32.6%
Greece	14,050	11,742	695		2,308	16.4%	5.9%
Italy	13,683	12,222	3,116	1	1,460	10.7%	25.5%
Latvia	7,912	7,465	2,347		447	5.6%	31.4%
Lithuania	3,701	3,119	1,363		568	15.3%	43.7%
Netherlands	23,708	18,546	11,554	4	4,983	21.0%	62.3%
Poland	5,065	4,782	1,644	1	282	5.6%	34.4%
Switzerland	3,655	3,303	692	3	349	9.5%	21.0%
Total	106,024	92,895	30,293	13	12,854	12.1%	32.6%

Source: European Commission¹⁷

It should be highlighted that after successful implementation of the VLAP with the EU, since 28 March 2017, Georgian citizens holding biometric passports can travel to EU/Schengen countries without a visa, for the purpose of short-term stay (90 days in 180 days period). Visa-free travel is possible on the territory of the Schengen zone, which includes 22 EU member states and four non-member countries. Visa-free regime is also in place with four EU member/ Schengen candidate states (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania, and Croatia). Consequently, it is highly expected that from 2017 onwards the demand for short-term visas from EU/Schengen consulates located in Georgia will decrease considerably.

1.2.2. Residence Permits in EU Countries

According to Eurostat, in 2015, a total of 71,223 Georgian citizens held valid residence permits in EU countries, with that number reaching 74,416 in 2016. The annual number of valid residence permits issued to Georgian citizens has been increasing since 2010 (when it was 53,020). Analysis of the types of residence permits issued shows that the growth can be primarily attributed to the number of permits issued for family reunification and "other" reasons (see Table N6).

Table N6. Valid residence permits issued to Georgian citizens in the EU-28, by reason (2012-2016)

Year	Education Reasons	Family Reasons	Remunerated Activity	Other	Total
2012	4,056	21,673	18,147	16,992	60,868
2013	4,150	24,419	19,301	18,413	66,283
2014	4,360	25,086	19,563	20,863	69,872
2015	4,626	25,547	18,411	22,639	71,223
2016	4,730	26,538	18,435	24,713	74,416

Source: Eurostat, All valid permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship on 31 December of each year (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

17 European Commission - Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, <http://bit.ly/2mw0fnr>, Visa statistics for consulates 2016 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

As regards the number of first-time residence permits issued to Georgian citizens in the 28 EU member states, their number in recent years varied between 7,902 and 9,850. In 2015 and 2016 (compared with 2013), the number of residence permits issued for the purpose of remunerated activity decreased (see Table N7 below). However, an increasing tendency has been observed in the number of residence permits issued for education and family reunification reasons.

Table N7. First-time residence permits issued to Georgian citizens in the EU-28, by reason (2012-2016)

Year	Education Reasons	Family Reasons	Remunerated Activity	Other	Total
2012	1,145	2,654	3,222	1,487	8,508
2013	1,224	2,516	4,290	1,820	9,850
2014	1,399	2,440	3,220	1,839	8,898
2015	1,447	2,880	1,686	1,889	7,902
2016	1,919	3,077	1,861	2,389	9,246

Source: Eurostat, *First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship* (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

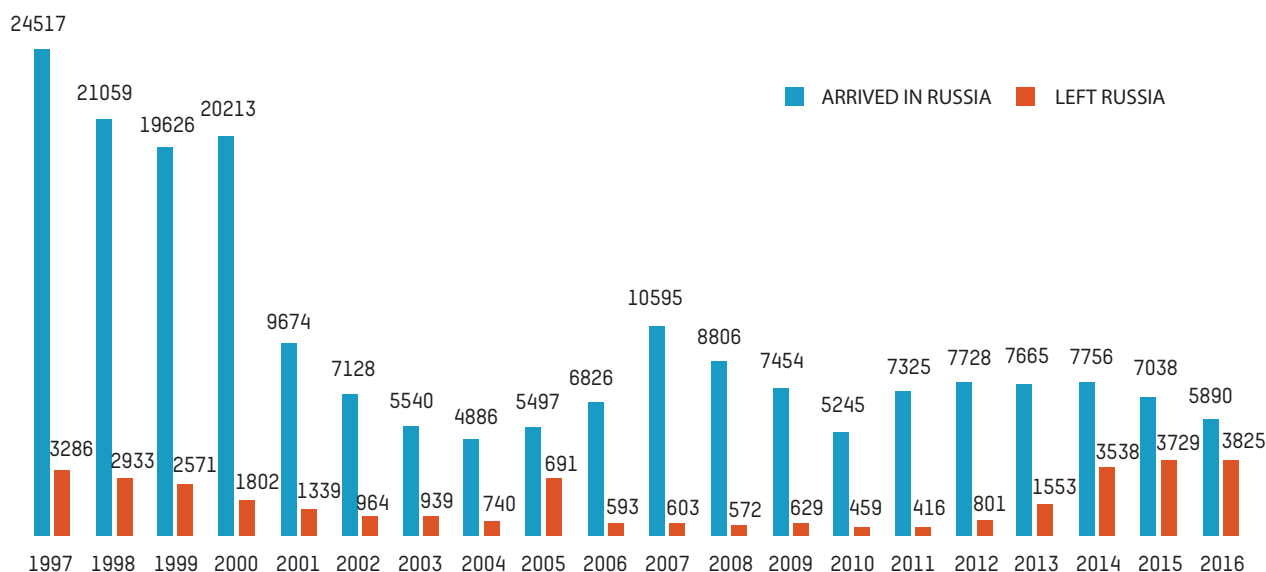
1.2.3. Russia

According to all existing estimates and statistical data (see Tables N2 and N4), the largest number of emigrants from Georgia reside in Russia. According to the Federal Migration Service of Russia, in 2016 there were 49,983 registered Georgian citizens in Russia, an increase on the 2015 figure (43,762).¹⁸

According to Russia's Federal State Statistics Service, the migration dynamics between Russia and Georgia from 1997 onwards have been quite volatile. The number of emigrants from Georgia migrating to Russia before 2000 (when Russia introduced a visa regime for Georgian citizens), was quite stable and fluctuated at around 20,000-25,000 individuals per year (see Diagram N2). From 2001 onwards, however, the number of emigrants from Georgia to Russia began to halve, reaching its lowest number in 2004 (4,886). In 2004 the number of emigrants once again began to increase and by 2007 it had reached around 10,000 emigrants. Since 2007, the number of persons arriving in Russia from Georgia has seen a downward trend, while the number of persons returning to Georgia from Russia has been rising. It should be highlighted that since 1997 the number of Georgian nationals arriving in Russia each year has considerably exceeded the number of persons returning to Georgia. However, according to the indicators of recent years, migration from Georgia to Russia has been somewhat offset by migration to Georgia from Russia. The data from 2016 (January-November) indicates that 5,890 Georgian citizens arrived in Russia, while 3,825 Georgian citizens departed and returned to Georgia.

¹⁸ <https://xn--b1aew.xn--p1ai/Deljatelnost/statistics/migracionnaya/item/9359228/> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Diagram N2. Migration dynamics from Georgia to Russia and Russia to Georgia (1997-2016)¹⁹

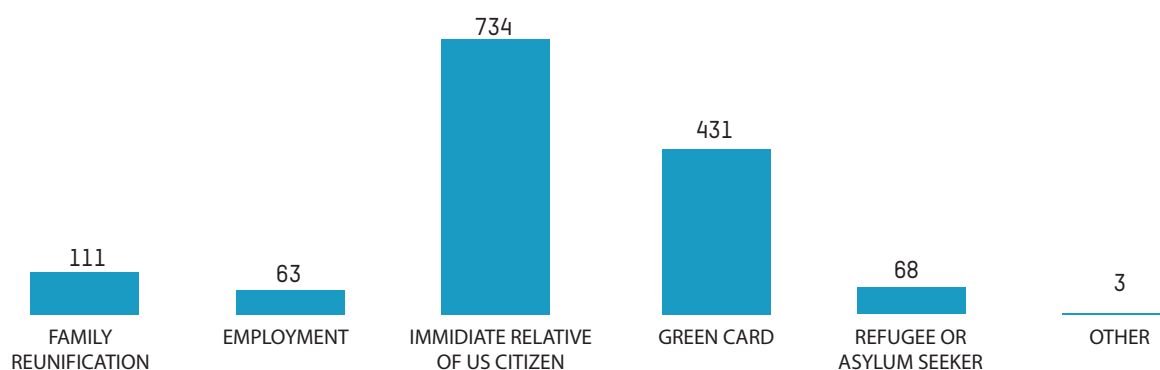


Source: Russia's Federal State Statistics Service²⁰ (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

1.2.4. USA

According to US Department of Homeland Security data, in the period 2000-2015,²¹ some 20,375 Georgian citizens received lawful permanent residence permit in the United States.²² In 2015, out of 1,410 Georgian citizens who received a residence permit, 734 persons received it on grounds of being an immediate relative of a US citizen, while 431 did so on the basis of winning in the Diversity Visa Lottery programme.²³ It is likely that apart from the over 20,000 Georgian citizens who hold lawful permanent residence permits in the United States, a share of Georgian emigrants reside in the US without legal status, which makes it difficult to estimate their number accurately.

Diagram N3. Number of Georgians citizens issued Lawful Permanent Residence Permit in the US, by broad class of admission (2015)



Source: US Department of Homeland Security²⁴

¹⁹ http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/population/demo/migr1_bd.htm (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

²⁰ Please note that the data from 2016 is incomplete and covers the period January to November only.

²¹ According to US Department of Homeland Security data, prior to 2000 Georgian citizens were included in either the Russian Empire (1820-1920), USSR (1920-1990), or Russian Federation (1991-1999) citizen groups. See the 2012 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics from the Office of Immigration Statistics of the US Department of Homeland Security, 2013, p. 11.

²² US Department of Homeland Security, 2015 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2015> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

²³ Diversity Visa Lottery ("Green Card").

²⁴ US Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2015, <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2015>, Table 10. Persons obtaining legal permanent resident status by broad class of admission and region and country of birth: Fiscal year 2015 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Between 2001 and 2016, a total of 8,841 Georgian citizens won a “Green Card” in the US Diversity Visa Lottery programme.²⁵ Although it is most likely that not all of them settled in the USA permanently, we can assume that a majority of the winners obtained permanent resident status.

1.2.5. Turkey

According to 2014 Georgian population census data, Turkey is the third largest country by number of Georgian emigrants (see Table N2). According to statistics from Turkey’s Ministry of Interior, 18,511 Georgian citizens held a Turkish residence permit in 2016. The majority of these were work (8,014) or short-term residence permits (7,478), while in 2477 cases residence permits were issued for family reunification.²⁶

Border crossing data published by the Turkish Ministry of Interior indicates that citizens of Georgia enter Turkey quite frequently, second only to German citizens. In 2016, Georgian citizens crossed the Georgia-Turkey border 2,195,727 times in the direction of Turkey and 2,176,867 times in the direction of Georgia.²⁷ The data indicates that migration between Georgia and Turkey is circular and of a bilateral transit nature, which is typical of frontier migration.

1.3. International Protection

According to the UNHCR, the annual statistics for Georgian citizens who seek asylum in other countries are quite volatile. The largest number of asylum applications was recorded in 2009 (15,735), a year after the Russian-Georgian War. During 2015, a total of 11,413 citizens of Georgia requested asylum in different countries, while in 2016 the number was 11,197. These figures are slightly lower than for the three years previous. Moreover, the recognition rate for asylum applications filed by Georgian citizens has decreased in recent years, from 6% to 3% (see Table N8).

Table N8. Number of pending asylum applications (Start and End of Year), applications during the year and rejections

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Start of Year	2,958	4,238	11,394	8,275	9,260
Applied during the year	14,094	12,592	12,377	11,413	11,197
Total positive decisions	402	258	263	250	192
Rejections	6,779	6,900	7,641	6,768	7,105
Otherwise closed	5,296	4,862	5,132	3,231	4,203
Total decisions	12,591	12,364	13,448	10,553	11,884
Recognition rate ²⁸	6%	4%	3%	4%	3%
Rejection rate ²⁹	94%	96%	97%	96%	97%
End of Year	4,583	11,571	7,809	9,255	10,252

Source: UNHCR ³⁰

In 2016, the highest number of asylum applications filed by Georgian citizens was in Germany (3,448). Those seeking asylum in Germany constituted almost half of all asylum applications (7,496) made by Georgian nationals in 2016. According to the UNHCR, the number of asylum applications by Georgian citizens to Germany

25 <https://www.green-card.com/green-card-lottery/winners-and-statistics/distribution-of-winners-2011-dv-2011/?country=Georgia> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

26 Turkish Ministry of Interior - Directorate General of Migration Mangement, Residence Permits, <http://bit.ly/2FjunhO> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

27 Ibid., Entry - Exit, http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/entry---exit_915_1024_4744, (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

28 Recognition rate = positive decisions divided by the total of positive decisions and rejections, excluding otherwise closed cases.

29 Rejection rate = rejections divided by total of positive decisions and rejections, excluding otherwise closed cases.

30 UNHCR, Population Statistics, http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/asylum_seekers (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

and the USA has increased considerably in the past five years (2012-2016). Meanwhile, the number of Georgian citizens seeking asylum in France and Greece has decreased (see Table N9).

Table N9. Number of Georgian citizen asylum applications, by top destination countries (applied during the year)

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Germany	1,298	2,336	2,873	2,782	3,448
France	2,552	2,456	1,369	1,084	833
Sweden	748	625	735	782	638
Netherlands	226	209	319	261	584
USA	39	50	117	215	394
Switzerland	614	565	402	365	396
Greece	893	532	350	297	201
Italy	65	107	88	135	194
Belgium	386	229	280	200	184
Austria	300	257	348	no data	124
Canada	62	32	79	81	106
Other countries	3,771	1,687	1,201	740	394
Total (all countries)	10,954	9,085	8,161	6,942	7,496

Source: UNHCR³¹

The Eurostat data partially corresponds to the UNHCR statistics with respect to EU countries, and also shows that in 2016 Germany was the country that received the most applications from Georgian asylum seekers. Both sources indicate that since 2012 there has been a declining tendency in the number of asylum seeker applications filed by Georgian citizens abroad. The differences between Eurostat and UNHCR data can be explained by the fact that each of these organisations use a different methods of collecting information.

Table N10: Georgian citizen asylum applicants in EU/Schengen countries, by top destination countries (applied during the year)

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Germany	1,430	2,485	3,180	3,195	3,770
France	2,680	2,695	1,610	1,325	1,165
Sweden	750	620	805	890	720
Greece	895	535	350	385	690
Netherlands	250	215	335	265	595
Switzerland	725	655	465	405	465
Austria	300	255	415	405	350
Belgium	505	370	430	300	240
Italy	65	105	90	135	195
Poland	3,235	1,240	720	390	125
Other countries	840	640	670	510	520
Total (EU/Schengen countries)	11,675	9,815	9,070	8,205	8,835

Source: Eurostat. *Asylum and first-time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex. Annual aggregated data (last accessed: 31.10.2017)*

31 Ibid.

According to the UNHCR population statistics database, in recent years there has been a declining tendency in the number of persons from Georgia holding a refugee status (including other forms of international protection).³² There was a 30% decrease in the number of persons under international protection in 2010 compared to the previous year, from 15,020 to 10,640, which can be primarily attributed to the reduction of Georgian refugee numbers in Ukraine – and the declining tendency has persisted in the years since, mainly due to a decrease in the number of persons holding refugee status in Russia, Germany, Ukraine and the USA.

Table N11. Number of Georgian refugees abroad, by destination country (2009-2016)

Country of Residence	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
France	2,105	2,153	2,249	2,391	2,571	2,714	2,826	3,011
Austria	654	730	774	819	788	739	681	630
Germany	1,943	2,034	2,105	2,202	333	343	360	394
USA	1,091	928	802	693	608	496	422	370
Greece	-	-	13	31	84	264	266	266
Russia	2,329	2,478	1,900	1,404	762	537	344	261
Italy	89	84	89	90	109	130	188	259
Canada	501	495	506	504	485	474	449	257
Sweden	165	173	177	170	158	161	153	173
Switzerland	78	76	80	-	83	87	100	115
Cyprus	81	85	85	85	85	85	85	85
Ireland	169	172	168	150	72	70	75	70
Belarus	100	96	94	92	90	87	81	61
Hungary	104	92	87	88	45	45	56	61
Netherlands	216	173	146	117	111	89	62	53
Ukraine	5,079	571	568	66	63	62	60	49
Other countries	316	300	269	359	331	298	285	250
Total	15,020	10,640	10,112	9,261	6,778	6,681	6,493	6,365

Source: UNHCR³³

In 2016, the largest numbers of Georgian refugees were in France, Austria, Germany and the USA. According to Eurostat, in that year, among EU/Schengen countries, the largest number of first instance positive decisions granting Georgian citizens international protection were taken by the respective administrative bodies of France, Germany and Italy (see Table N12).

Table N12. First instance positive decisions for Georgian citizens on international protection in EU/Schengen countries

Country of Residence	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
France	70	125	195	205	200
Germany	5	5	10	5	75
Italy	15	25	25	60	70
Switzerland	5	10	10	25	35
Austria	30	20	20	45	30

³² Persons recognised as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention, in accordance with the UNHCR Statute, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection. It also includes persons in a refugee-like situation for whom refugee status has, for practical or other reasons, not been ascertained. In the absence of official government figures, the UNHCR has estimated the refugee population in many industrialised countries based on ten years of individual asylum seeker recognition.

³³ UNHCR, Population Statistics, http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/time_series (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Sweden	0	10	15	15	15
Ireland	0	0	5	5	10
Hungary	0	15	5	0	5
Netherlands	0	5	5	0	5
Estonia	5	0	0	0	5
Other countries	45	75	75	20	0
Total EU/Schengen (32) countries	175	290	365	380	450

Source: Eurostat. *First instance positive decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex* (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

According to Eurostat, in 2016 a total of 450 Georgian citizens were granted international protection in EU/Schengen countries, an increase of 70 persons compared to the previous year. In general, this figure has been rising since 2012. However, as can be observed from the UNHCR population statistics database, the total number of Georgian citizen refugees in EU/Schengen countries is not increasing, possibly because Georgian nationals periodically lose refugee status due to naturalisation or return to their country of origin.

It should also be highlighted that in recent years Georgia has been added to the list of safe countries of origin by several states (Belgium, Iceland, France, Austria, Bulgaria, Israel³⁴ and the Netherlands³⁵), which means that Georgian nationals have very little chance of obtaining asylum status in these countries.

1.4. Irregular Migration of Georgian Citizens to EU/Schengen Countries

On the whole, obtaining accurate statistical information regarding irregular migration is a challenging task. Nevertheless, in the case of EU/Schengen countries, there are two sources which enable approximate estimates for the level of irregular emigration from Georgia: 1. Eurostat data and 2. FRONTEX data, published annually in the EaP-RAN. Eurostat data contains information obtained from EU/Schengen countries, while the FRONTEX report is based only on the data from EU/Schengen countries bordering Eastern European countries (Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania), collected in the frame of the EaP-RAN.³⁶

1.4.1. Refusal of entry

According to Eurostat data, the number of cases of Georgian citizens being refused entry to EU/Schengen countries is significantly dropping from year to year (see Table N13).

Eurostat indicate that in 2016 Poland, Greece and France were the top countries in term of refusing entry to Georgian citizens. In the past five years (2012-2016), the number of entry refusals to Poland for Georgian citizens has fallen significantly. However, the number of refusals have increased in France and Ireland.

Table N13: Number of refusals of entry for Georgian citizens, by country (top ten EU countries, 2012-2016)

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Poland	8,245	7,250	1,345	505	200
Greece	95	160	210	135	130
France	20	30	5	25	105

³⁴ MFA website, <http://www.mfa.gov.ge/News/israelis-sakhelmcifom-saqartvelo-usaftrtkho-qveyneb.aspx?CatID=5&lang=en-US> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

³⁵ Government of the Netherlands website, Dutch list of safe countries of origin, <http://bit.ly/2wBdoPu> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

³⁶ FRONTEX, EaP-RAN Quarterly, Quarter 4, 2016, http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/EaP_RAN/EaP-RAN_Q4_2016.pdf, p. 3. (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Ireland	10	10	5	15	70
Romania	10	25	230	170	55
Germany	20	20	25	25	40
Lithuania	115	110	145	65	40
Netherlands	60	60	45	50	40
Italy	35	60	70	30	30
Hungary	10	10	10	25	30
Other countries	375	460	1,120	325	160
Total (32 EU/Schengen countries)	8,995	8,195	3,210	1,370	900

Source: Eurostat (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

The majority of those Georgian citizens denied entry to EU countries sought to gain entry via land borders (see Table N14). However, in the past five years (2012-2016) the share of refusals at land borders in the total number of entry refusals has in fact decreased considerably, mainly due to the increase in the number of entry refusals at air borders.

Table N14. Georgian citizens refused entry to the 32 EU/Schengen countries by border type (percentage distribution)

Border Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Land	96.3%	95.7%	87.9%	71.4%	54.5%
Air	3.6%	4.0%	11.9%	27.5%	44.4%
Sea	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	1.1%	1.1%

Source: Eurostat. *Third country nationals refused entry at the external borders* (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

Regarding the reasons given for denying entry to Georgian citizens, Eurostat data shows that the most common reason is the absence of a valid visa or residence permit. Compared to previous years, in 2016 the number of incidents of Georgian citizens being denied entry to EU/Schengen countries due to their lacking a valid travel document or possession of a falsified visa or residence permit increased (see Table N15).

