



# The Georgia Governance Index 2021



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



საქართველოს პოლიტიკის ინსტიტუტი  
GEORGIAN INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

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**Tbilisi  
2021**



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GEORGIAN INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

## About

The Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP) is a Tbilisi-based non-profit, non-partisan, research and analysis organization. GIP works to strengthen the organizational backbone of democratic institutions and promote good governance and development through policy research and advocacy in Georgia. It also encourages public participation in civil society-building and developing democratic processes. The organization aims to become a major center for scholarship and policy innovation for the country of Georgia and the wider Black Sea region. To that end, GIP is working to distinguish itself through relevant, incisive research, extensive public outreach, and a bold spirit of innovation in policy discourse and political conversation.

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# Abbreviations

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AA	- Association Agreement
CEC	- Central Elections Commission of Georgia
CBS	- Civil Service Bureau of Georgia
CPI	- Consumer Price Index
CSO	- Civil Society Organization
DTDA	- Danish Trade Union Development Agency
ECHR	- European Court of Human Rights
ECJ	- European Court of Justice
EU	- The European Union
FDI	- Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
GGI	- Georgia Governance Index
GIP	- Georgian Institute of Politics
GOC	- Georgian Orthodox Church
GOV	- Government of Georgia
GPB	- Georgia Public Broadcasting
GYLA	- Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
HPP	- Hydroelectric Power Plants
IPRM	- Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism
IDFI	- Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
ISFED	- International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy
JSC	- Joint- Stock Company
LPS	- Law of Georgia on Public Service
MFA	- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
MOH	- Ministry of the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia
MOESD	- Ministry of Economic and Sustainable Development of Georgia
MOF	- Ministry of Finance of Georgia

# Abbreviations

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MP	-	Member of Parliament
MRDI	-	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCDC	-	National Center of Disease Control and Public Health
NDI	-	National Democratic Institute
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
ODIHR	-	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD/ACN	-	The OECD Anti-Corruption Network
OGP	-	Open Government Partnership
OSCE	-	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAR	-	Public Administration Reform
PMCG	-	Policy and Management Consulting Group
RIA	-	Regulatory Impact Assessment
SIGMA	-	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SNGP	-	Substantial NATO-Georgia Package
SSS of Georgia	-	State Security Service of Georgia
SSPS	-	Special State Protection Service of Georgia
UN	-	United Nations
UNM	-	United National Movement
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
US	-	The United States of America
VAT	-	Value Added Tax
WHO	-	World Health Organization



## Executive Summary

The Georgia Governance Index (GGI) analyzes and measures the performance of Georgia as a country in four key areas of governance: democracy and human rights (democratic governance), effective state and state institutions (effective governance) social and economic policies (socio-economic governance) and foreign and security policy (external governance). While the index focuses mostly on the Georgian state authorities it also includes analysis of other actors, including political parties, civil society organizations, and external players.

While numerous indices and rankings include Georgia in their worldwide or regional analyses, a context-specific, country-focused in-depth annual exploration of Georgia's performance is still lacking. No other country-based organisation has so far made this attempt. While GGI certainly partly converges with international indices in terms of both methodology and empirics, it provides a unique inside-out view, as well as innovative methodological tools. GIP's index will communicate Georgia's democratic and economic performance to the Georgian public and a variety of stakeholders, as there was an increasing demand to have a comprehensive domestic report on the subject.

In terms of methodology, GGI employs both qualitative and quantitative techniques and epistemologies. The grading system is based on the GGI Expert Survey which was conducted among forty Georgian experts working in different domains. The quantitative survey was supplemented by qualitative analyses conducted by GIP's team.

In terms of results, overall the first GGI depicts a bleak picture of Georgia throughout 2021. Georgia's performance was suboptimal in all four areas of governance. The country's records were especially poor in the areas of democratic governance and effective governance while the other two areas also received below average scores. Therefore, it is not surprising that the areas of democratic and effective governance dominated the list of challenges Georgia faced in 2021. Provision of justice and judicial reforms were identified as the biggest failures, followed by poor management of pandemics, contested elections and failed EU mediation.

