

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION POLICY: PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(In accordance with the EU-Georgia Association Agreement)

POLICY PAPER SUMMARY



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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.

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Summary

This report and its recommendations are the third in a series of recommendations for innovation policy, prepared once every three years. The issues under consideration defined six years ago have remained the same, due to the fact that they are based on international, namely European, experience. Though, in each particular *Recommendations* emphasis was placed on issues especially important for the time of the *Recommendations'* publication. The present Recommendations focus on the research system problems, however, the general issues of the research, development and innovation (RDI) management are also reviewed to some extent.

The RDI issues represent an integral part of the EU-Georgia Association Strategy. They are included in all the fundamental documents related to EU integration, namely: 1. The Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States on one hand, and Georgia on the other hand; 2. The EU-Georgia Association Agenda; 3. The Annual National Action Plans for the Association's Agenda Implementation; 4. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement (DCFTA); 5. Georgia's Action Plan for the Implementation of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement (DCFTA) 2014 - 2017.

All of these documents include a special chapter called «Cooperation In Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Fields». Moreover, into other sections and chapters these issues are also mentioned (for example, in *Standardization, metrology, accreditation and conformity assessment*, as well as in chapters relating to *transport, energy, agriculture, health care* and other sectors).

In advanced countries (in particular, the EU member states and the whole European Union), the RDI system formation is based on the relevant policy. The quality of the RDI policy is crucial for successful development. It is more important than the quality of any sectoral policy. In addition, it determines the quality of some sectors entirely (such e. g. as the higher education sector).

Today we can conclude that in RDI field Georgia has refused neo-liberal paradigm of "no policy" ("the market will sort out/regulate everything"), which has proven to be especially dangerous. In Georgia, it has affected the system which ensures the innovative development of the country, of which the components are the higher education, research and research service systems (the latter includes intellectual property protection, scientific and technological information, standardization, agricultural testing, quality management, geological, metrological, meteorological, hydrological, seismological and many other services). It have led to the situation, in which there is already an apparent lack of personnel having an engineering background and vocational education in the country.

Unfortunately, still we cannot say that Georgia has progressed to the «development on the basis of innovation policy», as most important decisions again are made without adopting an overall strategy and are based on opportunistic considerations. In the previous recommendations (2013), this stage was called «the government supports the innovative development».

As for research support, an especially unsatisfactory conditions can be seen in the sectors with the most promising prospects for development. For example, research intensities in the food industry, agriculture, energy and construction are 10 to 40 times lower compared to the global average level, not to mention developed countries. This fact must be taken into account in the process of improving the research system. The “mechanical” criteria, proposed by some “reformers” for evaluation of research organizations, must not serve as a guide.

Therefore, the government should:

1. Avoid hasty decisions in evaluation of research institutions and refuse application of any incorrect criteria.
2. Ensure as soon as possible the functioning of the national registry and statistical accounting for research activities and research output, enabling the possibility to plan and measure activities.
3. Restore the revoked status of legal entities to all institutes to enable all of them to work more efficiently.
4. Set to research system, as well as to individual research institutions specific goals related to the development of Georgia (elaborated in collaboration with research community in accordance with international practice)
5. In case of merging or establishing new institutions follow objectives determined in paragraph 4, if applicable.
6. Define and approve the rate of research funding growth which will meet the European integration process.
7. Postpone the evaluation of research institutions until tangible results of tasks referred to in paragraph 4 have been accumulated.

In general, the government should implement the following activities in accordance with international (mostly European) practices in the research, development and innovation field:

- To concentrate research, development and innovation management to one agency (according to the European model. Currently, it is split between two Ministries).
- Elaborate and adopt Georgia’s innovative development strategy, which will ensure the balancing of all its subsystems.

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- Draft a new law (set of laws) concerning research and innovation activities, in which all areas/aspects of these activities will be balanced.

We hope after the new Prime Minister of Georgia will be appointed, Parliament and Government of Georgia will consider, and pay special attention to, these recommendations and request the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economy, as well as other ministries, to act in compliance with the experience of EU and EaP countries.

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