Table N15. Georgian citizens refused entry to the 32 EU/Schengen countries, by reason (percentage distribution)

Reason	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
No valid visa or residence permit	99.6%	99.3%	98.5%	95.5%	71.2%
No valid travel document	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	2.5%	16.9%
Falsified visa or residence permit	0.1%	0.4%	1.1%	1.0%	11.0%
Falsified travel document	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	1.0%	0.8%

Source: Eurostat. *Third country nationals refused entry at the external borders* (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

The decline in the number of entry refusals for Georgian citizens is also evident from the FRONTEX EaP-RAN 2017 Annual Report, which states that, in comparison to the previous year in 2016, the number of entry refusals for Georgian nationals to EU/Schengen countries bordering Eastern European countries halved. According to the agency, the number of entry refusals was 5,268 in 2015, dropping to 2,470 in the year covered by the report.³⁷

³⁷ FRONTEX, Eastern Partnership Annual Risk Analysis 2017, http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/EaP-ARA_2017.pdf, p. 29 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

1.4.2. Illegal Border Crossing

According to the FRONTEX EaP-RAN 2017 Annual Report the number of cases of illegal border crossing by Georgian citizens detected at checkpoints on Eastern European borders decreased by a factor of three compared to previous year. The report states that in 2016, 108 incidents of illegal border crossings by Georgian citizens were detected, while in 2015, 345 such cases were recorded.³⁸

1.4.3. Apprehension of Emigrants due to Irregular Stay

According to Eurostat data, since 2008 the number of Georgian citizens detected as being illegally present in the EU/Schengen member states fluctuated annually between 4,495 and 7,170. It should be mentioned here that in 2016 the number of detected cases of Georgian citizens illegally present in the 32 EU/Schengen countries decreased compared to the previous two years (see Table N16 below).

Table N16. Number of Georgian citizens found to be illegally present in the 32 EU/Schengen countries, by age and gender (2008-2016)

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total	5,015	7,170	5,320	4,495	5,560	5,270	6,630	5,590	5,400
Age									
<14	75	165	130	95	125	140	240	95	185
14-17	60	120	60	60	60	55	60	45	30
18-34	2,360	4,525	3,230	2,620	3,275	3,220	3,760	2,880	2,800
35+	1,385	2,345	1,875	1,710	2,075	1,795	2,510	2,585	2,355
Gender									
Male	3,895	5,295	4,205	3,545	4,470	4,490	5,200	4,200	4,045
Female	1,100	1,865	1,120	945	1,065	765	1,415	1,395	1,365
Un-known	-	-	-	-	-	-	905	-	-

Source: Eurostat (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

According to Eurostat, the majority of Georgian nationals found illegally present in the 32 EU/Schengen countries are male, aged 18-34. This data indicates that most of the Georgian citizens illegally living abroad are potentially part of the labour force and looking for employment opportunities in foreign countries.

According to the FRONTEX EaP-RAN 2017 Annual Report, compared to 2015 the number of detected cases of illegal stay by Georgian nationals decreased slightly: from 2,610 cases in 2015 to 2,496 in 2016.³⁹

1.5. Impact of Emigration

1.5.1. Demographic Dimension

According to the final results of 2014 general population census, the country's population on 1 January 2015 comprised 3,713,700 persons.⁴⁰ Compared with the 2002 census results, the population had decreased by

³⁸ Entering another country by crossing external borders ("green borders") located outside the territory of border checkpoints which is uncovered as the result of observation operations at the "green borders", see the FRONTEX Eastern Partnership Annual Risk Analysis 2017, <http://bit.ly/2GkwfoA>, p. 26 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

³⁹ The report reflects figures for illegal stay, which refer only to detections at borders of persons who have overstayed in a particular country and are now exiting that country. See FRONTEX Eastern Partnership Annual Risk Analysis 2017, p. 28 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

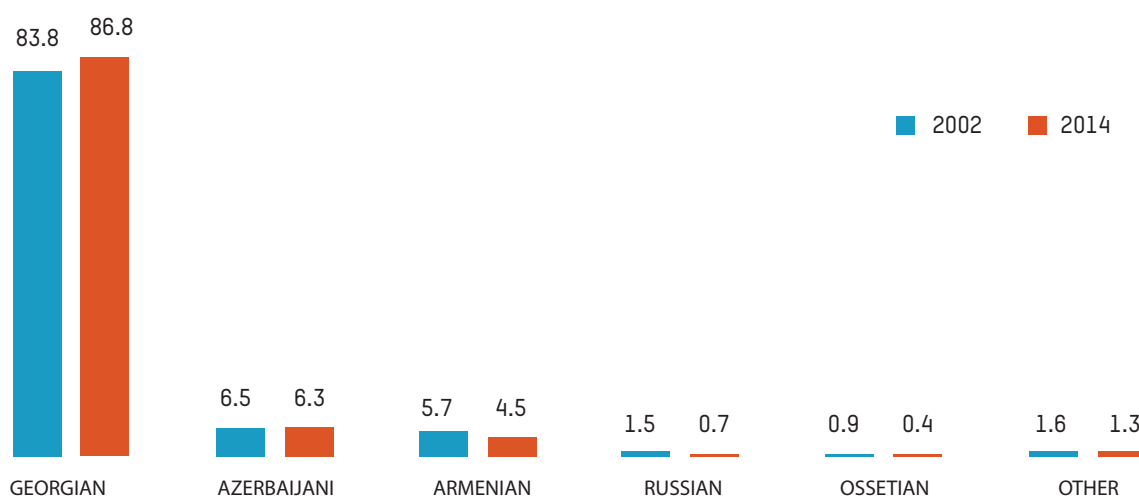
⁴⁰ Geostat, 2014 General Population Census. Main Results, <http://bit.ly/1WXI47f> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

657,731 persons.⁴¹ According to Geostat data, the Georgian population was estimated at 3,720,400 on 1 January 2016, and 3,718,200 on the same day in 2017.⁴²

Moreover, apart from declining in numbers, the Georgian population is also aging – compared with 2002 census data, the 2014 results showed the share of people aged 65 or older as having increased by 1.6% to comprise 14.3% of total population. It should be mentioned that one of the factors contributing to the aging of the population is emigration.

The 2014 population census showed that since the 2002 census changes had also occurred in the ethnic composition of the Georgian population. In particular, there has been a decrease in both the numbers of the main ethnic minority groups and their share in total population. In the period 2002-2014, the number of ethnic Azeris living in Georgia declined from 285,000 to 233,000, the number of Armenians from 249,000 to 168,000, and the number of Russians from 68,000 to 26,000, while the number of Ossetians fell from 38,000 to 14,000.⁴³

Diagram N4. Georgia's permanent population, by ethnic composition (%)



Source: Geostat

As a result of external and internal migration, the proportion of the urban to the rural population changed in the period between the censuses (see Diagram N22). The share of the urban population in total population increased by almost 5%. Although a decline in population is evident in both urban and rural areas, the rate of population decrease in villages is three times higher than in cities (see section 4.4. Rural-Urban-Rural Migration below p. 60), which creates a risk of depopulation in certain villages.

According to the 2014 population census results, 75% of emigrants are in the 20-54 age group.⁴⁴ This category of emigrants belong to the working and fertile age population, and their moving abroad negatively affects the country's economic and demographic situation.

1.5.2. Remittances

The annual total monetary value of remittances from the various different countries to Georgia exceeds 1 billion USD. Up until 2014, the volume of remittances transferred to Georgia through formal channels steadily increased⁴⁵ (with 2009 being an exception, when the value of remittances dropped due to the global financial

41 Figures obtained from the 2014 General Population Census prompted recalculation and updating of the basic demographic data from the previous years. Geostat is currently recalculating this data, which would allow harmonisation of the historical data (collected during the period 1994-2014) with the data obtained from the 2014 census.

42 The preliminary results of the 2014 census form a basis for calculation of population size on 1 January 2015, while population on the same day in 2016 and 2017 has been calculated based on the 2014 population census data and the annual rate of increase.

43 <https://goo.gl/WwifxD> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

44 Geostat, 2014 General Population Census. Main Results, <http://bit.ly/1WXI47f> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

45 The remittance data of the NBG reflects money transfers to and from Georgia made through fast money transfer systems (Western Union, MoneyGram, Anelik, Unistream etc.). The data is obtained from the monthly reports of the commercial banks, including branches of the non-resident banks in Georgia and microfinance institutions. Therefore, it does not include informal transfers, salaries of employed workers, or transfers to Georgian bank accounts.

crisis). Compared to the previous year, in 2015 the value of remittances to Georgia again decreased, this time by almost quarter (which can be primarily attributed to the drop in remittances from Russia caused by economic recession in that country and the devaluation of the Rouble (see Table N17)). However, it should be highlighted that the total monetary value of remittances once again was on the increase in 2016 (see Diagram N5).

In 2016, Russia, the USA, Greece and Italy were the top remittance-sending countries. The biggest drop in inflow of remittances can be observed in those sent from Russia and Greece. The monetary value of remittances from both of these countries decreased by almost 40% in 2015 when compared to the figures for 2014.

Although the largest part of remittances to Georgia still comes from Russia, its share in the total monetary value of remittances is gradually decreasing and in 2016 reached its lowest level yet (34%). Moreover, while in 2015 the absolute value of remittances transferred to Georgia from EU countries dropped, primarily due to a decrease in remittances from Greece, the proportion of remittances from the EU (28 countries) during the period 2012-2016 increased overall.⁴⁶

Table N17. Remittances to Georgia, by major sending countries (2012-2016, in USD)

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Russia	747,449,059	801,428,419	709,238,042	432,687,902	394,499,000
USA	74,038,455	74,855,423	82,062,934	100,037,117	127,659,057
Greece	159,617,327	197,970,440	204,781,891	117,750,709	124,565,290
Italy	102,871,876	110,184,195	121,469,558	109,077,712	121,248,934
Turkey	29,979,738	41,736,088	64,336,936	68,945,457	87,067,874
Israel	15,968,063	19,732,896	23,626,722	32,878,737	60,732,702
Spain	27,813,731	25,372,466	28,048,538	26,771,932	30,876,353
Germany	13,214,996	17,800,784	24,217,680	26,661,893	29,853,266
Ukraine	47,420,926	45,573,156	30,800,553	20,850,230	20,808,138
United Kingdom	19,715,084	18,635,624	15,059,741	15,964,841	17,381,858
Azerbaijan	10,351,831	14,964,157	17,789,818	15,507,003	14,751,075
France	9,823,814	11,587,497	11,638,028	10,856,217	11,946,356
Kazakhstan	12,622,127	16,076,506	17,581,114	14,656,271	11,838,787
Iraq	1,627,719	5,625,753	6,404,687	9,986,462	11,480,419
Other	59,647,190	75,476,130	83,698,023	77,319,636	86,527,058
Total	1,334,173,935	1,477,019,533	1,440,754,264	1,079,952,119	1,151,236,167

Source: NBG

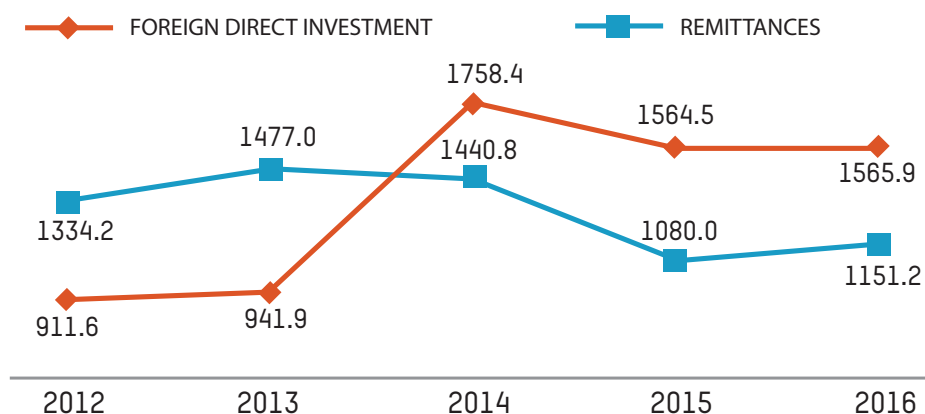
It is important to note that despite the large volume of remittances received annually by Georgia, the country's economy is not over dependent on remittances. According to Geostat and NBG data, in 2016 GDP at current prices was 14 377,9 million USD.⁴⁷ The total monetary value of remittances in the same year reached 1,151,236.167 USD, with remittances therefore constituting only 8% of GDP.

From 2009 to 2014, the annual volume of remittances exceeded the annual inflow of FDI in the country. This trend was reversed in 2014 and the annual FDI inflow has surpassed remittances to Georgia by approximately 500 million USD ever since (see Diagram N5 below). This change confirms the view that FDI depends on the attractiveness of the country's investment climate as well as many other factors, while inflow of remittances is a relatively stable process contingent on the endurance of the relationship which emigrants have with their country of origin.

⁴⁶ SCMI, Brief Migration Profile. Remittances, 2016, <http://www.migration.commission.ge/files/eng.pdf> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁴⁷ Geostat, Gross Domestic Product of Georgia in 2016, http://geostat.ge/cms/site_images/_files/english/nad/GDP%202016%20Press%20release_Eng.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Diagram N5. Inflow of remittances and Foreign Direct Investment to Georgia (in millions of USD)



Source: NBG; Geostat. The volume of FDI in 2016 has been calculated based on preliminary data.

As a potential source of savings and investment, remittances from emigrants have the capacity to boost a country's economic development. In particular, they have the potential to stimulate certain sectors of the economy, support the stability of the national currency, improve the living standards of many families and reduce poverty levels.⁴⁸ Although remittances are personal transfers which recipients use as they see fit, the state can direct the remittance resource towards social and economic development through implementation of respective policies.

Research conducted by ACT in Georgia for the SCMI in 2016 provides a general picture regarding utilisation of remittances by recipient families in Georgia. According to the research, the remittances of every second emigrant constituted half or three-quarters of their family's budget, and in 15% of cases constituted their family's only source of income. Moreover, 55% of families who had at least one family member abroad at the time of the opinion poll indicated that the migration of their family member improved their living conditions, making healthcare more affordable for 30% of those surveyed and education more affordable for 25%.⁴⁹

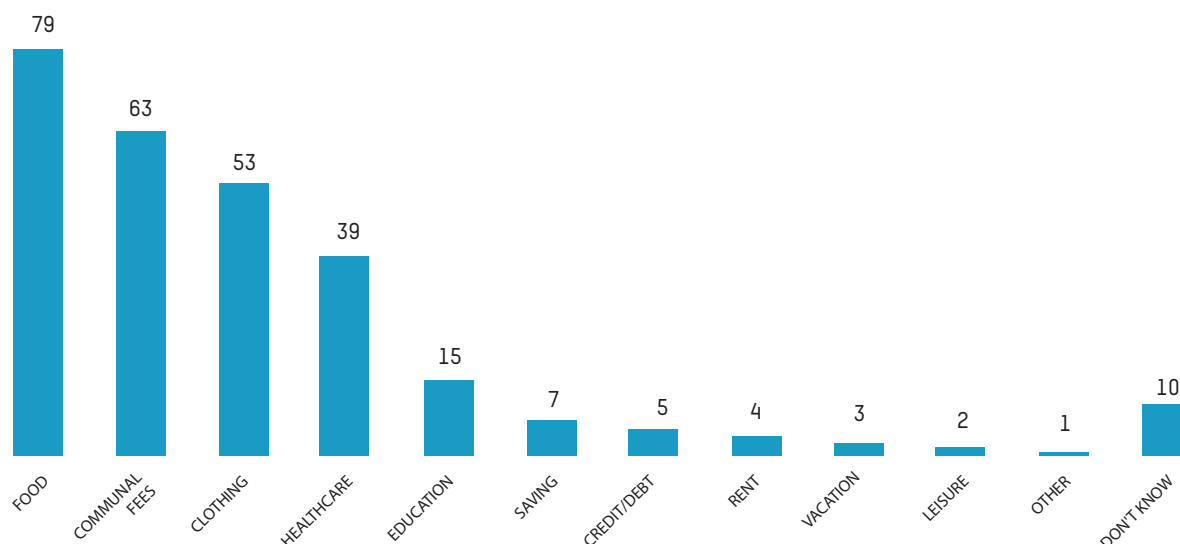
The public opinion poll conducted in 2017 by CRRC in Georgia for GYLA and CIPDD confirms these results. Thirty-six percent of remittance-receiving families responded to a question about the importance of remittances for their economic well-being by indicating that they would not have been able to make ends meet in the previous 12 months without them, while 40% responded that they would have survived but would have had to struggle in order to do so. According to the survey, in 64% of cases the decisions on how to spend remittances are primarily taken by the family members who remain in Georgia, and in 29% of cases these decisions are taken jointly by the emigrant and their family members.

Existing studies indicate that similar to many other countries a large share of remittances in Georgia is spent on meeting basic needs (see Diagram N6 below). However, a significant part of remittances is also used on healthcare and education, which ultimately contributes to the creation of a healthy and qualified labour force, promoting sustainable economic development.

⁴⁸ Economic Policy Research Centre, The Role of Remittances in Georgian Economy, 2011, <http://bit.ly/2kvKDzE> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁴⁹ The data is based on a survey of 215 families with at least one member abroad at the time of interview.

Diagram N6. Utilisation of remittances by receiving households



Source: SCMI, Public Opinion Poll, 2016

The results of both the studies mentioned indicate that the share of remittances saved or invested in business activity in Georgia is low.

The Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development research conducted in 2014 by OECD in partnership with the SCMI Secretariat and CRRC-Georgia showed that the share of remittance-receiving families is larger in rural areas than in urban areas. According to the research, families who receive remittances spend more on agricultural development and education compared to families who do not receive remittances. The research also shows that women, on average, send home larger sums of money than men.⁵⁰

In terms of the impact on the macroeconomic level, remittances are an important source of foreign exchange inflow. Foreign currency reserves allow countries to buy imported goods or repay foreign debt, which is of particular significance for countries running a trade deficit.⁵¹

In the past three years (2014-2016) the decline in remittances, along with other macroeconomic factors, might have affected depreciation of the national currency (see Table N18).

Table N18. Average annual USD-GEL exchange rates and total value of remittances (2012-2016)

Year	USD/GEL exchange rate (year average)	Remittances to Georgia from abroad (in thousands of USD)
2012	1.6513	1,334,173.9
2013	1.6634	1,477,019.5
2014	1.7659	1,440,754.2
2015	2.2702	1,079,952.1
2016	2.3667	1,151,236.1

Source: NBG

The results of different researches conducted in the past years indicate that work needs to be performed in several directions in order to ensure better utilisation of remittances. First, the level of financial education and entrepreneurial skills possessed by emigrants and their family members needs to be improved, so that they can plan/manage their budgets more effectively and acquire complete information about existing bank products,

⁵⁰ OECD, Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development in Georgia, <http://bit.ly/2kvRdGt> (project implemented 2013-2016) (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁵¹ According to Geostat, Georgia's trade deficit was 5.096 million USD in 2015, and 5.181 million USD in 2016. See <http://bit.ly/2tc6ELj> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

investment opportunities and basic principles of business administration. Moreover, it is also important that emigrants maintain more control over the remittances they send and are able to spend them appropriately, taking into consideration their family's needs. Furthermore, saving schemes in the country need to be improved so as to promote more productive utilisation of remittances. In this regard, enhancing local capital markets and increasing accessibility to alternative financing is important, including offering co-financing options or attractive investment provisions for emigrants.

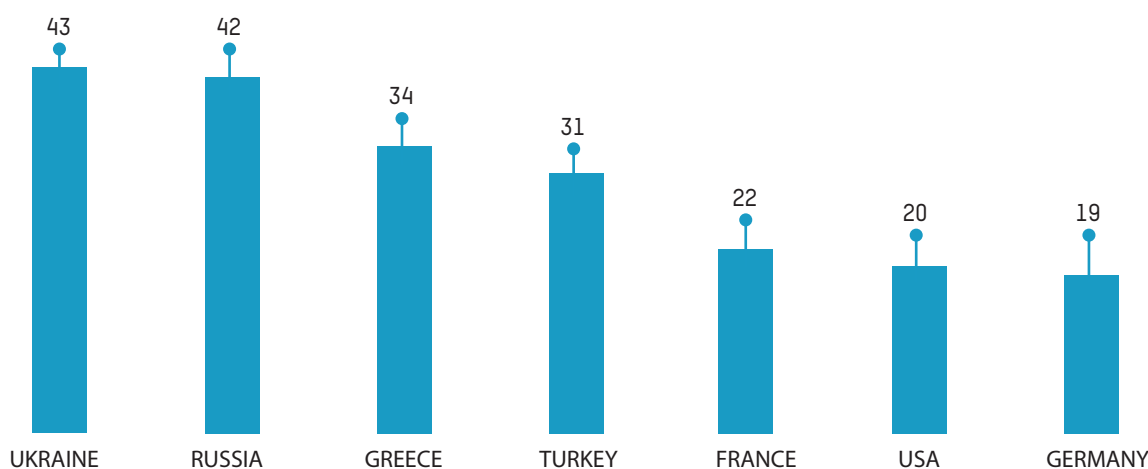
1.5.3. Diaspora Engagement

The diaspora plays an important role in attracting FDI, and developing exports, imports and tourism – as well as the equally important dissemination of new knowledge and skills.⁵²

The socio-economic situation and legal status of the Georgian diaspora varies by country of residence. Consequently, their involvement in the socio-economic and cultural life of Georgia varies accordingly.