## Key Findings

### Democratic Governance

- **Democratic governance – the weakest link.** Among the four governance areas studied by GGI democratic governance suffered most throughout 2021. It also received the lowest score in the GGI Expert Survey. The continuous political crisis, contested elections, failure of judicial reform, violence against journalists and protesters, political polarization and radicalization were among the major challenges faced by democratic governance during the year.
- **Provision of justice and (failure of) judicial reform.** Provision of justice and failure of judicial reform were identified both by the GGI Expert Survey and the GIP Index task force as the most problematic areas among all categories of all four governance areas. Provision of justice and judicial reforms were also the only categories which failed to receive a double-digit score in the GGI Expert Survey (7.5 and 2.5 points out of 100 respectively).
- **Electoral reform and contested elections.** Some aspects of electoral reform, such as the changing of the composition of the central election administration, can be partially considered as a step forward towards higher standards of democratic governance. However, the contested elections and especially the uneven playing field and radicalized pre- and post-election environment remain serious challenges for Georgia's democratic governance.
- **Civil society – strong but with challenges.** Civil society continues to be an impactful non-state actor. Yet many CSO's suffer from the usual problems, such as donor dependency and lack of trust and communication with the population. The media landscape and some of the CSOs remain polarized along party-political lines.
- **Judicial reform long overdue.** A genuine judicial reform seems to be the most urgent reform and should be prioritized by the government in 2022, according to both surveyed experts and the authors of this report. Next to the judiciary, electoral reform needs to be finalized, and law-enforcement bodies and prosecutor's office need to be depoliticized.

## Effective Governance

- **Effective governance.** Effective governance was another problematic category which received a second-lowest assessment (27.5 points out of 100) in the GGI Expert survey, coming after only democratic governance. Major challenges include informal governance, the fight against political corruption and the failure of the authorities to extend the state's monopoly of power to all societal segments and to incorporate the occupied territories.
- **Areas of limited statehood widened.** The Georgian Orthodox Church and far-right groups have emerged as new areas of limited statehood in 2021, where the state authorities refuse to make use of their right of monopoly of power. The violence against journalists and protesters during the LGBT rally is a case in point. The state's monopoly of power continues to be limited in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and the South Ossetia (Tskhinvali Region). On the other hand, the ruling of ECJ on IDP rights was an important step forward towards better protection of human rights in the occupied territories.
- **Informal governance – the major challenge.** Informal governance remains the major challenge to Georgia's effective governance and stateness as Bidzina Ivanishvili's influence on state authorities remains uncontested. In the GGI Expert Survey, fighting informal governance received 12.5 points out of 100, the third lowest score and coming only after provision of judiciary and judicial reform.
- **Stalled anti-corruption reforms.** Informal governance also fuels political corruption while anti-corruption reforms were somewhat stalled throughout 2021. Anti-corruption reforms were also mentioned as a top priority for 2022 by the GGI Expert Survey. Anti-corruption reform should include the establishment of an independent anti-corruption body with investigative competences.
- **Provision of public services.** Provision of public services received the highest score (47.5) among all indicators of effective governance. Nevertheless, serious gaps and challenges remain. Implementation of public administration reform often depends on political context, which in 2021 resulted into the delay of the adoption of the new PAR roadmap.

## Social and Economic Governance

- **Better performer but with challenges.** Georgia's performance in social and economic governance received 32.5 points out of 100 in the GGI Expert Survey which puts it on second place, coming after only external governance. Nevertheless, it suffers from major challenges and lacks a holistic long-term reform vision. The state authorities lack a comprehensive long-term structural reform agenda in key areas, such as education, social and the labor market. Not enough attention is paid to the attraction of Foreign Direct Investments and export diversification. Political considerations and election campaigns dominate the socio-economic agendas of the state authorities and political parties.
- **Strong economic recovery but growing inflation.** In 2021 Georgia experienced relatively strong economic recovery but this was accompanied by high inflation and tight monetary policy, which threatens economic growth and inclusiveness. The sharp rise in prices is particularly acute for vulnerable groups of the society.
- **Slow vaccination.** The slow vaccination process became a major domestic problem in Georgia throughout 2021. Coupled with political uncertainties and other domestic problems the vaccination delays undermine public trust towards governance and vaccination process. They also negatively affect the business environment and the attraction of foreign direct investment.
- **Long-term reform agenda is needed.** The GGI Survey identified reforms in healthcare and pharmacy as the most important reform priority for 2022. Other reform suggestions for 2022 include labour market policies, the introduction of minimum wages and unemployment insurance, reforms of the health and social assistance systems as well as the education system.

