

CULTURE FOR EVERYONE: INDICATOR FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

POLICY PAPER SUMMARY



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Authors: Marine Solomonishvili, Rakhil Solomonia, Thea Galdava



Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform is an association of local and international non-commercial legal entities registered in Georgia, aiming to promote and implement the goals set by the Joint Declarations of the Prague, Warsaw and Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summits and the EU-Georgia Association Agreement of European Neighborhood Policy and other joint events.

Authors: Marine Solomonishvili, Rakhil Solomonia, Thea Galdava

Editing by: Inge Snip

Summary

All the provisions of the EU Association Agreement entered into force and became effective as of July 1, 2016. One of the core directives among the obligations, determined in the EU Association Agreement, is related to the protection and support of cultural diversity as enshrined in Chapter XVII, articles 362, 363 of the Association Agreement supported by the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. In addition, the development of so called artistic industries is crucial. Nowadays, even the idea that cultural diversity, including cultural heritage of ethnical and religious minorities, should serve economic growth, promote export and employment, or that this field requires development, is neither popular nor duly studied.

From October 1, 2008, the Georgian Government ratified the 2005 UNESCO Convention. However, the implementation process to comply with the obligations undertaken under the document is not consistent. For example, according to the Convention, once in every four years the State shall submit a detailed report on the implementation of the Convention obligations. This report should even have been prepared back in 2012 for submission to the UNESCO head office. However, the report is not prepared and is still in the working process. In addition, involvement of the civil society in preparation of the report is limited. Moreover, there is no the action plan for the implementation of the Convention in Georgia.

Except for this, there is no inter-agency coordination in terms of cultural issues, while preparing and implementing different action plans. Participation of the civil society, especially representatives of the ethnical/religious minorities, is limited in the process of elaboration, monitoring and implementation of the cultural strategy and action plan and other related action plans.

The goal of the present Policy Document is to demonstrate the current situation, solutions for the problems, as well as finding a relevant alternative, considering the European and world-wide experience in this field. This document does not deal with all the problematic issues related to the preparation of a culture policy document in Georgia, but only discusses those matters such as: culture of ethnical minorities and its role in the development of the Country, culture and artistic industry, equal access to culture in the capital city and provinces etc. In addition, the document identifies a problem related to professional growth of the public servants and the improvement of participation of the ethnical/religious minorities. For the due development of the cultural diversity in Georgia, it is required to make decisions that are based on factual data and studies in this field, past experience and new trends in the world. This is one of the basics for enforcing European values in the Country and its sustainable development.

This policy document provides recommendations, including:

- Establish councils in the office of the Prime-Minister (inter-disciplinary body unifying representatives of the ministries, experts, representatives of civil society, international organizations, business and media); b) in local self-government bodies, unifying local public servants, experts, representatives of local civil society (including ethnical/religious minorities and other vulnerable groups), business and media. These councils will study the needs and elaborate documents on the development of cultural and artistic potential in the region as well as promote the identification and study of cultural and artistic potential etc.
- Develop a special fund (with the assistance of the State and international organizations) or allocating funds in the local budget that will be spent on the implementation of culture project ideas through a transparent and competitive process, as well as financing needs and project ideas of ethnic/religious minorities.
- Promote the establishment of informational centers and social spaces or improving existing centers that will, in addition to increasing access to information, support the preparation of local cultural projects, their implementation and coverage.
- Consider training staff in the local municipalities in the field of culture. Promote professional growth, participation in international exchanges and cultural projects of public servants and civil society beneficiaries, including the ethnical/religious minorities.
- Raise awareness of public servants and civil society regarding importance of development of the art industries;
- Elaborate, for the purposes of implementation of articles 6 and 7 of 2005 UNESCO Convention, an action plan with the participation of representatives of the government and civil society. In the State budget there should be funds allocated for women in culture, development of individual forms of cultural self-determination of ethnical/religious minorities and other socially vulnerable groups, promotion of business-incubators and social enterprises.
- Promote simple regulations of economic provisions in the field of culture, such as the law on the institute of sponsors, benefits in the tax system, low interest loans etc.
- Promote the development of cultural and historical inheritance of ethnical/religious minorities in Georgia, by the Ministry for Diaspora and National Tourism Administration, which should include sustainable development of touristic routes together with the foreign-residing Georgian diaspora for the purposes of promotion and popularization of Georgian cultural diversity.

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- Protect human rights in accordance with the UNESCO Convention in the State programs, protection of should be strengthened with a focus on the protection of cultural inheritance and self-sustainability of ethnical and religious minorities, right to receive education in mother tong, including in conflict zones.
 - Establish a Civil Society Monitoring Group in the office of the Prime Minister with participation of the cultural group of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Platform and invited experts that will carry out studies and assessments of different State documents regarding cultural matters (including, Strategy and Action Plan “Culture 2025”, State Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020) for Civil Equality and Integration, 4 Years report of UNESCO 2005 Convention Implementation).

EaP Civil Society Forum Georgian National Platform

Tbilisi, Georgia 0108

50, Rustaveli ave. II entrance, 4 fl.

Tel/Fax: +995 322 931128

Cell.: +995 599 551128

E-mail: np_events@ei-lat.ge

URL: <http://eap-csf.ge>