According to the MFA, there are over 300 Georgian diaspora organisations abroad.⁵³ Although this estimate may not accurately reflect the actual number of organisations and covers only active diaspora associations which maintain regular contact with the Ministry, it still provides certain indications as to which countries host the more self-organised Georgian emigrants and which diaspora communities tend to be more active and/or willing to cooperate with the state authorities.⁵⁴ On the other hand, a high number of diaspora groups could also be indicative of the fragmentation of the Georgian communities in the given countries.

Diagram N7. Number of Georgian diaspora organisations, Sunday schools and creative groups abroad in 2016 (major countries)



Source: MFA

The largest number of diaspora organisations, including Sunday schools and creative groups, are registered in Ukraine and Russia (see Diagram N7 above). Next come Greece and Turkey, followed by France, the USA and Germany. The number of diaspora organisations in Kazakhstan, Israel, Belgium, Estonia, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland ranges from five to ten for each. For the most part, these are community and/or faith-based associations aiming at preserving the Georgian language and culture among Georgian communities abroad, which corresponds to the declared priorities of the MFA, namely: promoting the preservation of national identity of compatriots living abroad, strengthening their contacts with the motherland, and developing cooperation, including in the area of popularisation of Georgian culture, history and traditions.⁵⁵

52 Migration Policy Institute, What We Know About Diasporas and Economic Development, 2013, <http://bit.ly/2BnQmIF> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

53 The term 'diaspora' covers the members of all Georgian migrant communities abroad, including historical diaspora members, temporary short-term emigrants, long-term emigrants, expatriates, and Georgians who are already naturalised in their countries of destination.

54 As the result of structural changes carried out in the Georgian Government, the Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues ceased to exist as of 1 January 2017, and starting from this date, its functions were transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

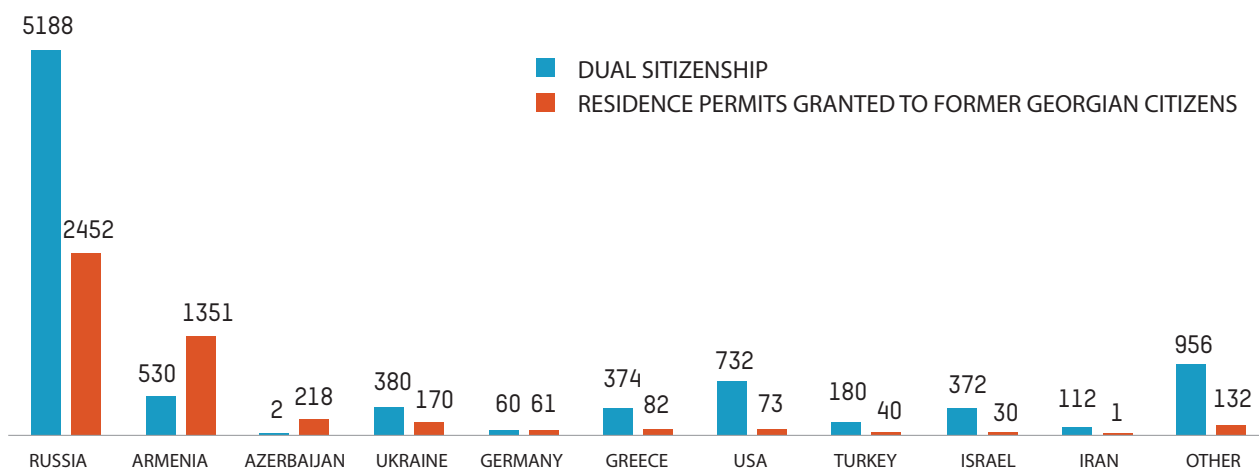
55 MFA website, <http://mfa.gov.ge/MainNav/ForeignPolicy/ForeignPolicyStrategy.aspx> (last accessed: 31.10.2017),

The research conducted in 2016 by ACT in Georgia for the SCMI shows that emigrant membership of diaspora or other formal organisations is rather low.⁵⁶ Among the families (with at least one family member living abroad) interviewed, three-quarters indicated that that member was not a formal or informal member of any organisation created by Georgian emigrants abroad; only 4% stated that they had a family member living abroad who was part of a Georgian diaspora organisation, while in 14% of cases those relatives living abroad were members of a Georgian church parish. The latter figure indicates that at this time the church has a larger potential for mobilising diaspora than the existing formal or informal diaspora organisations.

The statistics on the number of former Georgian citizens being granted residence permits, compatriot status or dual citizenship also points to diaspora engagement in Georgia. In the period 2015-2016, 4,610 residence permits were issued to former Georgian citizens (see p. 37), while 8,868 persons were granted Georgian citizenship “by way of exception”.

The majority of those persons holding dual citizenship and those former Georgian citizens issued residence permits are of an employable age, between 18 and 65 years, and in both cases are primarily male.

Diagram N8. Residence permits issued and dual citizenships granted to former Georgian citizens (2015-2016)



Source: PSDA

In the period 2015-2016, 1,147 persons were granted compatriot status; among them 857 were citizens of Azerbaijan, while 241 were citizens of Iran. Compatriot status is granted to foreign citizens who are of Georgian descent and/or whose native language belongs to the Kartvelian language group, and also to those Georgian citizens whom have been residing abroad for a long period of time. Persons with compatriot status can represent Georgia in international sports competitions, enter and stay in the country for a period of 30 days without a visa, obtain state funding for receiving general and higher education, be employed in the civil service and participate in the state programmes designed for diaspora members.

1.5.4. Skill Development and Knowledge Networks

Emigrants can make a significant contribution to the development of their country of origin by strengthening the human capital and transfer of knowledge and skills. This depends on whether they manage to raise their level of qualification abroad and acquire new knowledge and skills, and on their willingness to return to their country of origin.

⁵⁶ The conclusions are based on the answers of 142 individuals with at least one family member living abroad at the time of the survey, thus they cannot be extended to all emigrants.

The study conducted in 2017 by CRRC in Georgia for the GYLA and the CIPDD shows that before leaving the country 37% of emigrants had acquired secondary education, 19% had obtained secondary technical or secondary special education, 11% held a Bachelor's degree, 7% held a Master's degree, and 22% had five years of higher education (specialist diploma).⁵⁷ The research conducted by ACT in 2016 for the SCMI indicated that the majority of both returnees and emigrants who were abroad at the time of the survey (two-thirds and three-quarters respectively) had not received any education abroad. Half of emigrants from respondent families indicated that they primarily communicated with Georgians during their stay abroad (only one third stated that they predominantly communicated with locals).

The research *Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development in Georgia* conducted by the OECD in partnership with the SCMI Secretariat and CRRC in 2014 showed that only 9% of returned migrants had obtained education abroad.

These studies indicate that the majority of emigrants possess higher than secondary education, although most of them do not manage to improve their level of education abroad. Consequently, it is essential to both maintain qualified human resources by synchronising the needs of the job market with priority educational areas and to attract, even temporarily, persons who have increased their qualifications abroad (for the purpose of experience and knowledge sharing).

Circular migration (temporary legal labour migration) is one of the effective and successful methods of regulating labour migration since it ensures both protection of the rights of the parties engaged in the migration process and coordinated collaboration between the states involved. It also takes into consideration the interests of the recipient and origin countries with respect to inflow-outflow of the labour force. Correctly managed circular migration can reduce the level of unemployment and also create a new, qualified labour force.

During the period 2013-2016, GIZ and PSDA implemented the joint pilot project - Strengthening the Development Potential of the EU Mobility Partnership in Georgia through Targeted Circular Migration and Diaspora Mobilisation. Within the frame of the project, 32 specialists from Georgia (12 nurses and 20 representatives from the tourism sector) were employed in Germany for different periods of time (from 14 to 18 months).⁵⁸

The project "Temporary Labour Migration of Georgian Workers to Poland and Estonia", which has been jointly implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and MoLHSA since 2015, envisages the development of the temporary labour (circular) migration operational frameworks with these two EU countries in order to facilitate worker mobility from Georgia to Poland and Estonia.

The internationalisation of the Georgian education system,⁵⁹ along with supporting Georgian students in receiving education and work experience abroad, constitutes a declared priority of the Georgian Government. Since 2007, the Government has been funding opportunities for obtaining higher education abroad for young professionals and recent graduates. In the past three years (2014-2016), 301 students have received funding for academic studies abroad, while 12 persons were sent abroad for qualification raising courses (see Table N19 below). The majority of those awarded scholarships undertook Master's level studies at European or US universities. Regarding the educational fields selected by those students who received government funding, 34% chose Social Sciences/Public Administration, 15% Arts and Humanities, 12% Legal Studies, 10% Exact and Natural Sciences, 9% Business Administration and Management and 9% Engineering and IT Technologies (see Table N20).

57 Calculated based on 364 cases.

58 http://migration.commission.ge/files/pcms_en_final.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

59 The aim of the Georgian Government in the frame of the Bologna process is to increase the internalisation of the Georgian education system (in terms of both students and academic personnel) by 20%.

Table N19. State-funded education abroad, by destination country and education level (2014-2016)

Country	2014			2015				2016			
	Education Level			Education Level				Education Level			
	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Qualification Raising	Bachelor's	Master's	PhD	Qualification Raising
USA	10	16	5	17	19	5	2	11	16	6	1
Canada	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Europe	5	28	9	6	51	9	2	4	68	8	6
Russia	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
China	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Japan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Israel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Total	16	46	14	24	71	14	5	16	86	14	7

Source: International Education Center

Table N20. State-funded education abroad, by major

Major	2014	2015	2016	Total	Share of Total
Social Sciences/Public Administration	26	36	39	101	34%
Arts and Humanities	14	14	17	45	15%
Legal Studies	7	11	17	35	12%
Exact and Natural Sciences	5	15	10	30	10%
Business Administration and Management	7	10	10	27	9%
Engineering and IT Technologies	6	11	9	26	9%
Other	11	12	14	37	12%
Total	76	109	116	301	100%

Source: International Education Center

Another programme financed by the State and implemented by the Rustaveli Foundation helps Georgian diaspora and emigrants maintain contact with their motherland and contribute to the development of science. The foundation funds joint research projects for Georgian tertiary institutions and research institutions and Georgian scientists abroad. In the period 2011-2016, the foundation financed 69 joint research projects.⁶⁰ Moreover, the Rustaveli Foundation funds scientific research internships for young scientists abroad for periods of between two and eight months. In the period 2011-2016, 215 young Georgian scientists benefited from funding under this programme.⁶¹

Apart from the state scholarships, there are also other scholarship programmes which help Georgian citizens acquire higher education abroad. Some of these are state-funded programmes of foreign countries (e.g. the Future Leaders Exchange Program, the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program, and the Fulbright Graduate Student Program (all USA), Chevening (Great Britain), DAAD scholarships (Germany), the Netherlands Fellowship Programme (the Netherlands), etc.). Others are funded within the framework of the EU's educational programmes (TEMPUS, ERASMUS), whilst others still are exchange and/or scholarship programmes of Georgian or foreign tertiary institutions. After returning to Georgia, beneficiaries of such programmes easily find jobs and are considered high-demand human resources in the country. Some of the beneficiaries of such programmes currently hold top positions in Georgian state entities, the business sector and various international or non-governmental organisations. All these programmes support the creation of knowledge networks and promote "brain gain" within the country.

60 Rustaveli Foundation, "Research with Participation of Compatriots Residing Abroad".

61 Rustaveli Foundation, "Young Scientists' Internship Abroad".

2. Immigration

2.1. Overview of Immigration

There are several data sources which allow estimates of the number of immigrants in Georgia. This chapter analyses data from Geostat, the UN DESA and the PSDA. However, it should be mentioned that none of these sources provide a comprehensive and exact picture regarding the number and dynamics of the immigrant population in Georgia.

Since 2012, Geostat has published annual data on immigrants and emigrants based on border-crossing information. According to Geostat's methodology, any person is considered an immigrant (regardless of citizenship) if s/he satisfies the following two conditions: 1. Has crossed a Georgian state border and stayed on the territory of Georgia for at least 183 days (can be the cumulative sum of several stays) in the past 12 months and 2. Georgia was not the person's usual place of residence, i.e. s/he spent at least 183 days abroad in the previous 12 months.

According to Geostat, there were 92,557 immigrants in Georgia in 2015, over half of them (55%) citizens of Georgia. The number of immigrants slightly decreased in 2016 and comprised 90,228 persons, among which 51% were Georgian citizens (see Table N21).

As can be observed from Table N21 below, immigrants are primarily citizens of Georgia's neighbouring countries (Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine). According to Geostat, the number of immigrants in 2014 was 82,161. Compared to 2014, the number of immigrants who were citizens of Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Iran, China or India increased in 2016. Furthermore, the number of immigrant men in the past two years has exceeded the number of women.

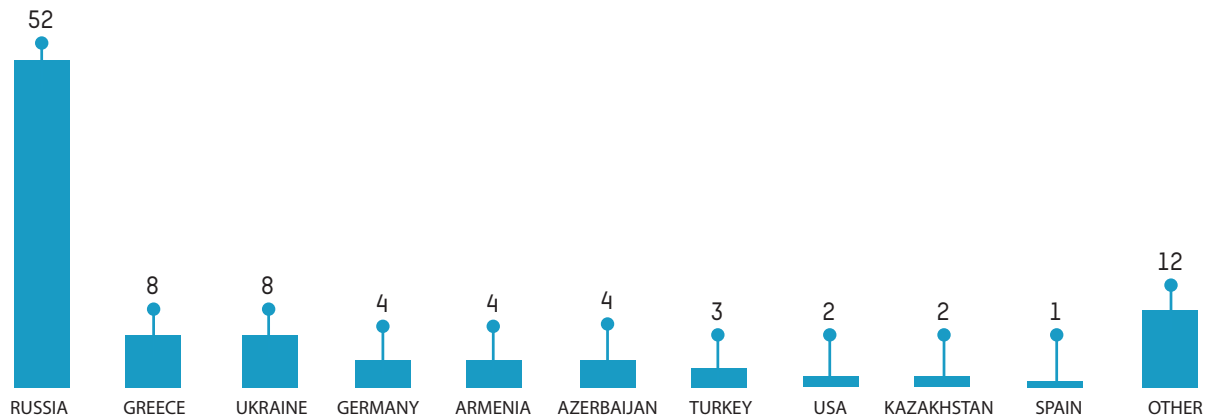
Table N21. Number of immigrants, by country of citizenship and gender (2015 and 2016)

2015				2016			
Country of Citizenship	Both Genders	Male	Female	Country of Citizenship	Both Genders	Male	Female
Georgia	50,924	30,411	20,513	Georgia	47,086	28,263	18,823
Russian Federation	10,552	5,972	4,580	Russian Federation	11,185	6,262	4,923
Turkey	5,810	4,687	1,123	Turkey	6,294	4,823	1,471
Armenia	4,143	2,582	1,561	Armenia	6,241	3,550	2,691
Ukraine	2,886	1,414	1,472	Azerbaijan	3,420	1,935	1,485
Azerbaijan	2,839	1,554	1,285	Ukraine	2,922	1,445	1,477
Iran	1,766	1,368	398	India	1,435	1,016	419
Kuwait	1,320	850	470	USA	1,101	628	473
Iraq	1,618	1,244	374	China	873	675	198
China	1,267	1,044	223	Israel	832	402	430
USA	1,081	639	442	Kuwait	643	415	228
Other countries	8,206	4,836	3,370	Other countries	7,979	4,811	3,168
Not stated	145	91	54	Not stated	217	130	87
Total	92,557	56,692	35,865	Total	90,228	54,355	35,873

Source: Geostat

The results of the 2014 Georgian population census include data on the number of immigrants in the country. According to the census methodology, any person who has ever lived abroad for over 12 months is considered an immigrant (regardless of citizenship). Using this definition, there were 184,629 immigrants living in Georgia in 2014. Their distribution by previous place of residence is shown in Diagram N9 below.

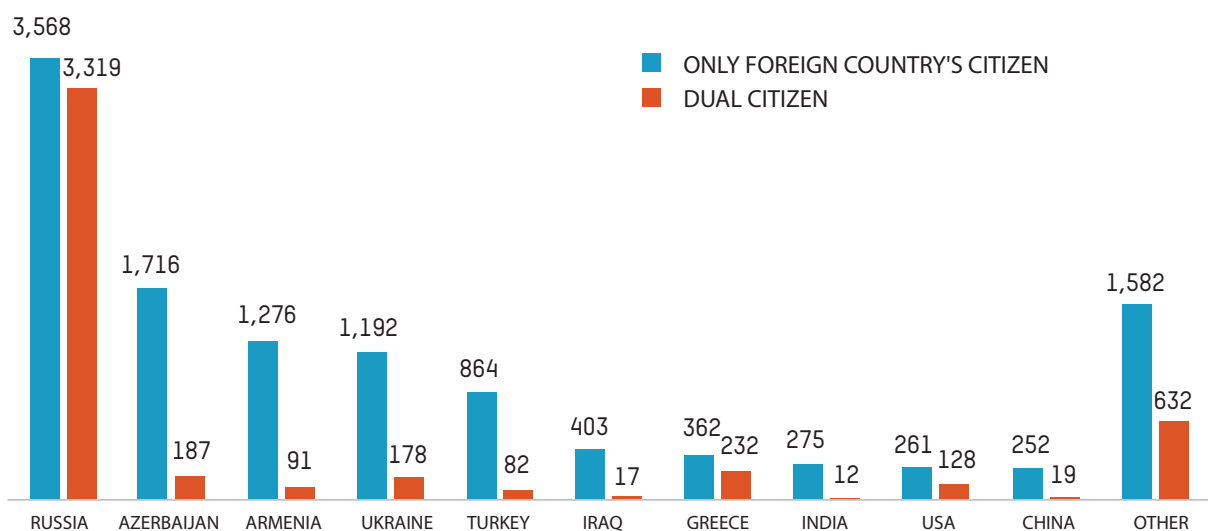
Diagram N9. Percentage distribution of immigrants, by previous place of residence (2014)



Source: Geostat, 2014 General Population Census

The distribution of immigrants by citizenship shows that out of 184,629 immigrants 91% (167,506) had only Georgian citizenship, 6% (11,751) had only citizenship of a foreign country, 3% (4,897) had dual citizenship and 1% were stateless or information about their citizenship was missing. Among the 11,751 immigrants who had only citizenship of another country, the majority were citizens of Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Ukraine or Turkey (see Diagram N10 below).

Diagram N10. Distribution of immigrants holding only foreign country or dual citizenship, by country of citizenship



Source: Geostat, 2014 General Population Census

According to the 2014 census results, 99% of Georgia's population were citizens of Georgia, while 97% were born in Georgia. Table N22 shows the distribution of Georgia's population by citizenship.

Table N22. Distribution of Georgia’s population, by citizenship and place of birth

Country of Citizenship	Number	Born in Georgia	Born in Other Countries	Birthplace Missing
Georgia	3,677,833	3,602,530	51,098	24,205
Other countries	22,131	8,474	11,820	1,837
Russia	7,620	4,312	2,571	737
Armenia	3,784	1,953	1,606	225
Azerbaijan	3,236	1,044	1,975	217
Ukraine	1,631	368	1,132	131
Turkey	1,410	72	1,245	93
Greece	531	241	234	56
Iraq	485	6	451	28
USA	429	81	287	61
India	416	2	371	43
China	365	6	313	46
Other	2,224	389	1,635	200
Dual citizenship	6,757	4,012	2,702	43
Stateless	379	172	154	53
Not stated	6,704	1,693	456	4,555
Total	3,713,804	3,616,881	66,230	30,693

Source: Geostat, 2014 General Population Census

As can be observed from the data, the foreigners living in Georgia are predominately citizens of Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine or Turkey. Almost half of foreigners living in Georgia (47%) were born in Georgia, this particularly concerns citizens of Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Greece, while in the case of other countries, the number of foreign-born persons exceeds the number who were born in Georgia (See Table N22 above).

The UN DESA calculates the number of immigrants based on the “foreign-born population” category. This category may include a segment of population whom originate from Georgia but whom were born in countries of the former Soviet Union, or during the Soviet Union period (or after its collapse), and whom eventually settled in Georgia, and could potentially be citizens of Georgia. Using the UN DESA methodology, there were 168,802 immigrants in Georgia in 2015, the majority of whom were born in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus or Uzbekistan (see Table N23).

Table N23. Number of immigrants, by country of birth (2015)

Country of Birth	Number of Immigrants
Russia	92,937
Ukraine	22,263
Kazakhstan	10,763
Belarus	8,272
Uzbekistan	7,639
Azerbaijan	3,891
Poland	2,673
Moldova	2,213
Lithuania	2,202
Armenia	1,980
Tajikistan	1,834

Kyrgyzstan	1,720
Germany	1,515
Other countries	8,900
Total	168,802

Source: UN DESA⁶²

Given that the UN DESA and Geostat use different definitions of “immigrant” and apply a different methodology for estimating the number of immigrants, their data is not comparable. Nevertheless, taken together these two sources create a certain picture regarding the number of immigrants in Georgia and their countries of origin.

The number of immigrants can also be estimated using the PSDA’s statistics. The PSDA collects data on issuance of residence permits to foreign citizens (both temporary and permanent), as well as on the granting of Georgian citizenship.