## External Governance

- **Georgia's European Integration has slowed down.** Problems with democracy and the domestic political crisis in Georgia negatively impacted Georgia's relations with its Euro-Atlantic partners and endangered Georgia's European prospects. Georgia needs to regain the trust of the international community as a reliable and stable aspiring democracy.
- **3+3 Format a new major challenge.** Russia remains the major external challenge to Georgia's national security and domestic political and economic order. Russian threats, including disinformation and hybrid warfare, should be taken more seriously. New regional initiatives with Russia's participation, such as the 3+3 format, emerged

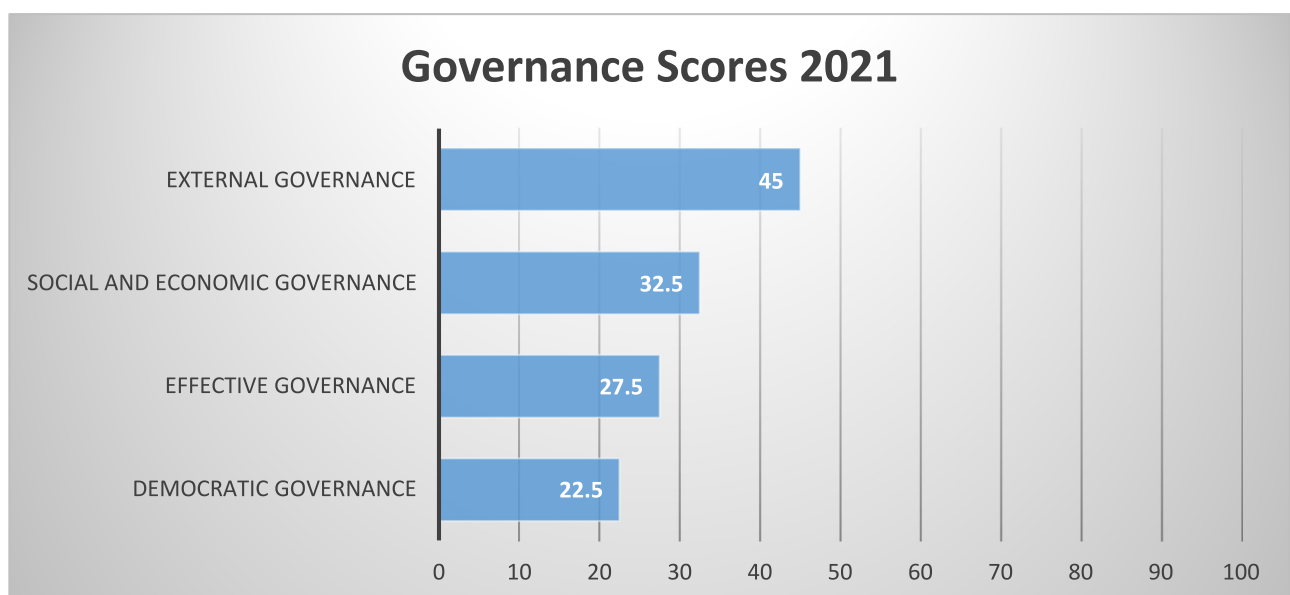
as another regional risk to Georgia's security in 2021.

- **Success of regional diplomacy.** Georgia's diplomacy during and after the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war, including management of a difficult neutral balance between two neighboring states and mediation in the prisoner swap, were praised as a major regional success by the GGI Expert Survey.
- **New military pact with the US.** While overall relations with the West suffered because of the political crisis and democratic problems in Georgia, a new military agreement with the US stood out as a rare success and was praised by the experts surveyed as an important achievement in 2021 in Georgia's external governance.
- **Georgia's foreign policy success depends on democratic reforms.** A major challenge for 2022 will be to restore the country's tarnished image in the eyes of the international community. To achieve this, it is necessary to enhance democratic reforms and recover from the longstanding political crisis.

## Introduction

2021 was a difficult year for Georgia. The country experienced a continuous political and economic crisis which was further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence it is no surprise that all four areas of governance studied by the GGI (democratic, effective, socio-economic and external) suffered from major challenges. Both the analysis conducted by GIP's analytical task force and the GGI Expert Survey were rather critical in their assessments. None of the governance areas received a positive assessment and all failed to pass the important 50 mark threshold on a scale of zero to hundred (figure 1). However, there were significant differences in assessments of individual governance areas. Unsurprisingly, Georgia's performance on democratic governance was assessed very negatively and received only 22.5 points out of 100 (figure 1). Both the experts surveyed and the authors of the report identified a lack of provision of justice and failed judicial reform as well as the contested nature of the elections and violations of some political and civil rights as the most significant challenges throughout 2021. The case was the same with the low assessment received for Georgia's performance on effective governance (27.5 points out of 100, see figure 1). Here, informal governance and political corruption seem to be the most detrimental issues undermining a good and inclusive performance by the country's institutions. Social and economic governance received 32.5 points out of 100. The GGI Expert Survey gave the highest score to the country's performance in external governance (45 out of 100, see figure 1).