Table N24 presents the number of residence permits issued by the PSDA by reason. It should be mentioned that residence permits issued for education, work, or family reunification purposes, permits issued to former Georgian citizens, and special and short-term residence permits all grant right of temporary residence for up to six years (initially issued for a one-year period with possible extension for another five years). In contrast, investment and permanent residence permits are issued for an unlimited period of time.

Table N24. Residence permits issued, by reason (2012-2016)

Year	Work	Education	Family Reunification	Investment ⁶³	Former Georgian Citizen	Permanent Residence Permit ⁶⁴	Special Residence Permit ⁶⁵	Short-Term Residence Permit ⁶⁶	Total
2012	5,091	876	961	-	840	4	-	-	7,772
2013	3,921	554	931	-	620	4	-	-	6,030
2014	4,666	1,130	1,136	54	2,282	676	181	-	10,125
2015	9,441	4,663	2,636	214	4,250	7,077	1,044	37	29,362
2016	9,664	2,901	1,694	95	360	1,610	587	308	17,219
Total	32,783	10,124	7,358	363	8,352	9,371	1,812	345	70,508

Source: PSDA

In the past five years (2012-2016), the PSDA has granted over 70,000 residence permits.⁶⁷ The number of residence permits issued in 2016 was considerably smaller compared to that for 2015, which can be explained by the legislative changes that came into force in June 2015 and significantly altered the residence permit and visa policies in terms of the simplification of procedures.⁶⁸ In particular, citizens of 94 countries were granted permission to enter the country and stay on the territory of Georgia for a one-year period. Previously, citizens of these countries had a right to stay in Georgia for maximum of 90 days in any 180-day period, and were obliged to obtain a residence permit for extended stays. The new regulation, to a certain extent, reduced the demand for residence permits, since visa-free regime conditions are completely sufficient for long-term stay in the country for foreigners in this category. It should also be mentioned that compared to the period 2012-2014, in 2016 there was still an increase in the number of residence permits issued.

62 UN DESA, International migrant stock - by destination and origin, <http://bit.ly/1W6TR0n> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

63 The investment residence permit was introduced in September 2014.

64 Residence permits issued since September 2014 to family members of Georgian citizens or persons living in Georgia in the past six years on the basis of the temporary residence permit (prior to 2014, the permit was granted only on the basis of a six-year residence).

65 A special residence permit was introduced in September 2014 and is granted to persons holding compatriot status, victims of trafficking, or foreigners whose applications are backed up with a written initiative presented by a member of the Government of Georgia.

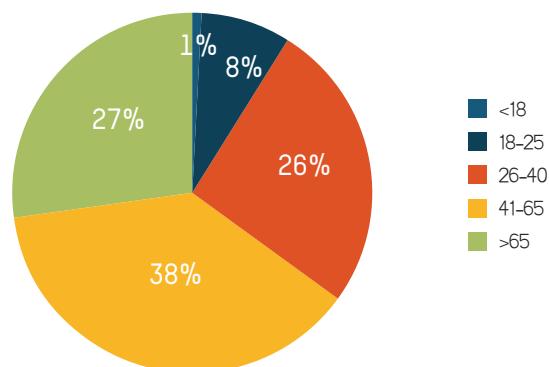
66 Short-term residence permits have been issued since June 2015 to foreigners who own property (with the exception of agricultural land) on the territory of Georgia with a market price exceeding the GEL equivalent of 35,000 USD.

67 This number does not accurately reflect the number of foreigners who hold residence permits, since the same person might have applied and received or extended their residence permit each year.

68 See amendments to the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2278806> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

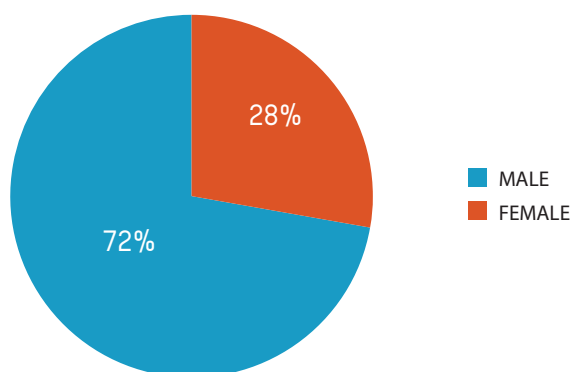
Analysis of the 2016 residence permit statistics shows that the majority of permits were issued to males and persons aged 26-40, which indicates that a large proportion of long-term immigrants present in Georgia are of fertile and working age.

Diagram N11. 2016 residence permits, age distribution



Source: PSDA

Diagram N12. 2016 residence permits, gender distribution



Source: PSDA

Analysis of the PSDA data from 2015-2016 shows that the largest numbers of residence permits were granted to citizens of Azerbaijan, Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Ukraine, India, China and Iran.

There are certain differences as to which foreign citizens apply for which specific residence permits. For instance, in 2015-2016 the largest share of work residence permits were issued to citizens of Turkey, India, China, Ukraine and Iran. Permanent residence permits, on the other hand, were issued primarily to citizens of Azerbaijan, Russia, Armenia, Ukraine and Turkey. The majority of residence permits for educational purposes were granted to citizens of India, Iraq, Nigeria, Azerbaijan and Turkey, while citizens of Azerbaijan, Russia, Armenia, Ukraine and Turkey dominate among the number of family reunification residence permit holders (see Table N25 below). During this two-year period, residence permits for former Georgian citizens were mainly issued to citizens of Russia and Armenia, and special residence permits mainly to citizens of Azerbaijan.

Table N25. Residence permits issued, by country of citizenship (top five countries, 2015-2016)

Work Residence Permits		Permanent Residence Permits		Education Residence Permits		Family Reunification Residence Permits	
Turkey	4,861	Azerbaijan	2,428	India	2,511	Turkey	762
India	3,269	Russia	2,028	Iraq	1,595	Iran	530
China	3,000	Armenia	1,608	Nigeria	956	Azerbaijan	474
Ukraine	1,585	Ukraine	795	Azerbaijan	791	Russia	463
Iran	1,551	Turkey	413	Turkey	674	Ukraine	439

Source: PSDA

During the period 2012-2016, 9,408 residence permit applications (approximately 12% of the total number of applications) were rejected (see Table N26).

Table N26. Total number of residence permits issued/refused (2012-2016)

Year	Total Number of Applications	Number of Residence Permits Issued	Number of Residence Permits Refused
2012	9,545	7,772	1,773
2013	8,775	6,030	2,745
2014	12,460	10,125	2,335
2015	30,253	29,362	891
2016	18,883	17,219	1,664
Total	79,916	70,508	9,408

Source: PSDA

2.1.1. Naturalisation

The Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship defines five types of naturalisation: 1) Granting citizenship under regular procedure; 2) Granting citizenship under simplified procedure; 3) Granting citizenship by way of exception; 4) Granting citizenship by way of its restoration; 5) Granting citizenship under special procedure. Out of these five types, granting Georgian citizenship by way of exception is the most in demand, which is granted to an alien who has made a contribution of exceptional merit to Georgia or who should be granted Georgian citizenship based on state interests. Table N27 summarises the total statistics for all types of naturalisation in the past five years (2012-2016). It should be mentioned that 96% of the naturalisation applications approved fall into granting citizenship by way of exception category (dual citizenship).

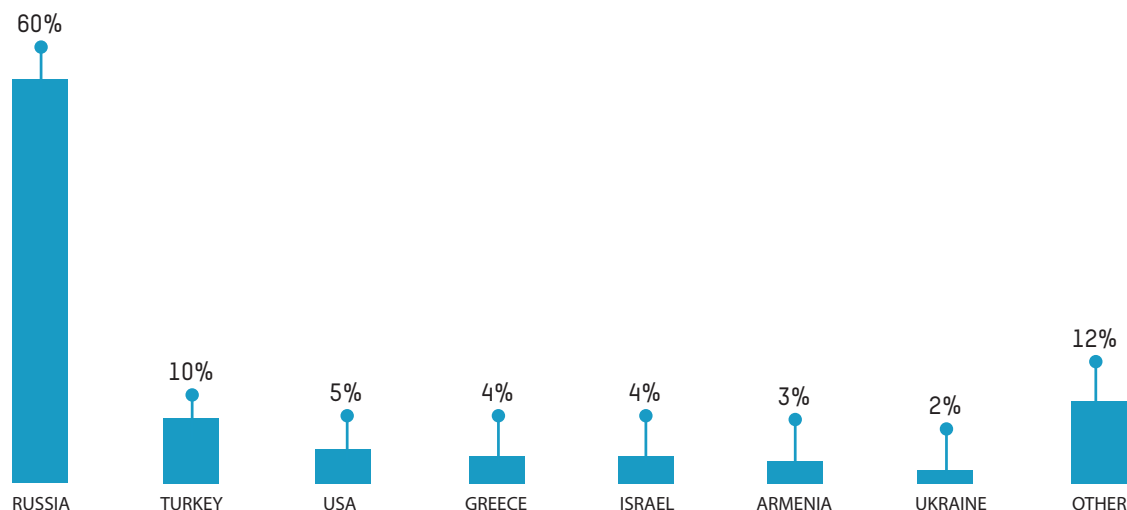
Table N27. Citizenship through naturalisation, total numbers for the five types of naturalisation (2012-2016)

Year	Number of Naturalisation Applications Approved	Number of Naturalisation Applications Refused
2012	7,447	1,400
2013	9,947	2,427
2014	5,086	2,420
2015	4,433	1,328
2016	4,677	1,325
Total	31,590	8,900

Source: PSDA

In the period 2012-2016, a total of 31,590 persons acquired Georgian citizenship through naturalisation (see Table N27); out of which 30,199 were aliens, who obtained citizenship based on being granted citizenship through the way of exception procedure. A large part of these, some 30,199 persons (60%), are Russian citizens who previously held Georgian citizenship. The other top six countries in terms of acquisition of Georgian citizenship in the period 2012-2016 were: Turkey, the USA, Greece, Israel, Armenia and Ukraine (see Diagram N13 below).

Diagram N13. Citizenship of naturalised Georgian citizens (top countries, 2012-2016)



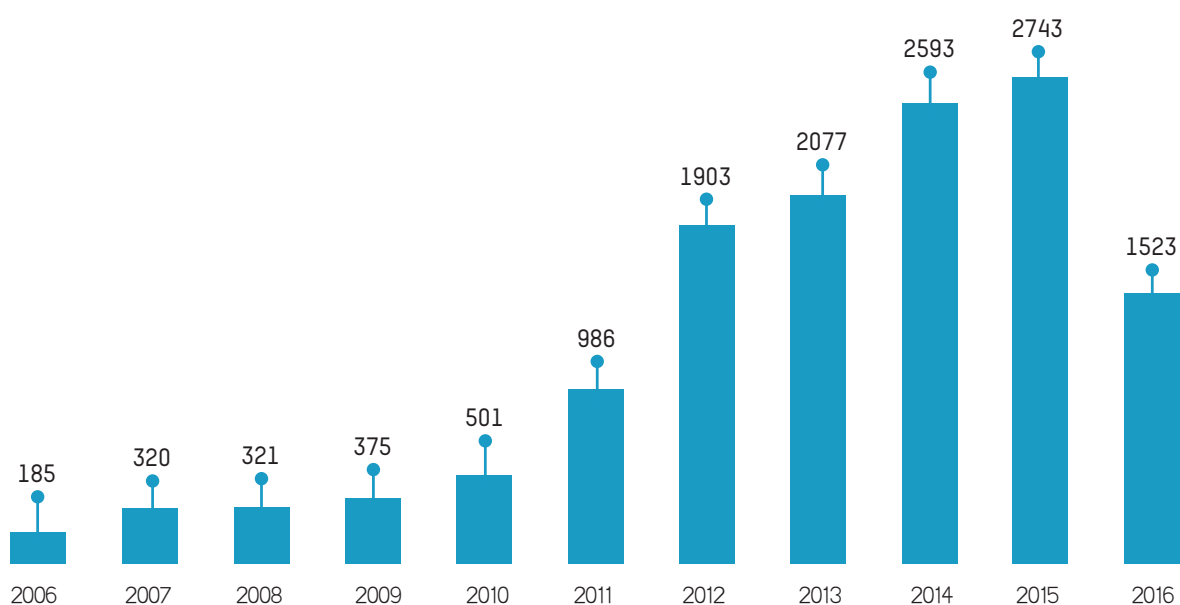
Source: PSDA

Diagram N13 predominantly depicts the countries which host the largest number of Georgian emigrants, according to the various sources. Consequently, this indicates that Georgian citizenship was primarily granted to former citizens of Georgia or to persons of Georgian origin.

2.1.2. Educational Immigrants

A relatively new and important group of immigrants to Georgia is educational immigrants, who mostly come to the country in order to obtain tertiary education. During the period 2006-2016, the number of foreign students enrolled annually at Georgian higher education institutions increased (see Diagram N14). According to 2016 data, the total number of foreign students enrolled in Georgian higher education institutions in the previous 11 years was 13,527.

Diagram N14. Foreign student enrolment in Georgian tertiary education (2006-2016)



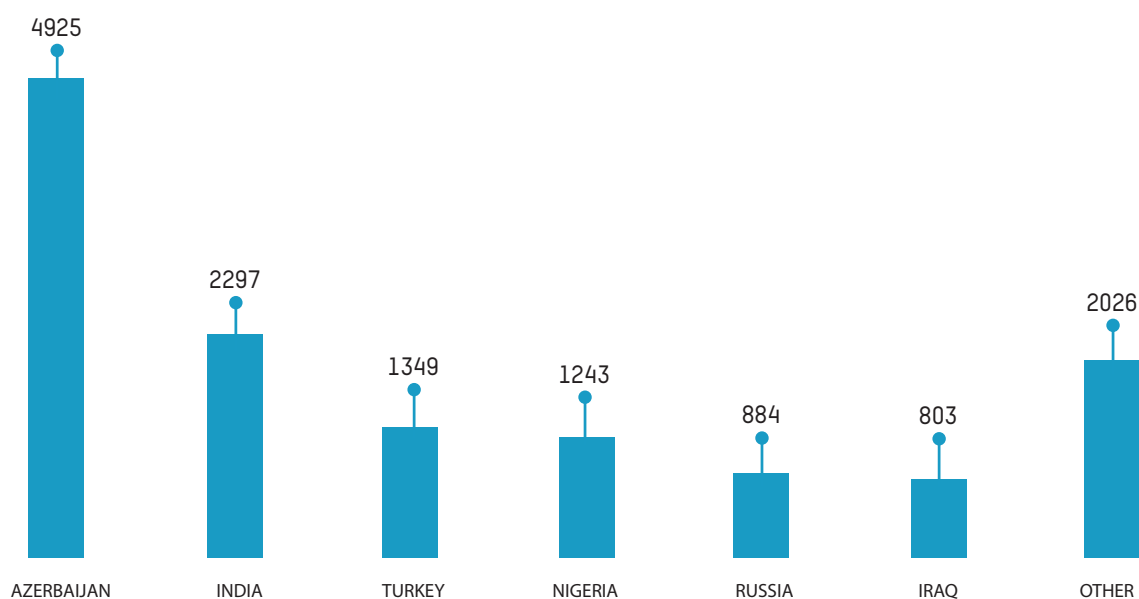
Source: MoES

As can be observed from Diagram N14, the biggest increases in the number of foreign student enrolment were in the academic years 2010/2011 and 2011/2012, when the number of foreign students enrolled at Georgian higher education institutions almost doubled. The number of foreign students in Georgian tertiary education peaked in 2015, while in 2016 this number saw a significant decrease. This can be partially attributed to the new regulations of the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, adopted in 2014. The procedures for foreigners were changed once again and simplified from the second half of 2015 onwards. Nevertheless, the decrease in the number of foreign student enrolments in 2016 can probably be attributed to the fact that less students decided to come and study in Georgia in 2015 due to the legislative changes adopted.

Georgian higher education institutions are gradually starting to respond to the demands of international students and consequently an increasing number of Georgian institutions of higher education offer foreign students Bachelor's, Master's and PhD academic programmes taught in foreign languages. In 2014, there were 160 foreign-language educational programmes being taught at 25 different Georgian institutions, while in 2016 this number reached 205 (out of which over half – 127 programmes – were taught in English), offered by 33 institutions.

For the period 2006-2016, foreign students from Azerbaijan, India, Turkey, Nigeria, Russia and Iraq constituted the biggest group amongst those foreigners enrolled at Georgian higher education institutions (see Diagram N15 below). These numbers correspond to the PSDA's data on the number of residence permits issued for educational purposes (see Table N25).

Diagram N15. Major countries of origin of foreign students (aggregated numbers, 2006-2016)



Source: MoES

Half of the foreign students in Georgia study medicine, while approximately a quarter choose to pursue studies in business, economics or law. According to the existing studies, the majority of higher education institutions use recruitment agencies located in Georgia and abroad to attract foreign students. The reputation of Georgia as a safe country with relatively low tuition fees plays an important role in attracting foreign students.⁶⁹

The number of foreign students in vocational education is considerably lower. According to the MoES, there were 119 foreign students enrolled at Georgian vocational education institutions in 2015, and 106 in 2016.

The number of foreign students in secondary education institutions is also annually increasing. Their number was 1,147 for the academic year 2011/2012 and reached 4,177 in 2016/2017. The majority of these foreign students in secondary schools is made up by citizens of Russia (38%), Azerbaijan (14%), Ukraine (11%), Armenia

⁶⁹ SCMI, Brief Migration Profile. Foreign Students in Georgia, 2017 http://www.migration.commission.ge/files/migraciis_profili_a5_eng.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

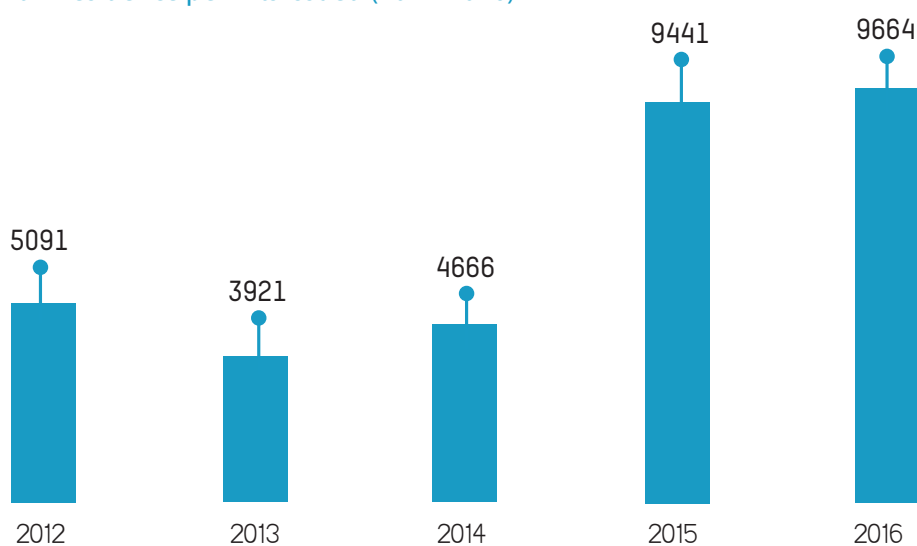
(8%), the USA (5%) and Turkey (4%). Most likely, these students are in Georgia for family reunification reasons rather than specifically to obtain secondary education.

2.1.3. Labour Immigrants

Labour market mobility in Georgia is regulated by the Law of Georgia on Labour Migration, the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons⁷⁰ and other legal acts and subordinate bylaws. According to the Law of Georgia on Labour Migration, aliens legally residing in Georgia and Georgian citizens enjoy the same rights on the labour market. Local employers do not face any restrictions regarding hiring foreign labour.

According to PSDA data, the number of work residence permits issued has been increasing in recent years.⁷¹ There were twice as many work residence permits issued in 2015 and 2016 than in previous years (see Diagram N16 below).

Diagram N16. Work residence permits issued (2012-2016)



Source: PSDA

The majority of work residence permit holders in Georgia are citizens of Turkey, China, India or Iran. Out of the 32,783 work residence permits issued during the period 2012-2016, 7,739 (24%) were issued to citizens of Turkey, 7,173 (22%) to citizens of China, 4,357 (13%) to citizens of India, 2,896 (9%) to citizens of Iran, and 1,943 (6%) to citizens of Ukraine. As can be observed from Table N28 below, in 2016, compared to previous years, the number of work residence permits issued to citizens of India and Iran increased significantly. Furthermore, in 2015 there was a considerable increase in the number of work residence permits issued to citizens of Ukraine, although this number fell by almost half the following year.

Table N28. Top five countries of origin of work residence permit holders in 2012-2016 (first-time permits and renewals)

Country/Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Turkey	806	736	1,336	2,911	1,950	7,739
China	1,803	1,416	954	1,449	1,551	7,173
India	396	328	364	600	2,669	4,357
Iran	822	312	211	524	1,027	2,896
Ukraine	63	71	224	1,102	483	1,943

Source: PSDA

70 Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons (2014) <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2278806> (last accessed: 31.10.2017). Law of Georgia on Labour Migration (2015), <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/2806732/1/en/pdf> (last accessed: 31.10.2017);

71 It should be noted that work residence permits are issued to aliens coming to Georgia for labour or entrepreneurial activity (self-employed) as well as to freelancers.

2.1.4. Foreign Entrepreneurs/Investors

According to data provided by NAPR, in the period 2012-2016 there were 34,024 cases of foreign citizens registering ownership of either agricultural/non-agricultural land, or an apartment/house in Georgia. After the imposition of a moratorium on the acquisition of agricultural land by foreigners in 2014, the number of foreigners registering ownership of this type of land decreased considerably. However, since the moratorium was lifted in 2015,⁷² the number of such registrations has surged once again, along with the number of foreigners registering ownership of real estate (see Table N29 below).

Table N29. Registration of immovable property by foreign citizens, by type of property (2012-2016)

Year	Agricultural Land	Non-Agricultural Land	Apartment/House	Total
2012	1,776	987	1871	4,634
2013	2,146	1,273	2,808	6,227
2014	1,424	1,651	3,943	7,018
2015	3,209	878	3,283	7,370
2016	4,443	920	3,412	8,775
Total	12,998	5,709	15,317	34,024

Source: NAPR

Among the foreign citizens investing in immovable property in Georgia, citizens of Georgia's neighbouring countries (Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan) stand out. Presumably, part of this group consists of former Georgian citizens who have emigrated to these countries and are willing to retain stronger links with Georgia through investing in property. The same may be partly true for the US and Israeli citizens.

Table N30. Registration of immovable property in Georgia by foreign citizens, by type of property (top countries, 2012-2016)

Country of Citizenship	Agricultural Land	Non-Agricultural Land	Apartment/House	Total
Russia	7,835	2,364	7,842	18,041
Ukraine	476	222	1,117	1,815
Armenia	1,117	253	421	1,791
Azerbaijan	1,133	126	419	1,678
Israel	103	324	789	1,216
USA	150	164	730	1,044
Greece	527	150	338	1,015
Germany	149	132	556	837
Iran	171	204	399	774
Iraq	77	410	236	723
Turkey	80	127	363	570

Source: NAPR

In the period 2012-2016, an overall total of 35,575 foreigners started (registered) either entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial activities in Georgia. Among these, the share of non-profit entities is insignificant. The overwhelming majority of registrations (see Table N31) was comprised of Ltds and individual entrepreneurs. In 2014, compared to the previous year, the number of Ltds registered declined by almost 50%, although 2015-2016 saw a considerable increase in the number of Ltd registrations once again.

⁷² The moratorium on the purchase by foreign citizens of agricultural land with right of ownership was in place from July 2013 to July 2014.

Table N31. Registration of entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial entities by foreign citizens, by type of registration (2012-2016)

Year	Entrepreneurial Entities				Non-Entrepreneurial Entities		Total
	Individual Entrepreneur	Ltd	Branch of a Foreign Commercial Legal Entity	Joint Stock Company	Non-Entrepreneurial Legal Entity	Branch of a Foreign Non-Entrepreneurial Legal Entity	
2012	355	7,076	95	0	0	6	7,532
2013	429	7,713	101	0	0	9	8,252
2014	563	3,766	164	0	0	13	4,506
2015	626	5,551	130	6	0	8	6,321
2016	749	7,982	224	3	0	6	8,964
Total	2,722	32,088	714	9	0	42	35,575

Source: NAPR

According to the NAPR data, in terms of regional distribution, the majority of foreigners preferred to register their entrepreneurial legal entity or individual entrepreneur status either in Tbilisi (59%) or the Adjara region (13%). In addition, 2016 saw an increase in the number of entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial entities registered by foreigners in the Kakheti region (to 1,361, from 441 in 2015).

The top countries of citizenship of those foreigners registering either entrepreneurial or non-entrepreneurial entities in Georgia are indicated in Table N32 below. Iran, Turkey and Egypt occupy the leading places on the list.

Table N32. Total number of enterprises (for-profit, non-profit and branches of foreign companies) registered by foreigners (top countries of origin, 2012-2016)

Country of Citizenship	Total
Iran	7,110
Turkey	5,171
Egypt	3,507
India	2,817
Russia	2,555
Ukraine	1,915
Azerbaijan	1,575
Iraq	1,407
Armenia	916
China	708
USA	673
Israel	567
Pakistan	427
Syria	413
Germany	386

Source: NAPR

By undertaking investment in Georgia, foreign citizens can obtain a corresponding residence permit. In the past two years (2015-2016), the number of foreigners issued investment and short-term residence permits⁷³ (see Table N24) has fallen behind the other types of residence permits. Nevertheless, the number of short-term residence permits increased considerably in 2016. The majority of these permits were granted to citizens of Iran and Iraq, while a large part of investment residence permits were issued to citizens of Egypt, Iraq and Iran (see Table N33).

Table N33. Short-term and investment residence permits issued (top countries of citizenship, 2015-2016)

Investment Residence Permit		Short-Term Residence Permit	
Iraq	80	Iran	101
Egypt	73	Iraq	89
Iran	47	Russia	42
Russia	18	Ukraine	29
India	16	Egypt	12

Source: PSDA

According to the data provided by the NAPR, both the amount of foreign investment and the number of entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial entities being registered by foreigners in Georgia is increasing. This indicates that foreigners view Georgia as an attractive country for entrepreneurial activity, which can have a positive impact on the Georgian economy.

2.2. Economic Impact of Immigration

The immigration of experienced and highly qualified foreign citizens can have a positive effect on a country's economy, especially in terms of skill development and knowledge transfer to the domestic labour market.

Two relatively recent studies, conducted in 2015 and 2016 and dealing with the demand side of the labour market and foreign students in Georgia respectively, give a certain impression regarding the economic activity of immigrants in Georgia.

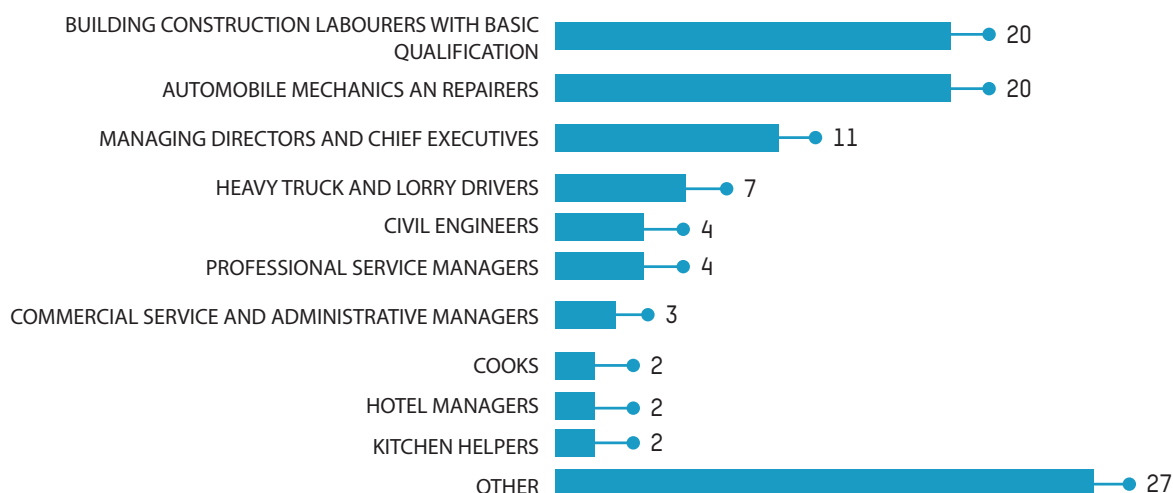
The Survey of Labour Market Demand Component was conducted in 2015 at the request of the MoLHSA.⁷⁴ This is the first study which portrays with a certain degree of accuracy the distribution of foreigners employed in Georgia by field of occupation and position. The research involved 6,000 public and private sector organisations.

According to the study, there were 5,578 foreigners employed in Georgia in 2015; the majority of these were occupied in the following positions (see Diagram N17 below): building construction labourers with basic qualifications (1,089), automobile mechanics and repairers (1,088), managing directors and chief executives (611), heavy truck and lorry drivers (366), civil engineers (240) and professional service managers who do not belong to any other category (210).

⁷³ A short-term residence permit is issued to an alien – and his/her family members – who, according to the Georgian legislation, has right of ownership to immovable property (except for agricultural land) within the territory of Georgia with a market price above the GEL equivalent of USD 35,000 (in effect since June 2015). An investment residence permit is issued to a foreign citizen who invests at least Gel 300,000 in Georgia. This provision is prescribed in the Law of Georgia on Promotion and Guarantees of Investment. In such cases, residence permits are also issued to the investor's family members.

⁷⁴ MoLHSA, The Survey Report of Labour Market Demand Component, http://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/oldMoh/01_GEO/Shroma/kvleva/4.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

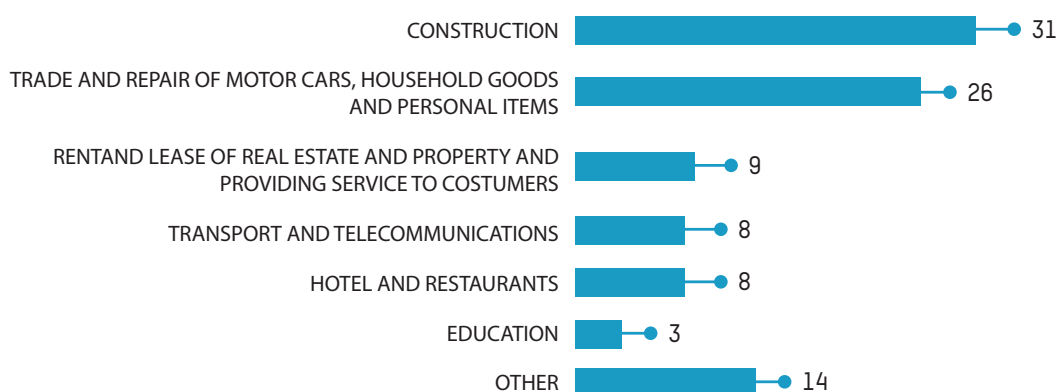
Diagram N17. Breakdown of foreign labour force by position held (%)



Source: MoLHSA

According to the study, a large share of foreigners are employed in the economic sectors related to construction, trade and repair of motor cars, and household goods and personal items.

Diagram N18. Breakdown of foreign labour force by economic sector (%)



Source: MoLHSA

Some 57% of the foreigners working in the country were in Tbilisi, and 31% in the Ajara region. The research also showed that the majority of positions occupied by foreigners require a secondary or vocational qualification. The low qualification level of the labour force available on the domestic job market was named as the primary reason for employing foreign workers. These results once again highlight the importance of promoting vocational education in society. Furthermore, creation of jobs by foreigners, which often determines their holding of managerial positions, was named as the second reason for employing foreign citizens.⁷⁵

The study regarding the economic impact of foreign students in Georgia outlined in the [Brief Migration Profile](#) (2017) and conducted by ISET in 2017 demonstrates that foreign students contribute significantly to both the economic advancement of the country and the development of Georgian institutions of higher education. According to the study, total annual expenditure by foreign students in Georgia constitutes 195 million GEL, which is 0.6 % of Georgia's GDP and 6% of service exports. Moreover, the study found that only a very small share of foreign students plan to continue their studies at the next (higher) level or seek employment in Georgia after graduation. This makes their future influence on the Georgian labour market insignificant. Furthermore, according to the study, part of these students were dissatisfied due to the (low) quality of teaching, an inability to gain

⁷⁵ MoLHSA, The Survey Report of Labour Market Demand Component, http://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/oldMoh/01_GEO/Shroma/kvleva/4.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

practical experience, and the substandard level of services provided by the Georgian educational institutions' administrative staff.

Tuition fees paid by foreign students to Georgian educational institutions constitute almost 39% of total annual student expenditure, which enables these institutions to invest in infrastructure and technologies and develop new educational programmes.⁷⁶

Immigrants in Georgia not only perform work requiring a different level of qualification but also create jobs themselves. During the five-year period 2012-2016 foreign citizens registered with the NAPR a total of 35,533 Ltds, branches of foreign company, joint stock companies or individual entrepreneurs, although probably not all of them are currently active and carrying on their entrepreneurial activities.

The number of foreign-founded organisations which are active can be estimated according to the number of legal entities paying taxes in Georgia as registered by the Revenue Service of the MoF. According to the Revenue Service, for the period 2015-2016, there were 3,913 registered taxpayers with at least one foreign founder,⁷⁷ while for the same period the number of branches (representations) of foreign non-profit legal entities was 13. Out of these entities, 572 paid taxes of over 15,915,000 GEL in 2015. The number of entities which paid taxes in 2016 increased considerably (to 1,298), paying a total in excess of 53,191,000 GEL.

The existing data does not provide enough information to make bold assumptions regarding the effects of these investments on the labour market. Nevertheless, on the basis of the declarations provided by the foreign companies to Geostat we can speak about a general positive impact on the industrial and construction sectors of the Georgian economy.⁷⁸ The share of foreign companies in the annual turnover of the construction sector for the past seven years (2010-2016) is provided in Table N34 below.

Total annual turnover of the construction sector almost doubled in the period 2011-2012 compared to previous years,⁷⁹ which can be partially attributed to the growth of foreign-owned companies. In 2013, construction sector sales turnover decreased by 1.2 billion GEL and then slightly increased in 2014. Construction sector sales turnover surged again in 2015-2016 (by 1.48 billion GEL in 2015 alone, compared to the previous year), reaching 5.64 billion GEL in 2016. During the past seven years, the share of foreign-owned companies in total annual turnover has quadrupled, increasing from 11% (2010) to 46.9% (2016) (see Table N34).

Table N34. Share of foreign individuals/legal entities in total turnover, construction sector (in millions of GEL)

Volume of Construction Sector Turnover			
Year	Total Turnover	Foreign Individuals and/or Legal Entities	Share of Foreign Individuals and/or Legal Entities
2010	1694.5	191.3	11.3%
2011	3348.0	921.7	27.5%
2012	4444.7	1368.1	30.8%
2013	3244.7	1047.2	32.3%
2014	3807.0	1315.3	34.5%
2015	5287.8	2244.4	42.4%
2016	6515.7	3054.3	46.9%

Source: Geostat

76 SCMI, Brief Migration Profile. Foreign Students in Georgia, 2017, http://migration.commission.ge/files/migraciis_profil_i_a5_eng.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

77 This category combines taxpayers with the following legal formations: Ltd, partnership, foreign organisation, foreign enterprise, etc.

78 Geostat, Main Statistics. Industry, Construction and Energy Statistics, http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=284&lang=eng (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

79 Geostat, Main Statistics. Construction, http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=467&lang=eng (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

2.3. Integration of Foreigners

Immigrants can make a significant contribution to the improvement of the economic and demographic situation of the recipient country, as well as to the diversification of its culture. Consequently, appropriate planning and implementation of policy for the integration of foreigners can promote a country's development and increase the benefits which immigrants can provide to the state.

A foreigner holding a permanent residence permit in Georgia enjoys the same social rights as a Georgian citizen. In particular, they qualify for the state pension, social assistance and state-funded medical insurance. In 2015, 465 foreigners used such services, while in 2016 the number of beneficiaries was 552.

Georgia's labour market is considered quite liberal concerning immigrants, since there is no required minimum wage and local employers have no restrictions regarding recruitment of foreign labour.

Persons who arrive in Georgia for family reunification purposes, in accordance with the provisions of the [Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Foreigners and Stateless Persons](#) can obtain a D4 type immigration visa and the relevant category of residence permit. It should be mentioned that both Georgian citizens and foreigners holding a Georgian residence permit have the right to reunite with their family members (the statistics regarding number of residence permits issued in Georgia for family reunification purposes is given in Table N24, page 37).

Educational immigrants can study at Georgian educational institutions. Children of foreign citizens are generally accepted at public/private kindergartens and schools. Foreigners are also not obliged to pass the Unified Entrance Exams to study at Georgian higher education institutions and instead are accepted solely based on their application and interview (statistics on foreign students enrolled in secondary and higher education in Georgia are shown in Diagram N14, pages 40-41).

Georgian legislation allows acquisition of Georgian citizenship through naturalisation. A foreigner who has lived in Georgia uninterruptedly for five years, or who is married to a Georgian citizen who has lived in Georgia uninterruptedly for at least two years, can acquire Georgian citizenship through standard procedures; while foreign citizens who have made an outstanding contribution to Georgia (or cases of national interests) can obtain Georgian citizenship by way of exception (dual citizenship) (the statistics on Georgian citizenship granted through naturalisation is provided in Table N27, page 39).

Concerning non-discriminatory treatment, Chapter 2 of the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons forbids discriminatory, degrading, or humiliating treatment of aliens.⁸⁰ Moreover, the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination ensures the equal rights of every person under the legislation of Georgia "irrespective of race, colour, language, sex, age, citizenship, origin, place of birth or residence, property or social status, religion or belief, national, ethnic or social origin, profession, marital status, health, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, political or other opinions, or other characteristics".⁸¹

Recent studies indicate that Georgian society is less aware about the benefits of immigrants and immigration. On the other hand, immigrants (despite their rights) are not properly informed about integration opportunities or do not show interest in the information regarding such rights. Both this lack of awareness among the recipient society and among the immigrants themselves creates certain difficulties, as well as unfavourable conditions for the successful integration of the latter.

The study on migration issues commissioned by the GYLA and the CIPDD and conducted by the CRRC-Georgia in 2017 showed that 79% of the Georgian population had never had any type of contact with foreigners who had come to Georgia for long-term residence (foreigners who remain in Georgia for over three months). This could point to both the low number of long-term immigrants in Georgia and a lack of communication between them and the local population (due to the fact that they do not speak Georgian), which implies that the level of foreigner integration is low.

⁸⁰ Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2278806> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁸¹ Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2339687> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Similarly, the study commissioned by the SCMI and conducted by ACT in 2016 indicates that the Georgian population primarily sees the economic rather than the cultural benefits of long-term visits to Georgia by foreign citizens – 60% of respondents specified money spent by foreigners locally as a key benefit of immigration, while 42% mentioned foreign investment in the country. As for the less favorable sides of immigration, the population surveyed saw the main concern as foreigners acquiring land and competing in the labour market.

Taking into consideration the abovementioned factors, it is recommended to elaborate specific mechanisms for the integration of immigrants and create an institutional framework specifically for the integration of long-term immigrants in Georgia.

2.4. International Protection in Georgia

In 2016, the Parliament of Georgia approved the new Law of Georgia on International Protection, which entered into force on 1 February 2017. According to the Law, three forms of international protection are defined in Georgia: 1) Refugee; 2) A person holding humanitarian status; 3) A person under temporary protection.

In the period 2012-2016, a total of 5,504 asylum applications were registered in Georgia. In 2016, the number of asylum seekers was 974, which is significantly lower compared to the two previous years (see Table N35 below). Since 2014, the number of asylum seekers has increased, particularly from Iraq and Ukraine, which can be explained by the armed conflicts in these countries. As can be observed from Table N35, over half of asylum applicants in the period 2012-2016 were citizens of Iraq. As for gender distribution, the majority (65%) of asylum seekers in Georgia during this period were male. The only exception were citizens of Ukraine, where 38% of asylum seekers were male, and 62% female.

Table N35. Number of asylum applications in Georgia (major countries of origin, 2012-2016)

Country of Origin	Number of Applications					
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Iraq	438	478	1070	650	259	2,895
Ukraine	1	2	419	404	54	880
Egypt	26	79	41	31	73	250
Iran	41	26	44	25	63	199
Syria	17	60	79	19	21	196
Bangladesh	1	9	2	80	69	161
Russia	36	28	30	27	34	155
Other	39	35	107	213	374	768
Total	599	717	1,792	1,449	947	5,504

Source: MRA

Georgia provides temporary accommodation to asylum seekers in a specially designated centre, located in the village of Martkopi. The first building of the temporary accommodation centre for asylum seekers has been functioning since June 2010 and can house 60 persons. In February 2016, a second building was added to the centre, which can receive 72 asylum seekers.

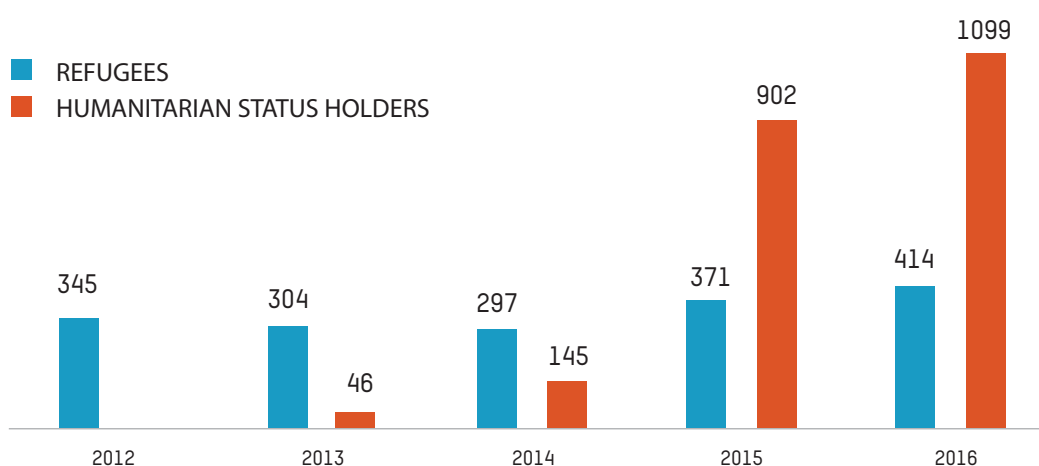
The number of asylum seekers housed in the temporary accommodation centre annually during the past five years (2012-2016) ranged from 76 to 121 per year. Primarily citizens of the Near Eastern countries request lodging at the centre (see Table N36).