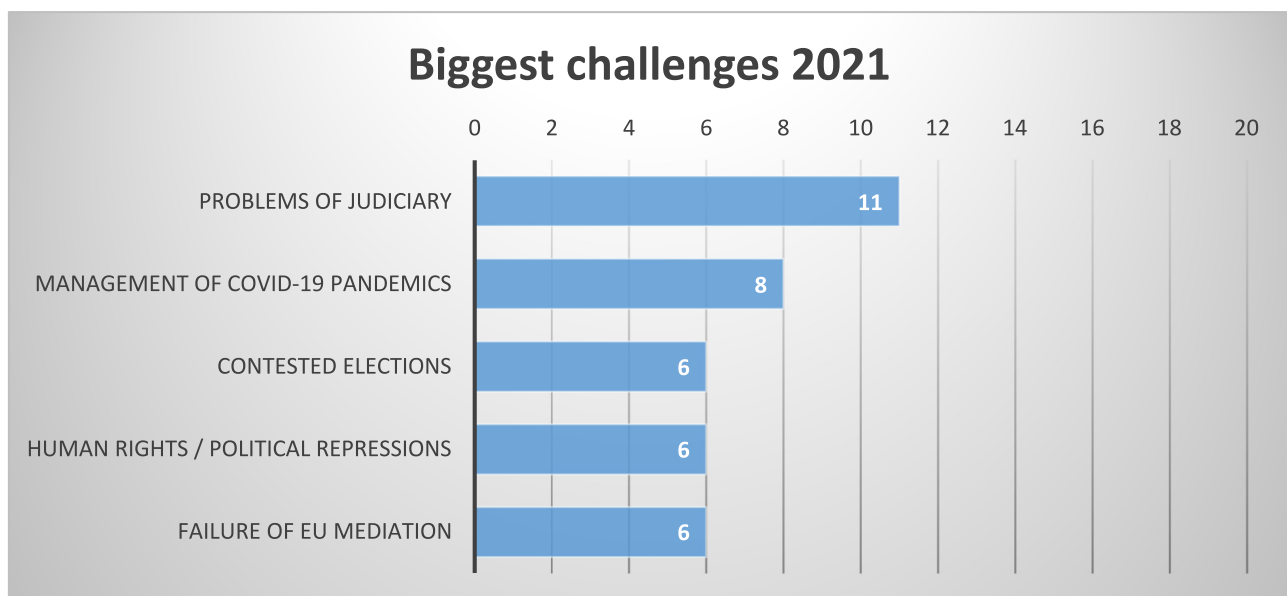
Figure 1: How would you assess Georgia's performance on the governance areas in 2021 (standardized on a scale of 0-100 (best)?



Another important goal of the GGI was to identify the main gaps in each of the four governance areas. Figure 2 shows the aggregated results of all responses received in the GGI Expert Survey. Problems with the judiciary were identified as the single most important issue

across all four governance areas. Specifically, judicial corporatism<sup>1</sup>, lack of transparency, politicization of the judiciary and selective justice were identified as a major blow to both effective and democratic governance in Georgia, and also as having an impact on social and economic governance as well as external governance. Next to judicial failure, another major challenge mentioned throughout 2021 was management of the Covid-19 pandemic which ravaged the country during the whole year. Other challenges included the contested nature of the 2021 local elections and the problematic electoral environment, frequent violations of political rights and civil liberties, as well as the failure of EU mediation between the government and the opposition and the resulting cooling of relations with the EU.