Table N36. Number of asylum applicants in the temporary accommodation centre, by country of origin

Country of Origin	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Iraq	50	52	31	36	3
Egypt	2	17	7	9	13
Iran	11	2	2	13	12
Russia	3	7	4	7	6
Azerbaijan	2	1	5	4	8
Afghanistan	1	0	1	4	14
Syria	1	1	9	5	0
Other	22	12	17	43	31
Total	92	92	76	121	87

Source: MRA

The number of refugees and persons holding humanitarian status in Georgia has been increasing in the past five years (2012-2016). By 2016 there were 1,513 persons under international protection in the country, which is more than four times the number of persons recorded in 2012 (345). The number of refugees in Georgia during the period 2012-2016 ranges from 297 to 414; humanitarian status has been granted in Georgia since 2013 and by 2016 the number of persons holding this status had reached 1,099 (see Diagram N19 below).

Diagram N19. Number of people under international protection in Georgia, by type of status (2012-2016)

Source: MRA

The rate of refusal to grant refugee or humanitarian status in 2012-2016 ranged from 16% to 35%.

Table N37. Refusal to grant refugee/humanitarian status (2012-2016)

Year	Total Number of Applications	Total Number of Refusals/Refusal Rate ⁸² (as % of Total)
2012	599	94/16%
2013	717	337/47%
2014	1792	362/20%
2015	1449	328/23%
2016	947	336/35%

Source: MRA

82 The percentage of the total number of applications which have been refused.

Often, asylum seekers fail to obtain refugee or humanitarian status due to the suspension of their application. The main reasons for suspension are failure of the asylum seeker to attend the interview and suspension of the application upon personal request (see Table N38).

Table N38. Suspension of asylum applications, by reason

Year	Number of Applications Suspended	Reason for Suspension			
		Failure to Attend Interview	Personal Request	Returned to Country of Origin	Engagement in UNHCR Resettlement Programme
2012	47	13	34	0	0
2013	473	232	241	0	0
2014	387	209	172	1	5
2015	756	342	412	0	2
2016	633	248	385	0	0

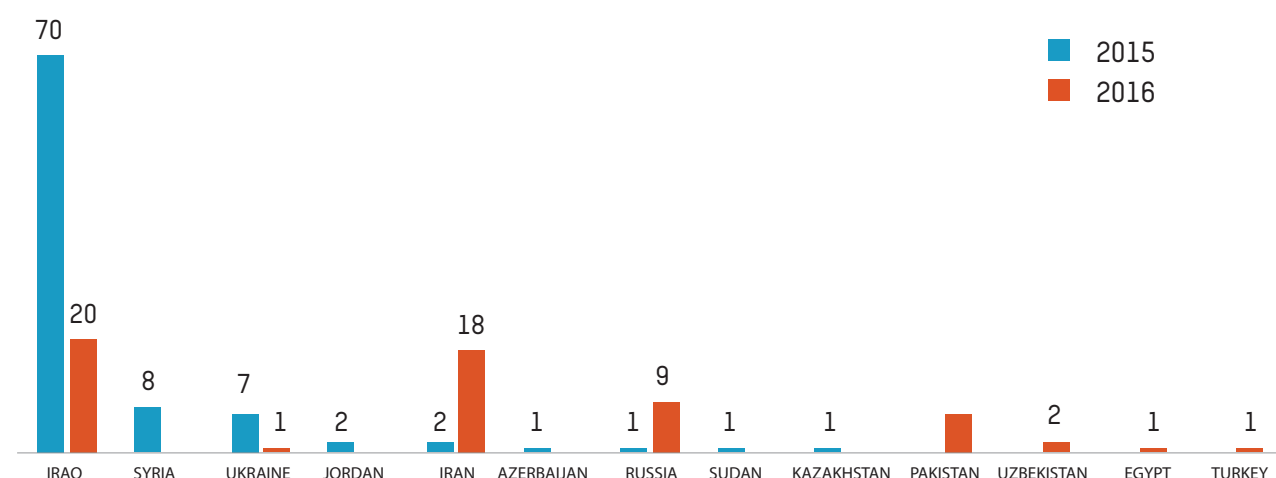
Source: MRA

2.4.1. Integration of Persons Granted International Protection

One of the biggest groups of refugees in Georgia are from the Russian Federation. The majority of these persons sought protection in Georgia in the late 1990s due to the military actions in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. According to PSDA data, 27 refugees were granted Georgian citizenship in 2015-2016, of whom a majority (25) were Russian citizens.

To facilitate international mobility of persons with international protection status, Georgia has been issuing travel documents to refugees since 2009 and travel documents for persons holding humanitarian status since 2017. Travel documents allow persons with international protection status to travel abroad to countries other than that of their citizenship or earlier permanent residence, as well to countries which are not considered safe for them or their family members. The PSDA issued 93 refugee travel documents in 2015 and 59 in 2016. The majority of these documents were issued to citizens of Iraq and Iran (see Diagram N20).

Diagram N20. Travel documents granted to refugees, by citizenship (2015-2016)



Source: PSDA

Holders of refugee or humanitarian status in Georgia are eligible for state support programmes (social assistance and the health insurance package envisaged by the universal healthcare programme). In the period 2015-2016, some 382 persons benefited from social assistance – and 392 from healthcare programmes.

Despite the rights granted to them by the legislation, refugees and persons with humanitarian status in Georgia face certain problems with respect to integration. According to a joint study conducted by the UNHCR and the UNDP in 2015, the major problems encountered by those persons with international protection status are employment, lack of knowledge of the Georgian (and sometimes the English) language, and a lack of access to education and healthcare, caused primarily by insufficient information. According to the study, among families under international protection in Georgia, 65% of pre-school age children do not attend kindergarten (mainly due to a lack of places, a lack of willingness, or financial or language constraints), while 21% of school-age children do not attend school (largely due to financial and language constraints as well as a lack of places). Although they have a strong interest in employment/self-employment and vocational education, only a small share of refugees (7%) attended vocational education courses in Georgia, due to a lack of information and knowledge of the Georgian language.⁸³

The same study showed that the majority of refugees and humanitarian status holders hold secondary or higher education, and possess work experience and various professional skills. They wish to remain in Georgia and integrate into the local society, which is something to consider when planning and implementing relevant policy.

It should be mentioned that the Integration Center of Persons under International Protection administered by MRA has been operational since 2017. The centre can serve 100 beneficiaries, providing persons under international protection with opportunities to learn the Georgian language, the basic principles of Georgian legislation, and a short history of the country and its cultural particularities, all of which will support their integration process. Moreover, the centre's employees can consult and provide information to refugees and persons holding humanitarian status in regard to the state employment programmes offered to them by the MoLHSA and the MES. The integration centre was set up and equipped with the financial support of the UNHCR, while the costs of its administration and implementation of the integration programmes is financed from the state budget annually.

2.5. Foreigners in an Irregular Situation

2.5.1. Detection of Foreigners in an Irregular Situation

According to the MIA, between 2012 and 2016 there were detected a total of 19,117 cases of illegally present foreign citizens in Georgia. Illegal presence in this case refers to immigrants who overstayed the duration of their legal stay in the country and does not refer to those immigrants who illegally entered Georgia. As Table N39 shows, the largest number of such cases (7,938) were detected in 2015, which can be partially attributed to the fact that the new Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons took effect in that year and the entry conditions, and the period and grounds of stay for foreigners in Georgia changed accordingly.

Table N39. Number of foreigners found to be illegally present in Georgia (major countries of citizenship, 2012-2016)

Country of Citizenship	Number of illegally present Foreigners Detected					Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Russia	1,339	1,357	1,225	1,926	399	6,246
Turkey	175	215	329	1,122	135	1,976
China	204	194	423	594	521	1,936
Iran	85	280	617	266	309	1,557
Azerbaijan	0	1	175	1,136	197	1,509

⁸³ UNHCR, Study on the Socio-Economic Situation of Refugees, Humanitarian Status Holders and Asylum-Seekers in Georgia, <http://bit.ly/2FXDyCt> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Armenia	0	0	62	1,089	286	1,437
India	99	107	157	192	269	824
Other	210	387	582	1,613	840	3,632
Total	2,112	2,541	3,570	7,938	2,956	19,117

Source: MIA

Among this group of foreigners, citizens of Russian Federation are the most prominent in terms of total number (6,246), followed by citizens of Turkey, China, Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia and India. Taken together, citizens of these seven countries constitute over 80% of all cases of illegally present foreigners detected in Georgia in the past five years (2012-2016) – although it should be pointed out that citizens of these countries also make up the largest group of immigrants legally present in Georgia.

2.5.2. Expulsion of Foreigners in an Irregular Situation

In September 2014, the Migration Department (MD) was created within the MIA, and is responsible for detection and expulsion of foreigners illegally present on Georgian territory. According to the MIA's data, 44 and 74 foreign citizens were expelled from Georgia in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Table N40 below presents the numbers of enforced expulsion decisions in Georgia for 2015 and 2016 by the expelled persons' countries of citizenship.

Table N40. Enforced expulsion decisions (major countries of citizenship, 2015-2016)

Country of Citizenship	2015	2016	Total
Russia	4	7	11
Nigeria	8	2	10
India	6	3	9
Somalia	0	9	9
Armenia	1	7	8
Turkey	0	8	8
Azerbaijan	1	6	7
Iran	3	4	7
Nepal	6	0	6
Sri Lanka	0	6	6
Uzbekistan	4	1	5
Cameroon	1	4	5
Afghanistan	1	4	5
Other countries	9	13	22
Total	44	74	118

Source: MIA

The MD also operates a temporary accommodation centre (which can house 92 persons), where foreigners subject to expulsion stay until enforcement of their expulsion decision.

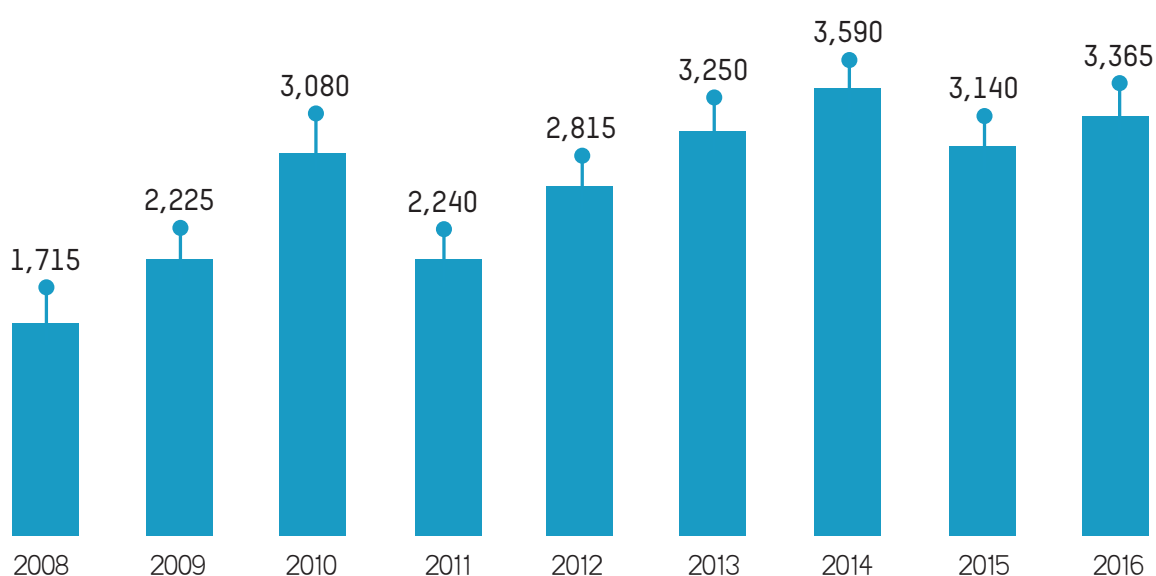
3. Return and Reintegration

3.1. Return Migration

Statistical data on return migration to Georgia is collected from several sources, although the data is fragmented and does not provide a complete picture on return migration. This chapter reviews the data of Eurostat, the MIA, the MRA and IOM on return migration. All of these sources document return cases of illegally present emigrants.

According to Eurostat, in 2016, 3,365 Georgian citizens returned to Georgia from the EU-28 following an order to leave the territory of the European Union. As can be observed from Diagram N21 below, the number of returnees has increased since 2008, although in the past four years (2013-2016) the numbers have remained relatively stable. In 2016, the largest number of Georgian migrants (1,215) returned from Germany.

Diagram N21. Number of Georgian citizens returned from EU countries (2008-2016)



Source: Eurostat (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

In the framework of the 2016 state programme “Supporting Reintegration of Returned Georgian Migrants”, 460 applications from returned migrants were registered in the period from June 2016 to March 2017. Migrants returned from Greece (103), Germany (88) and Russia (78) were among the most frequent applicants to the state reintegration programme.

Moreover, in 2015 some 1,505 persons applied for assistance to IOM, which was implementing reintegration programmes through mobility centres together with the MRA. The majority of applicants were returned migrants from Greece (612), Russia (148) and Germany (121). Similarly, in 2016 a total of 1,173 returned migrants approached mobility centres, the majority of whom also were from Greece (476), Russia (133) and Germany (161).

The Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme of IOM, which helps emigrants to voluntarily return to their countries of origin, has been operating in Georgia since 2003. In the frame of the programme, during the period 2003 to March, 2017, 5,453 Georgian citizens returned to Georgia. Majority of those came back from Greece (2,512), Poland (699), Switzerland (473), Belgium (398), Latvia (264) and the United Kingdom (212).

According to the existing studies, homesickness was named as the major reason for the return of Georgian citizens to their homeland. The study commissioned by the SCMI and conducted by ACT in 2016 showed that 33% of returned migrants specified nostalgia for Georgia and/or their family as the reason for their return. According

to OECD research conducted in 2014, a majority of returned migrants indicated that preferring to live in Georgia was their main reason for return. According to the same study, employment and investment possibilities are rarely mentioned by returned migrants as reasons for return.⁸⁴

3.1.1. Readmission

In addition to the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorisation, Georgia has readmission agreements with Ukraine, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Moldova, Belarus and Iceland. In the past five years (2012-2016), Georgia has satisfied 95% of readmission requests. The majority of readmission requests were received from Germany, Greece, France, Belgium and Spain (see Table N41).

Table N41. Number of returned persons within framework of readmission agreement, by country (2012-2016)

Country/Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Germany	194	225	344	411	793	1,967
Greece	164	174	193	168	128	827
France	33	162	200	196	164	755
Belgium	71	124	103	61	64	423
Spain	66	46	61	108	95	376
Sweden	53	54	73	94	87	361
Austria	123	54	26	24	80	307
Lithuania	73	81	44	37	3	238
Netherlands	41	44	43	32	70	230
Italy	48	42	24	58	43	215
Switzerland	-	-	25	106	78	209
Other countries	63	74	77	80	76	370
Total	929	1,080	1,213	1,375	1,681	6,278

Source: MIA

3.2. Reintegration of Returning Georgian Citizens

To facilitate the reintegration of Georgian migrants returning to their homeland, the MRA has been implementing state budget-funded reintegration programmes annually since 2015.⁸⁵

In the framework of the 2016 state programme, from June 2016 to March 2017, 460 applications from returned migrants were recorded, out of which 398 were registered as beneficiaries. Of these, 46.5% were female, and 53.5% male. Almost half (45%) of the registered beneficiaries belonged to the 26-40 age group, while 39% fell into the 41-60 age category. Analysis of the former countries of residence indicates that beneficiaries returned mainly from Greece (24%), Germany (20%), Russia (16%) and Turkey (9%). Sweden, Italy, France, Iraq, Ukraine and Austria are also on the list of the top ten countries for Georgian returnees. Some 64% of beneficiaries from the abovementioned countries returned voluntarily, 23% were ordered to leave, while 13% came back on the basis of the Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation. The highest number of applications were recorded in Tbilisi (43%) and the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region (16%). In the frame of the programme, 128 social projects for returned migrants (aimed at supporting self-employment) were funded, in 49 cases healthcare costs were covered, 30 beneficiaries engaged in

⁸⁴ OECD, Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development in Georgia, <http://bit.ly/2kvRdGt> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁸⁵ MRA, Reintegration Assistance Program for Georgian Returnees, <http://www.mra.gov.ge/eng/static/8769> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

professional development and qualification raising programmes, and 12 beneficiaries received funding for legal aid.

To facilitate reintegration of returnees, Mobility Centers⁸⁶ assisted migrants in return, transportation, temporary accommodation, medical assistance (both counselling and services), vocational training (including counselling, funding and employment services) and business development support (including counselling, training, assistance in business plan development and grants).

In the period 2015-2016, a total of 2,678 persons applied to Mobility Centers, out of which 794 were registered as beneficiaries; of these 720 persons were assisted (see Table N 39). The majority of registered returned migrants came from Greece (43%), Russia (11%) and Germany (9%).

Table N42. Assistance provided by Mobility Centers to returned migrants in 2015 and 2016

Type of Assistance	Number of Returnees Assisted in 2015	Number of Returnees Assisted in 2016
Medical consultation	102	83
Funding for medical services and medication	40	39
Provision of accommodation/improvement of living conditions	116	137
Consultation on professional training issues	110	49
Funding/co-funding of professional training	29	15
Business development support	336	124
Business grant	127	40
Employment support	32	16
Self-employment support (acquisition of necessary equipment)	84	44
Total number of beneficiaries receiving assistance	429	291

Source: MRA

As can be observed from Table N42, the most in demand service among returned migrants is business development consultation. According to an OECD study, returned migrants are likely to invest (including in agriculture), start their own business, become self-employed. This can be partially explained by the fact that they have built up certain amounts of savings while living abroad and have acquired new knowledge and skills, which helps them in self-employment and business development.⁸⁷

4. Internal Migration

Internal migration in Georgia is mainly caused by armed conflicts, natural disasters, and socio-economic factors. Hence, the major stocks of internal migrants in Georgia consist of persons displaced as a result of armed conflict in the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia – Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), persons affected by environmental hazards – ecological migrants (ecomigrants), and rural-urban-rural migrants (migrating with the aim of improving their socio-economic conditions).

⁸⁶ IOM implements reintegration programmes together with the MRA through Mobility Centers. In the period 2014-2017, the Mobility Centers project was financed by the European Union "More for More" programme. After completion of the project, responsibility for their administration, as well as provision of the assistance provided by the centres, was transferred to the MRA.

⁸⁷ OECD, Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development in Georgia, <http://bit.ly/2kvRdGt> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

4.1. Internally Displaced Persons

The stock of IDPs currently residing in Georgia is comprised of two major groups: a first wave of IDPs that were forcefully displaced in the period 1991-1993 as a result of conflict in the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia; and a second wave, from the same regions, displaced as a result of the 2008 Russian-Georgian War. According to MRA data, in 2016 the total number of all registered IDPs was around 268,000 (see Table N43), which constitutes approximately 7% of the total population of Georgia. The number of IDPs from Abkhazia is almost ten times larger than that of IDPs from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. As for gender distribution among the IDP population, there are slightly more females than males (54%/46%) among the IDPs from the occupied Georgian region of Abkhazia, while in the case of those from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia there is an almost equal number of males and females. Concerning the age composition of IDPs, in both cases the bigger groups are constituted by young (less than 18 years old) and middle-aged IDPs (41-65 years old).

Table N43. IDPs from the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, by gender and age distribution (2015 and 2016)

Year	Number of IDPs	Number of IDP Households	Gender		Age Distribution				
IDPs from Abkhazia									
			Female	Male	<18	18-25	26-40	41-65	>65
2015	237,124	77,492	127,898	109,226	65,747	22,193	47,961	72,556	28,667
2016	242,443	78,507	130,442	112,001	71,108	22,363	48,609	72,908	27,455
IDPs from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia									
2015	25,531	8,901	12,853	12,678	6,819	2,539	5,404	7,329	3,440
2016	25,976	8,966	13,090	12,886	7,319	2,554	5,467	7,354	3,282

Source: MRA

In 2016, 56% of IDPs from Abkhazia lived in collective housing centres, while 44% resided in private housing facilities – compared to 2014 (when it was 56%), the proportion of IDPs living in private housing has decreased. For IDPs from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, in 2016, 27% lived in collective housing centres and 73% in private housing facilities. It must be highlighted that from 2014 to 2016, there was a major increase (by 35%) in the number of IDPs from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia living in private accommodation, which can probably be attributed to the Durable Housing Solution Program for IDPs, implemented by the MRA since 2013.

In terms of regional distribution, the majority of IDPs from Abkhazia are concentrated in either Tbilisi or Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, the region adjacent to the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. In the case of IDPs from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, they are primarily resettled in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, as well as the Shida Kartli region, which is adjacent to the occupied Georgian region of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

Table N44. IDPs from the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, by region of resettlement (2015 and 2016)

Year	Region of Resettlement										
	Tbilisi	Ajara	Guria	Imereti	Kakheti	Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Racha-Lechkhumi, Kvemo Svaneti	Samegrelo, Zemo Svaneti	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Shida Kartli
IDPs from Abkhazia											
2015	97,670	6,480	486	24,801	1,227	1,289	839	85,020	2,297	9,291	7,724
2016	100,426	6,706	496	25,335	1,235	1,332	825	86,212	2,353	9,544	7,979
IDPs from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia											
2015	2,842	21	8	355	254	9,661	2	78	15	3,305	8,990
2016	2,954	24	8	357	257	9,715	2	80	16	3,384	9,179

Source: MRA

In 2016 over 3,000 IDPs made use of the various livelihood programmes aimed at improving the socio-economic situation of IDPs and increasing their access to the labour market. These programmes also involved activities such as qualification raising trainings and studies at the state vocational education centres aimed at assisting in employment, and promotion of start-ups and development of agricultural and micro/small business activities through co-financing grants and engaging IDPs in cooperative support programmes.

4.2. Ecological Migrants

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia has been in charge of relocating families who have suffered the effects of natural disasters and are subject to resettlement (ecomigrants). Since 1 January 2014, the Ecomigrants Department has been functioning within the MRA, and is responsible for managing the resettlement process of ecomigrant families.

Since 2016, a unified electronic database of households which have suffered through natural disasters and are subject to resettlement (ecomigrants) has been in operation at the ministry. Up to 5,000 households have been registered in the database.

In the period 2004-2016, the ministry provided housing to 1,345 families which had suffered the effects of natural disasters. Housing for the victims of natural disasters was acquired by using both state budget funds and donor funding. In 2015 and 2016, some 5,375,000 GEL was allocated and 233 houses were purchased for this purpose, among them 140 in 2015 and 93 in 2016. As Table N45 below shows, the total amount of funds allocated for ecomigrants for the past two years (2015-2016) significantly surpasses that of previous years.

Table N45. Funds allocated for ecomigrants' alternative housing (2012-2016)

Year	Total Funding (in thousands of GEL)	State Budget (in thousands of GEL)	Other Funding Sources (in thousands of GEL)	Total Number of Housing Units Purchased
2012	231.4	0	231.4	12
2013	647.8	647.8	0	33
2014	678.8	601.3	77.5	36
2015	2,787.5	1,800.0	987.5	140
2016	2250	2250	0	93
Total	6,595.5	5,299.1	1,296.4	314

Source: MRA

In accordance with Ordinance №996 of the Government of Georgia, a project started on 18 May 2015 aimed at transferring state-owned property which has been allocated for the use of ecomigrant households to private ownership. In the frame of the project, by 2016 over 300 families had received private ownership of houses, including properties in the Tsalka, Ninotsminda and Tetrtskaro municipalities.

Moreover, according to the 2016 agreement between the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara and the MRA, in that year new houses on the territory of the Autonomous Republic were purchased for 96 families (victims of natural disasters) in a safe environment.

4.3. Population Living on the Territory of the Occupied Regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia

Due to the armed conflicts on the territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and their occupation by the Russian Federation, it is difficult to accurately estimate the exact amount of population and the demographic situation in these regions. The only available information is on the number of IDPs from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, who are periodically registered by other Georgian regions.

The Georgian Government aims at ensuring the same rights and privileges to the population living in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia as enjoyed by every Georgian citizen.⁸⁸ To help the population of the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia maintain contacts with Georgia and realise their social rights, the Georgian Government has since 2011 issued status neutral ID cards and status neutral travel documents. The status neutral travel document allows a person living beyond the occupation line to travel abroad without obtaining a passport from either the Russian Federation or Georgia; the status neutral ID card permits movement on the rest of the territory of Georgia and the obtaining of public services. Both these documents are issued by the PSDA. The status neutral travel document issued by Georgia does not contain biometric data. Nevertheless, this document is acknowledged as a travel document by 12 countries,⁸⁹ including nine EU member states.

Table N46. Status neutral ID cards and status neutral travel documents issued to persons living in the occupied territories of Georgia (2015-2016)

Place of residence	Number of Travel Documents	Number of ID Cards	Male	Female	Total
Abkhazia	11	57	25	43	68
Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia	-	3	-	3	3
Total	11	60	25	46	71

Source: PSDA

As can be observed from Table N46 above, status neutral ID cards and status neutral travel documents are more popular in the occupied territory of Abkhazia than in Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. The highest demand for the status neutral documents was recorded in 2012, and was approximately evenly distributed in terms of gender and age group. Furthermore, increased demand was primarily observed for status neutral ID cards rather than travel documents, which can be probably attributed to the introduction of the universal healthcare programme (engagement of those persons requesting the cards in this programme).

In order to increase the accessibility of public services for the population living in the occupied Georgian territories, the Georgian Government opened Community Centers,⁹⁰ in villages adjacent to the occupation line, where

⁸⁸ Government of Georgia, State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement through Cooperation, <http://bit.ly/2tiNxPW> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁸⁹ USA, Japan, Israel and nine EU countries: Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

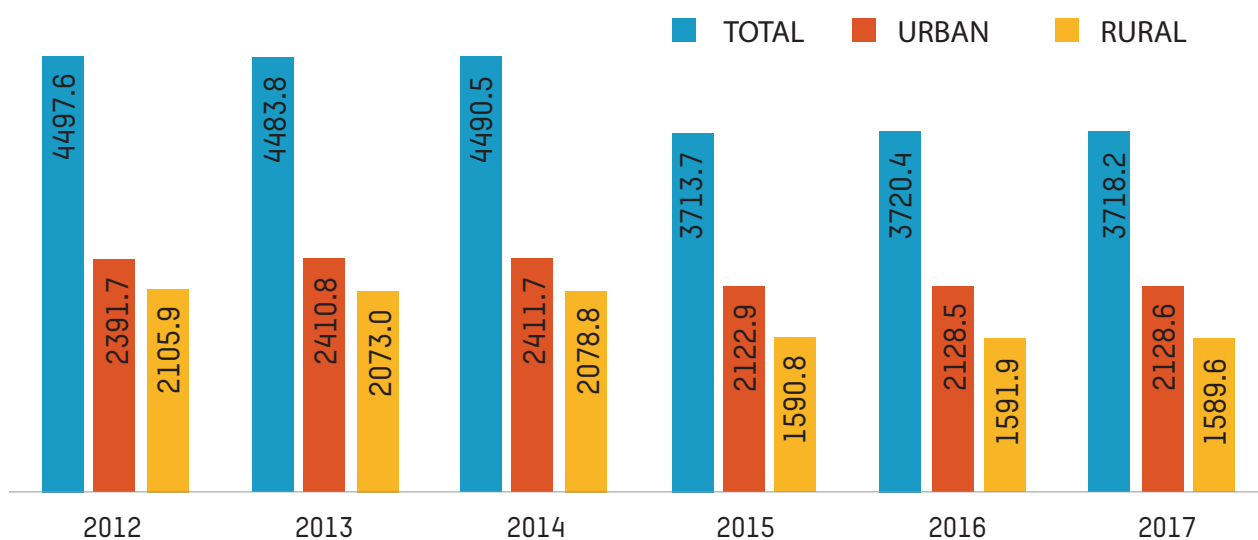
⁹⁰ There are currently five Community Centers functioning in the proximity of the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, administered by the Public Service Development Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. These are located in: 1) Village Mejvriskhevi, Gori municipality (opened 09.12.2014); 2) Village Orsantia, Zugdidi municipality (opened 13.07.2015); 3) Village Rukhi, Zugdidi municipality (opened 20.02.2016); 4) Village Tkviavi, Gori municipality (opened 08.09.2016); 5) Village Berdzenauli, Kareli municipality (opened 30.09.2016). For additional information please see <http://centri.gov.ge/en/> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

both local inhabitants and persons living in the occupied territories have the opportunity to receive over 200 public and private sector services.

4.4. Rural-Urban-Rural Migration

In the period between the two population censuses (2002-2014), Georgia's rural population saw large decline; during this period the rural population decreased by 23.7%, while the decrease in the urban population was 7.1%. Consequently, the urban-rural population ratio has changed considerably: the share of the urban population in total population has increased from 52.3% to 57.2%, a jump of almost 5%. As can be observed from Diagram N22 below, the decline in the rural population has persisted since the last census was conducted.

Diagram N22. Population in urban and rural type of settlements, for the beginning of the year (in thousands)



Source: Geostat

According to Geostat, during the period 2002-2014 the population of Tbilisi increased by 2.5%, while the population decreased significantly in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti (37.4%) as well as in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti (29%) regions. This tendency – the increasing number of Tbilisi residents and population decline in the abovementioned regions – has also continued since that period (see Table N47).

Table N47. Population in urban and rural types of settlement, for the beginning of the year and region (in thousands of persons)⁹¹

City/Region	2015			2016			2017		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Tbilisi	1,108.9	1,078.5	30.4	1,113.0	1,082.4	30.6	1,114.6	1,083.8	30.8
Autonomous Republic of Ajara	334.3	185.0	149.3	337.0	186.7	150.3	339.0	187.8	151.2
Guria	113.3	31.9	81.4	113.0	31.8	81.2	112.6	31.7	80.9
Imereti	533.6	258.5	275.1	532.9	258.5	274.4	529.7	257.3	272.4
Kakheti	318.4	71.4	247.0	318.4	71.3	247.1	317.5	70.9	246.6
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	94.5	21.2	73.3	94.2	21.0	73.2	93.8	20.8	73.0

⁹¹ Geostat, Main Statistics. Population, http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=1184&lang=eng (last accessed: 31.10.2017). The population on 1 January 2015 was estimated on the basis of the preliminary results of the 2014 national census, while population on 1 January in 2016 and 2017 was calculated on the basis of the 2014 census data adjusted to reflect the annual natural rate of increase.

Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	32.0	7.0	25.0	31.5	6.9	24.6	31.0	6.9	24.1
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	330.5	129.3	201.2	329.7	128.8	200.9	328.3	128.0	200.3
Samtskhe-Javakheti	160.6	54.7	105.9	160.5	54.6	105.9	160.6	54.7	105.9
Kvemo Kartli	424.2	180.2	244.0	426.4	181.1	245.3	427.4	181.4	246.0
Shida Kartli	263.4	105.2	158.2	263.8	105.4	158.4	263.7	105.3	158.4

Source: Geostat

In the period from 2002 to 2014, the population decline was smallest in the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, while the estimates for after 2015 point to an increase in the number of Ajara residents.

5. Trafficking in Persons

According to Article 143 of the Criminal Code of Georgia,¹ trafficking in persons (TIP) is defined as the “purchase or sale of human beings, or any unlawful transactions in relation to them, by means of threat, use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, blackmail, fraud, deception, by abuse of a position of vulnerability or power or by means of giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, as well as recruitment, carriage, concealing, hiring, transporting, providing, harbouring or receiving of a human being for exploitation”.⁹²

According to the US Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report 2017, Georgia serves as a source, transit and destination country for TIP. In the past two years, Georgia has taken significant steps towards combating TIP. Consequently, consistent with the US Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report 2016, Georgia moved from the tier 2 group of countries to the tier 1 group and maintained its ranking among tier 1 countries in the 2017 report.⁹³ According to the same report, Georgia has made significant progress in proactive investigation of cases, strengthening the referral mechanisms for child abuse and protection of victims, and generating information campaigns. The 2016 report underlines the intensive efforts taken by the Government of Georgia in 2015 with respect to training staff of institutions involved in fighting human trafficking as well as towards establishment of a labour inspectorate institute and adoption of a more victim-centred approach.⁹⁴

The State Fund for Protection and Assistance of (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking (ATIP Fund), a structural entity under the MoLHSA, provides victims and statutory victims of human trafficking with shelter and medical, legal and psychological assistance. Moreover, it offers beneficiaries one-off compensation, programmes for rehabilitation and reintegration and emergency hotline services. In addition, the ATIP Fund provides the alleged victims of trafficking with crisis centers.⁹⁵

In the last five years (2012-2016), the number of investigations of human trafficking cases has fluctuated between ten (2012) and 20 (2016) cases per year. Table N48 below provides information concerning the number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and convicts with respect to human trafficking crimes.

⁹² Criminal Code of Georgia (1999), <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/16426?impose=translateEn> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁹³ US Department of State, Trafficking in Persons Report 2017, <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2017/index.htm> (last accessed: 31.10.2017). According to the report, countries are ranked into four tiers (with tier 1 being the highest and tier 3 being the lowest). A country’s placing is based on the extent of the relevant government’s response to fighting human trafficking. It specifically involves assessment of government efforts to comply with the minimum standards set by the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

⁹⁴ Ibid., Trafficking in Persons Report 2016, <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2016/index.htm> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

⁹⁵ More information about the ATIP Fund can be found at <http://atipfund.gov.ge/eng> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Table N48. Human Trafficking Crimes Statistics (2012-2016)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Investigations	10	11	13	18	20
Prosecuted persons	1	5	5	5	1
Cases sent to court	1	4	4	3	0
Convictions	1	2	4	3	2
Number of convicts	1	2	6	3	4

Source: Secretariat of the TIP Council

In 2015 and 2016, seven persons were convicted for TIP. Out of these, three were citizens of Georgia, and the remaining four citizens of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey. Importantly, among those traffickers convicted in the period 2015-2016 four were female and three were male.

In 2015, eight victims and eight statutory victims of TIP were identified, while in 2016 these figures were one victim and two statutory victims. The majority of victims (eight) were citizens of Georgia who became victims of labour exploitation in Georgia, Turkey and Iraq. As for statutory victims, the majority (seven) were citizens of Uzbekistan who became victims of sexual exploitation in Georgia.⁹⁶

According to the [2016 Global Slavery Index](#), the Government of Georgia is placed among those authorities taking the most actions to end modern slavery.⁹⁷ Georgia occupies 17th place in the index and it is highlighted that it stands out among low GDP countries in terms of measures taken to combat TIP.

According to the same source, Georgia is ranked 1st on the regional level in terms of strong anti-trafficking governmental responses. In the region, only Georgia has managed to introduce an effective referral mechanism for victims of human trafficking.⁹⁸

Table N49 indicates that once a victim/statutory victim has been identified, the state institutions provide adequate remedies in the form of shelter accommodation and compensation, as well as psychological, medical and legal assistance.

Table N49. Government assistance to victims and statutory victims of human trafficking (2012-2016)

Type of Assistance	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Shelter accommodation ⁹⁹	13	6	7	8	4
Psychological assistance	7	4	4	6	1
Medical assistance	6	3	6	5	1
Legal assistance	7	33	12	25	6
Compensation	6	21	9	18	2
Total number of persons assisted	4	33	12	13	3

Source: ATIP Fund¹⁰⁰

The following trends can be observed in relation to TIP:

- Georgian victims of TIP are more likely to be subjected to labour (and, to a lesser extent, sexual) exploitation abroad.

⁹⁶ Status of victim is granted by the permanent working groups operating within the TIP Council. Status of statutory victim is granted by the State Prosecutor's decree in accordance with the criminal code of Georgia.

⁹⁷ Global Slavery Index 2016, Global Findings, <http://bit.ly/2odY3Wj> (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

⁹⁸ Ibid., Region Analysis. Russian and Eurasia, <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/region/russia-and-eurasia/> (last accessed: 31.10.2017)

⁹⁹ In certain cases, the number of beneficiaries in shelter accommodation also includes dependents of beneficiaries (underage persons).

¹⁰⁰ The numbers obtained from the ATIP Fund refer to the number of services provided to victims/statutory victims of human trafficking.

- Among the cases detected in Georgia, the principal victims/statutory victims of sexual exploitation have been female citizens of Uzbekistan.
- The data for 2015-2016 shows that in the case of Georgian citizens, the highest numbers of cases of labour exploitation are detected in Iraq, and (to a lesser extent) in Turkey (and predominantly involve males).
- The majority of victims of human trafficking identified on the territory of Georgia are over 18, however, in the past two years (2015-2016) two cases of human trafficking of minors have also been identified by Georgian law enforcement agencies.

6. Migration Management

6.1. Migration Policy Framework

In the past several years, notable progress has been made in the development of Georgia's migration policy framework, aiming at building a coherent migration policy on the national level. This was largely stipulated by the activities carried out for fulfilment of commitments envisaged by the VLAP with the EU.

Strategic Planning

In the 1990s, during the period following Georgia's regaining of its national independence, the first strategic document defining migration policy in Georgia was created (in 1997); the Concept of Migration Policy of Georgia approved by the President. This was a rather innovative document for its time, and had mainly a declaratory character, since it lacked an implementation mechanism in the form of an action plan. Consequently, it would be hard to judge whether the objectives outlined in the Concept were fulfilled and what role it played in the improvement of the migration management system in the country.¹⁰¹

The Concept was declared void in 2013 and replaced by the Migration Strategy 2013-2015,¹⁰² approved by the Government of Georgia. The Strategy and its Action Plan laid down the basis for institution building in the area of migration management and defined more clearly the state priorities in terms of development of certain fields of migration. The Strategy supported implementation of important reforms for enhancement of migration management in the country.

The Government of Georgia, taking into account the existing global and regional challenges as well as requirements established by the VLAP with the EU, in 2015 elaborated and approved the third strategic document for defining the country's migration policy – the Migration Strategy 2016-2020.¹⁰³ This is qualitatively a new document in the field of migration policy planning, which takes into consideration adjacent sector strategies and other policy defining legislative acts and largely reflects the main provisions of the European Agenda on Migration elaborated by the EU in 2015. Alongside the Strategy, the Government approved the corresponding Action Plan¹⁰⁴ and its implementation indicators, which serve as a basis for assessment of results achieved.

The other strategic documents adopted in recent years in areas related to migration are: the State Border Management Strategy of Georgia (2014-2018);¹⁰⁵ the State Strategy for the Formation of the Labour Market in Geor-

101 Migration Textbook, 2017, Part XIV, Migration and Public Administration, pp. 511-512.

102 Government of Georgia, Ordinance №59 of March 15, 2013 On Approval of Migration Strategy of Georgia 2013-2015, <http://bit.ly/2oUkLjk> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

103 Government of Georgia Ordinance №622 of December 14, 2015 On Approval of Georgia's Migration Strategy 2016-2020, <http://bit.ly/2D1aFC0> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

104 Action Plan of the Migration Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020, <http://bit.ly/2FnA4Lv> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

105 Government of Georgia, Ordinance №226 of March 13, 2014 On Approval of the State Border Management Strategy of Georgia, <http://bit.ly/2Fin5Yh> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

gia (2015-2018);¹⁰⁶ the Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy of Georgia (2013-2020);¹⁰⁷ Georgia's Concept of Demographic Security (2016);¹⁰⁸ the National Strategy for Combating Organized Crime 2017-2020;¹⁰⁹ the Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia on Georgia's EU and NATO Membership for 2017-2020;¹¹⁰ and the 2017-2018 Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking.¹¹¹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has also developed a state programme for diaspora engagement.

Integrated border management

Georgia's IBM principles are based on the European model and are aimed at coordination and cooperation of the activities of all relevant institutions engaged in the process, both at subnational and international level.

A number of important steps have been taken by the Government of Georgia in recent years towards approximation of the State's IBM to EU standards. In particular, legislative and institutional frameworks have been harmonised. As a result, relevant infrastructure has been updated, modern technologies introduced and qualifications of human resources raised.

Combating irregular migration and document security

[According to the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons](#), since 2014 the MIA has been defined as the entity responsible for combating irregular migration on the territory of Georgia. The Migration Department operating within the MIA since 2014 ensures detection of foreigners in an irregular situation and implementation of the relevant procedures for their expulsion from the country. To aid detection of such persons, electronic software was developed, which processes information from the competent entities regarding the legal basis of foreigners staying in Georgia and identifies persons illegally present on the territory of Georgia.

Rapid progress has also been achieved in the area of document security. From 2010, citizens of Georgia were issued second generation biometric passports, travel documents containing highly technological protection against fraud. Since Fall of 2016, Georgia has been issuing third generation biometric passports equipped with even stronger protective mechanisms compared with the 2010 model. The introduction of a biometric passport system significantly increased the level of trustworthiness of documents issued by Georgia. Since 2011, the country has also been issuing electronic ID and residence cards. Establishment of high standards for document security largely stipulated effective implementation of VLAP with the EU. Consequently, as of 28 March 2017, citizens of Georgia who hold biometric passports can travel visa-free to EU/Schengen countries.

Return and readmission

The Agreement between the European Union and Georgia on the Readmission of Persons Residing without Authorisation has been effective since 1 March 2011. Aside from EU Georgia has concluded readmission agreements with Ukraine, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Moldova, Belarus and Iceland. Negotiations are currently underway with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Pakistan. To assist the effective implementation of the readmission agreement between Georgia and the EU, the Readmission Case Management Electronic System (RCMES) was created in 2013. The system receives and processes readmission applications from

106 Government of Georgia, Ordinance №199 of August 2, 2013 On Approval of State Strategy for the Formation of Labor Market of Georgia and Action Plan of Realization of State Strategy for Formation of Georgian Labor Market 2015-2018, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1981264> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

107 <http://mes.gov.ge/uploads/300.pdf> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

108 Parliament of Georgia, Resolution 5586-II c On Approval of "Georgia's Demographic Security Concept", <http://bit.ly/2Fg2XWu> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

109 Government of Georgia, Decree №235 On Approval of 2017-2018 Action Plan of the National Strategy of the 2017-2020 Strategy for Combating Organized Crime and the Strategy for Combating Organized Crime 2017-2020, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3660371> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

110 Government of Georgia, Communication Strategy of the Government of Georgia on Georgia's EU and NATO Membership for 2017-2020, http://eu-nato.gov.ge/sites/default/files/EU-NATO%20Communication%20Strategy_ENG.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

111 <https://goo.gl/5BGBXw> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

EU countries. By 2017, 18 European countries joined the system.¹¹² Given the effectiveness of the system, it has been (or there are plans for it to be) replicated and introduced in other countries as well.

Reintegration of returned migrants

Reintegration of returned migrants is one of the priorities of the Government of Georgia. Therefore, since 2015, in order to facilitate the reintegration process for returned migrants, the Government has started to systematically allocate necessary funds from the state budget. The reintegration programme is implemented by the MRA by means of funding targeted projects of those civil society organisations (CSOs) which win the open grant competitions. This ensures the transparency of the reintegration programme as well as the strengthening and development of the CSOs working in this field. It is worth mentioning that the programme covers both the capital and the Georgian regions.

In the frame of the reintegration programme, the general public is informed regularly regarding the assistance and services provided by the programme.

System of international protection

In recent years, significant legislative and institutional changes have been implemented for the improvement of the system of international protection. So as to achieve further approximation of the Georgian legislation to the international standards, the new Law of Georgia on International Protection was adopted in 2016, and has been effective since 1 February 2017. In addition to this, divisions for information acquisition about country of origin, status determination, quality assurance and training were created within the MRA. Moreover, the electronic database of asylum seekers and persons under international protection was improved and in 2017 Georgia started to issue biometric travel documents to persons holding humanitarian status.

The integration centre for refugees and persons holding humanitarian status also started to operate in 2017. For the first time, funding was allocated from the state budget to ensure implementation of the integration programmes and administration of the centre.

Entry and stay of foreigners in the country

Georgia's visa and residence permit policy has changed several times in recent years. As the result of the new Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, in 2014 a mechanism similar to the Schengen Visa Code system was created. In particular, new visa categories (A, B, C, D and T) were introduced and new types of residence permits defined (as these processes are interconnected). Moreover, since 2015 the MFA has been operating an electronic visa portal which allows foreigners to apply remotely via the internet and obtain their Georgian visa electronically.¹¹³ A similar type of service was also introduced by the PSDA – foreigners can apply remotely via the PSDA's website for extension of their residence permits.

In 2015, the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons was amended and citizens of countries with a visa-free regime with Georgia were allowed to stay for up to one year in the country, instead of 90 days in every 180-day period as was previously defined. This was done to encourage development of such priority sectors as tourism as well as with the aim of creating a favourable environment for foreign investment.

Migration statistics

The efforts towards improvement of migration data collection and analysis is carried out in several directions: in 2015, Georgia introduced the qualitatively new Medium Migration Profile, which is updated biannually; and

¹¹² Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, France, Belgium, Romania, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Spain, Lithuania, Latvia, Italy, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Finland and Slovenia.

¹¹³ Georgia E-visa Portal, <https://www.evisa.gov.ge/GeoVisa/> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Brief Migration Profiles are developed during the in-between periods, using the particular thematic areas identified in the MMP. Moreover, migration profile data sources are being diversified and their methodology evolved each year. In addition, research of a different scale using various methodologies is carried out on topics relevant to migration. Finally, the United Migration Analytical System (UMAS) is being developed. In a similar vein, 2016 saw final and detailed data regarding internal and external migration collected by Geostat during the 2014 national census made publicly available.

The UMAS combines administrative data (at the first stage) related to immigration, collected by various state entities, into a single database. The interconnection of several databases allows an improvement in the quality of the existing migration data, and quicker and more frequent data updating, as well as generation of new, previously non-existent data. The UMAS uses modern, so-called 'Big Data' technology for data compilation and processing. Since March 2017, the UMAS has already been processing real data obtained from various state entities, although at this stage analytical reports are only produced for internal use, with the purpose of improving data quality and further developing the analysis methodology and algorithms. Alongside data analysis, active steps are being taken with respect to institutionalising and ensuring the sustainability of the UMAS.

6.2. Legislative Framework

In the past five years, four major new laws have been adopted in the field of migration management:

A. The **Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship**¹¹⁴ has been effective since June 2014. The Law simplifies the determination of Georgian citizenship and modifies the naturalisation procedures. Furthermore, it is in full compliance with the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

B. The new **Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons**,¹¹⁵ which has been effective since September 2014, established new regulations for the entering and staying in Georgia of foreign citizens, introduced new visa and residence permit categories, and created the effective expulsion mechanism for persons with no legal basis for staying in Georgia. Several issues were identified in the process of implementation of the Law, triggering amendments in 2015, which altered some of the regulations related to visa and residence permit issuance.

C. The **Law of Georgia on Labour Migration**,¹¹⁶ effective since November 2015, largely regulates the norms of the labour emigration of Georgian citizens abroad, particularly emigration through intermediary organisations. The Law also foresees mechanisms for protection of the rights of labour emigrants. The Government of Georgia has also approved a corresponding bylaw regulating labour immigration.¹¹⁷

D. With the purpose of approximation to the best international and European standards, the new **Law of Georgia on International Protection**¹¹⁸ was adopted in 2016, and has been effective since 1 February 2017. The Law defines legislative mechanisms which on the one hand protect the rights of those persons who truly require international protection, making the asylum granting procedures more effective and ensuring a decision within a realistic timeframe, while on the other hand tightening the regulations preventing abuse of the asylum system in Georgia.

114 Organic Law of Georgia on Georgian Citizenship, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2342552> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

115 Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2278806> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

116 Law of Georgia on Labour Migration, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2806732?impose=translateEn> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

117 Government of Georgia, ordinance №417 of August 7, 2015 On Approving the Rule on Employment by a Local Employer of Aliens Holding no Georgian Permanent Residence Permit and Performance of Paid Labour Activities by such Aliens, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2941958> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

118 Law on International Protection, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3452780?impose=translateEn> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Other laws regulating international migration

- Law of Georgia on the Rules of Georgian Citizens' Entry into and Exit from Georgia (1993);
- Law of Georgia on Procedure for Registration of Citizens of Georgia and Foreigners Residing in Georgia, Issuance of Identity (Residence) Card and Passport of a Citizen of Georgia (1996);
- Law of Georgia on the State Border of Georgia (1998);
- Law of Georgia on Combating Trafficking in Persons (2006);
- Law of Georgia on Compatriots Residing Abroad and Diaspora Organizations (2011);
- Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories (2008);
- Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection (2011).

Moreover, strategic documents and agreements signed between Georgia and the EU provide important guidelines on how migration management should be developed in Georgia. These documents are: the Association Agreement (AA) between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States and Georgia, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, the Association Agenda between the European Union and Georgia, and the commitments of the VLAP with the EU.

6.3. Institutional Framework

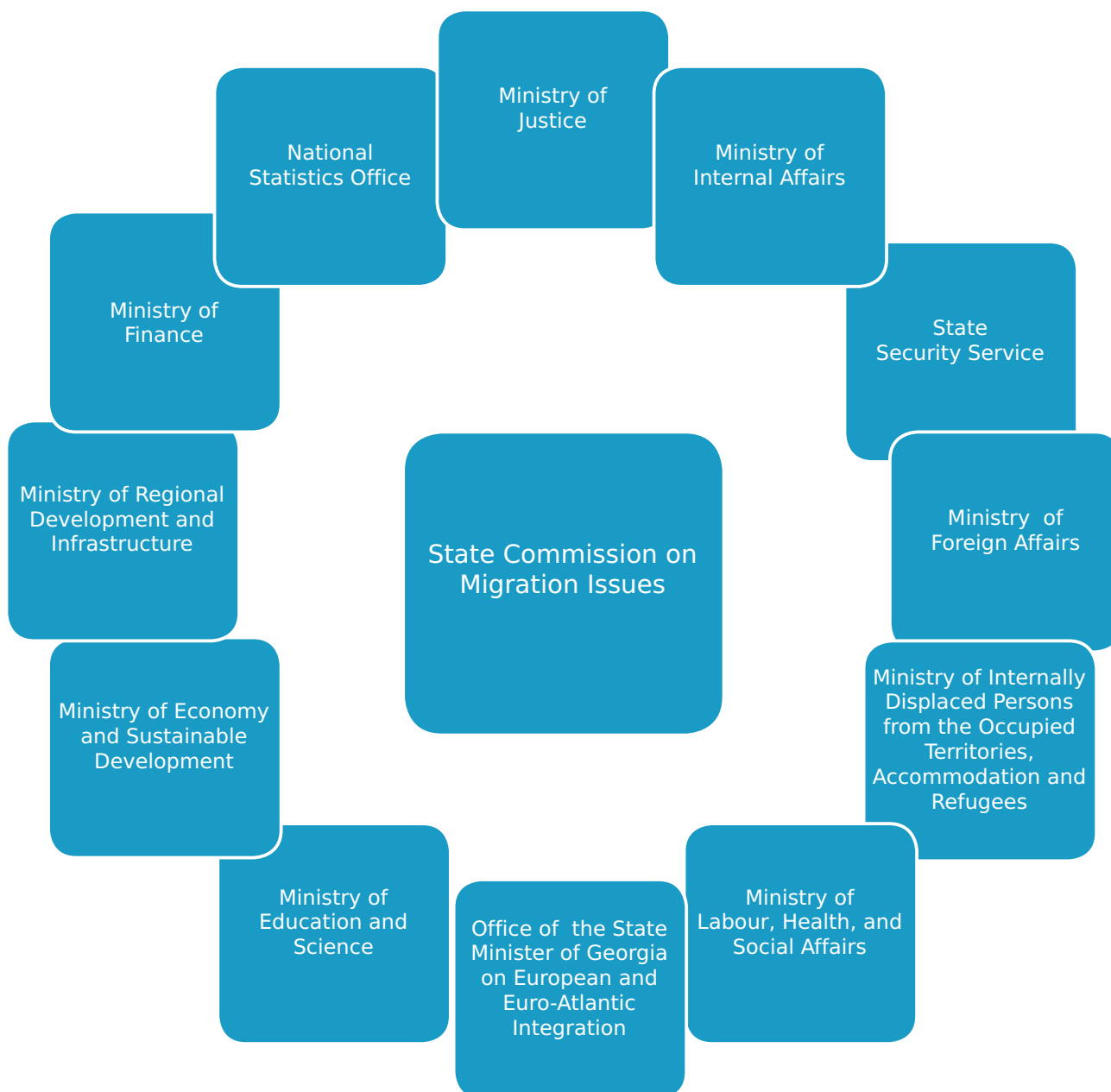
The State Commission on Migration Issues was established by the Government of Georgia in 2010 on the basis of Governmental Decree №314.¹¹⁹ The aim of the SCMI is to define and implement unified policy for the Government of Georgia in the field of migration and improve coordinated management of migratory processes. It is expected to achieve this goal through elaboration and implementation of research- and evidence-based migration policy; ensuring coordination of activities of entities engaged in migration management; and application of bilateral, regional and international cooperation formats and experience exchange, as well as through the active engagement of civil society and academia. In recent years, the SCMI's activities have developed dynamically in these directions.

In 2012, the SCMI Secretariat was formed with financial support from the EU. The function of the Secretariat is to assist the Commission's regular operations and provide expert and analytical support on migration-related issues. The Secretariat is hosted by the Public Service Development Agency under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia (MoJ).

The SCMI brings together high-level representatives from the state agencies below.

¹¹⁹ Government of Georgia, Ordinance №314 of October 13, 2010 On establishing State Commission on Migration Issues and Approving its statute, http://migration.commission.ge/files/scmi_ordinance_2017_eng_2_.pdf (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

Illustration 1. Member agencies of the SCMI



The chair of the Commission is the Ministry of Justice, and the co-chair is the Ministry of Interior.

Since 2013, seven international organisations and five national non-governmental organisations have had a consultative status in the SCMI.¹²⁰ Engagement of the non-governmental sector aims at supporting the Commission with additional expertise and encouraging inter- and intra-sectoral cooperation and experience exchange.

In order to study priority issues related to migration and prepare drafts of the decisions to be discussed at SCMI sittings, several subject-specific Working Groups (WGs) have been established within the Commission:¹²¹

1. Working Group on Statelessness;
2. Working Group on Consolidation of Reintegration Issues;
3. Working Group on Migration Strategy;

¹²⁰ The list of organisations with consultative status can be found on the SCMI website http://migration.commission.ge/index.php?article_id=59&clang=1 (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

¹²¹ The major directions of the Working Groups' activities can also be found on the SCMI website <http://bit.ly/2kE77hc> (last accessed: 31.10.2017).

4. Working Group for Setting Up a Unified Migration Analytical System;
5. Working Group on Migration Risk Analysis;
6. Working Group on Foreigner Integration;
7. Working Group on Migration and Development;

Organisations holding consultative status within SCMI are represented in the WGs, alongside state agencies.

7. Main Findings

The quality of the migration-related statistical data in Georgia, as in many other countries, needs to be improved. The data presented in this document is quite fragmented; in certain cases it supplements each other, while in others, due to methodological differences, it distorts a clear understanding of the situation. Nevertheless, analysis of the existing data and assessment of the migration management mechanisms in place allows the outlining of the following major findings.

Emigration

According to the 2014 Georgian census, the population decreased by 15% between 2002 and 2014. Given that the natural rate of increase during this period was quite stable, it can be assumed that increased emigration flows were one of the reasons for the decline.

- The **emigration rate** over the last decade has **increased**. The 2014 census shows that 75% of emigrants are in the 20-54 age category. Outflow of working and reproductive age population adversely affects the economic and demographic situation in the country.
- **The increase in legal migration from Georgia to the EU** is confirmed by the growing number of visas and residence permits issued by EU member states to Georgian citizens.
- According to all existing statistical data and estimates, **Russia continues to host the largest number of emigrants from Georgia**. However, data from the Federal Migration Service of Russia indicates that the net migration of Georgian citizens has been decreasing since 1997.
- Although the largest volume of remittances to Georgia still comes from Russia, its share in total volume of remittances is gradually decreasing, while the proportion of remittances from the EU-28 is increasing. A large share of remittances to Georgia, similar to many other countries, is spent on meeting basic needs. However, an **important part of remittances is also used on healthcare and education**, which ultimately contributes to the creation of a healthy and qualified labour force and promotes sustainable economic development.
- **The majority of emigrants possess more than secondary education**, although most of them do not manage to improve their level of education abroad. The socio-economic conditions and legal status of the Georgian diaspora, as well as their involvement in Georgia's socio-economic and cultural life, differ by destination country.
- In order to promote legal migration opportunities, **relevant state entities are working on the introduction and development of circular migration schemes**. Correctly planned and managed circular migration can reduce the level of unemployment whilst at the same time creating new, qualified labour.

- **There has been a declining tendency in the number of asylum seeker applications by Georgian citizens abroad** since 2012. There has also been a slight decrease in the number of Georgian citizens with refugee status abroad. During 2015-2016, most of the asylum applications filed by Georgian citizens were in Germany; while, as of 2016, the largest number of refugees from Georgia are to be found in France.
- **The number of cases of Georgian citizens being refused entry to EU/Schengen countries is significantly dropping from year to year.** It should be highlighted that in 2016 the number of cases of illegal border crossings by Georgian citizens detected at border checkpoints on Eastern European borders decreased by a factor of three compared to previous years.
- In 2016, the number of **detected cases of Georgian citizens illegally present in the 32 EU/Schengen countries decreased** compared to the previous two years. The majority of those Georgian nationals found to be illegally present in these countries were male, aged 18-34. This indicates that most of the Georgian citizens illegally living abroad are potentially part of the labour force and looking for employment opportunities in foreign countries.
- **The reintegration programmes for migrants returned to Georgia** are institutionalised within the MRA and have stable annual funding from the state budget. Among those services offered to returned migrants, the most in demand is business development consultation, which corresponds to the findings of an OECD study, according to which returned migrants are likely to invest (including in agriculture), start their own business, become self-employed.

Immigration

Although the existing data on immigrants is rather fragmented and incomplete, by basing analysis on various data sources it can be concluded that the number of immigrants in Georgia is increasing and that their contribution to the economic development of the country is becoming visible.

- According to Geostat, **immigrants in Georgia are primarily citizens of neighbouring countries** (Russia, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine).
- Compared to the previous year, in 2015 **the number of residence permits issued to foreigners in Georgia almost tripled**, while the decrease in the number of residence permits issued in 2016 can be primarily attributed to legislative changes.
- A relatively new and **important group of immigrants to Georgia consist of educational immigrants**, who mostly come in order to obtain tertiary education. In the period 2006-2016, foreign students from Azerbaijan, India, Turkey, Nigeria, Russia and Iraq constituted the biggest group amongst those foreigners enrolled at Georgian higher education institutions.
- **Foreign students make a considerable contribution to the development of both Georgia's economy and its institutions of higher education.** Total annual expenditure by foreign students in Georgia amounted to 195 million GEL in 2016, which is 0.6% of the country's GDP. Moreover, the tuition paid by foreign students enables Georgian higher education institutions to invest in infrastructure and technologies and develop new educational programmes.
- **There were about twice as many work residence permits issued in 2015 and 2016 than in previous years.** The majority of work permit holders in Georgia are citizens of Turkey, China, India or Iran. The majority of foreigners in Georgia are employed in the following sectors: construction, trade and repair of motor cars, household goods and personal items. Most of the positions occupied by foreigners require a secondary or vocational qualification.
- **Among those foreign citizens investing in immovable property in Georgia, citizens of Georgia's neighbouring countries** (Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Azerbaijan) **stand out.** Presumably, part of this

group consists of former Georgian citizens who have migrated to these countries and are willing to retain stronger links with Georgia through investing in property.

- In recent years, **the number of entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial entities founded by foreign citizens in Georgia has increased**. Such entities are more likely to be established by citizens of Iran, Turkey or Egypt. Compared to previous years, in 2016 there was a **rise in the number of foreigners registered as taxpayers, as well as in the amount of tax they paid**.
- **The number of refugees and persons holding humanitarian status in Georgia has been increasing in the past five years (2012-2016)**, although in 2016 the number of asylum seekers dropped significantly compared to the previous two years. Over half of asylum applicants in the period 2012-2016 were citizens of Iraq.
- Although the existing legislative framework regulates a number of questions related to immigrant integration in Georgia, there remain **issues which need to be resolved in order to make the immigrant integration process more active**.

Internal migration

The major stocks of internal migrants in Georgia consist of persons displaced as a result of armed conflict (IDPs); persons, affected by environmental hazards (ecomigrants), and rural-urban-rural migrants (migrating with the aim of improving their socio-economic conditions).

- **In 2016, the total number of all registered IDPs constituted approximately 7% of the total population of Georgia**. The number of IDPs from Abkhazia is almost ten times larger than that of IDPs from Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.
- **There is a limited amount of statistical data regarding ecomigrants**, which does not provide sufficient bases for conclusions. Moreover, the (little studied) issue of ecomigrants' integration remains problematic.
- **In the period between the two population censuses (2002-2014), the rural population saw large decline**. Consequently, the urban-rural population ratio has changed considerably: the share of urban population in total population has increased by almost 5%.

Trafficking in Persons

According to the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report 2017, Georgia serves as a source, transit and destination country for TIP.

- **In the last five years (2012-2016), the number of investigations of human trafficking cases fluctuated between ten and 20 cases per year**.
- Georgian citizens are **more likely to be subjected to labour exploitation abroad**.
- Once a victim/statutory victim has been identified, **the state institutions provide adequate remedies** in the form of shelter accommodation and compensation, as well as psychological, medical and legal assistance.
- Consistent with the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report 2016, Georgia **moved from the tier 2 group of countries to the tier 1 group and maintained its ranking among tier 1 countries in the 2017 report**.

8. Major Challenges and Recommendations

Major Challenges	Recommendations
<p>Various institutions in Georgia collect migration data using different methodology. The most problematic is immigration data, since there is no comprehensive mechanism which would allow for accurate registering of an immigrant's purpose of visit and duration of stay. Furthermore, studies that examine the interconnection between migration and development in Georgia or provide policy planning analysis of the existing situation are scarce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to work on developing the Unified Migration Analytical System. ■ Elaborate and introduce a mechanism for immigrant registration. ■ Support research on migration issues. Studies which examine the actual opinions, needs and abilities of migrants are of particular importance, as they can serve as a basis for the development of relevant services and the policy planning process.
<p>Remittances play a significant role in improving the well-being of recipient families, although they are rarely directed at long-term development or investment projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve the level of financial education and support development of entrepreneurial skills among emigrants and their family members, so that they can plan/manage their budgets more effectively and acquire complete information regarding existing bank products, investment opportunities and basic principles of business administration. ■ It is important that emigrants maintain more control over the remittances they send and are able to spend them appropriately, taking into consideration their family's needs. ■ Saving schemes in the country need to be improved in order to promote more productive utilisation of remittances.
<p>Foreign students are a significant group of immigrants in Georgia. They have a major positive effect on both the country's institutions of higher education and its economy. Consequently, it is essential to work on maintaining and expanding this group of immigrants. However, unless certain conditions are met, the number of educational immigrants in Georgia may decrease.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It is essential that the increase in the number of foreign-language academic programmes at Georgian institutions of higher education in recent years goes hand in hand with improvement of the quality of the teaching and student services offered; the creation/enhancement of student service-centres would support the provision of timely and useful information on various issues (including visa- and residence-related issues) to foreign students. It is also important to provide foreign students with an opportunity to acquire practical experience in Georgia, alongside the theoretical knowledge they attain.

<p>Unemployment remains one of the major problems in Georgia and a significant factor determining emigration, and research of the labour market shows that the majority of positions occupied by foreigners require secondary or vocational education. The low qualification level of labour available domestically was named as the primary reason for employment of foreign workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Harmonise labour market priorities with education priorities. ■ Improve and popularise vocational education programmes.
<p>Immigrant integration is a relatively unstudied field in Georgia. Although the Georgian legislation respects the major rights of immigrants, the existing studies indicate a need for their better integration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create an institutional framework for the integration of long-term immigrants in Georgia. ■ Elaborate specific research-based mechanisms for promoting immigrant integration.