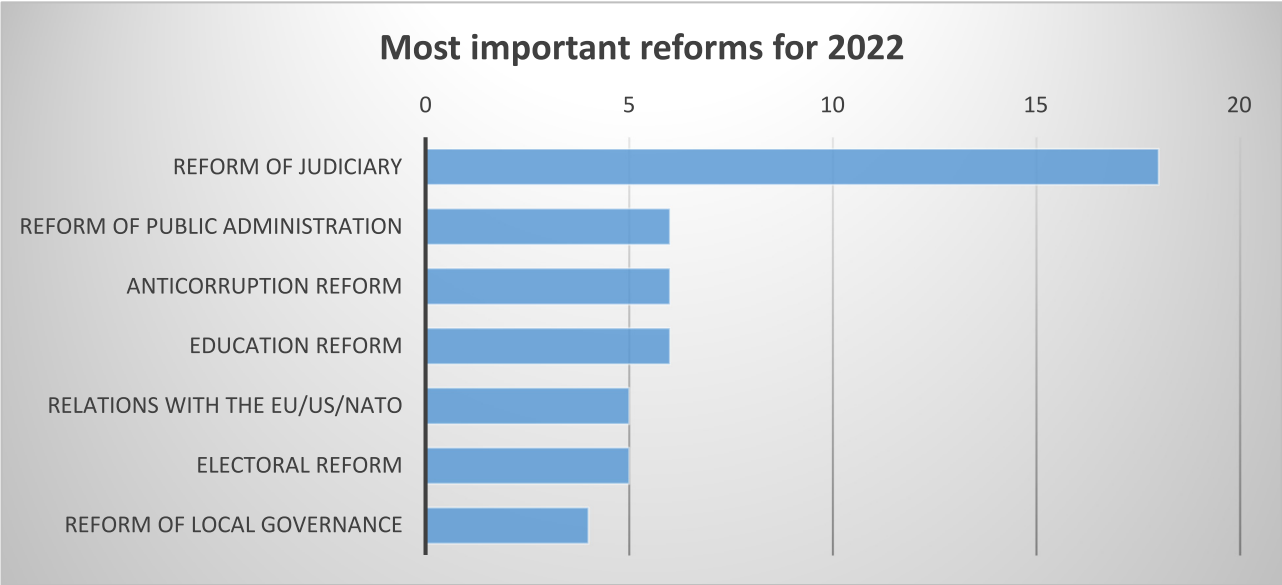
Figure 2: In your opinion, what were the largest challenges in 2021 in Georgia? (all mentions)



Finally, the GGI also mapped and analyzed the most important reform ideas for improving Georgia's governance performance in 2022. Here, the GGI Expert Survey again delivered unambiguous results: the reform of the judiciary was identified as by far the most important step to improve the country's performance in all four governance areas analyzed by the index (figure 3). Moreover, unlike in some other areas, the judiciary was identified by both experts and index authors as the single most important areas where all reform attempts have notoriously failed with the situation only worsening. Next to the judiciary, other suggestions for steps forward included continuation of public administration reform, revitalization of the somewhat stalled anticorruption reforms, improvement of relations with Western partners, and finalization of electoral reform (figure 3).

<sup>1</sup> Judicial corporatism refers to a disproportionate influence of an organized group of judges on the functioning of the judiciary. By using various mechanisms the same group of judges weakens the independence of the judiciary and subdues the justice system to the influence of the executive body (Erkvania & Lebanidze 2021).

Figure 3: In your opinion, what are the three most important reforms or ideas for Georgia for 2022? (all mentions)





## The Goal of the Report

The Georgia Governance Index (GGI) studies Georgia's performance in four governance areas: democratic, effective, social and economic, and external. In doing so, the report aims to identify the main challenges and gaps but also the positive developments in different governance areas of Georgia and to provide policy-relevant recommendations on how to mitigate the risks and improve governance quality.

This index is aimed at a wide audience including politicians and political parties, civil society representatives, think-tanks, NGOs, political foundations, international organizations, international and domestic observers, and pundits, as well as to wider public with an interest in Georgian governance affairs. The index was presented in Tbilisi with the aim of better informing the Georgian public and international community about the challenges inherent to Georgia's governance and democratization processes; placing Georgia's reforms in an international context; and advocating for Georgia's Euro- Atlantic integration efforts. The index will help strengthen the accountability of government and political actors to their constituents and promote more transparent governance. Additionally, it will help Georgian government receive constructive feedback from civil society activists, as well as Georgian think tanks and expert community, on their policies and planned reforms. For civil society, this index will provide a platform to voice their concerns and provide constructive policy suggestion.

## Conceptualization

In terms of the conceptual framework, the GGI utilizes the concept of embedded democracy, which was developed by German political scientist Wolfgang Merkel. Embedded democracy consists of five partial regimes: civil rights, political rights, electoral regime, horizontal accountability, and effective power to govern (Merkel 2004). The five regimes are embedded with each other internally, and further connected to other contextual conditions externally, such as civil society, stateness and socio-economic requisites (Merkel 2004). Various aspects of the concept are components of the majority of the indexes and rankings that measure different aspects of democracy. Some rankings have even been specifically modelled on the concept (e.g. Democracy Barometer). Embedded democracy as a concept consists of several partial regimes which cover aspects of democratic and effective governance as well as including economic and stateness-related contextual conditions, while still maintaining a focus on democratic credentials. In the GGI, we include all partial regimes and context requisites to measure the state of good governance in Georgia. However, we add one additional dimension: external governance with a focus on Euro-Atlantic Integra-

tion and peaceful management of security risks. While inclusion of the domain of foreign and security policy is not a usual practice in the measuring of the majority of democracy or good governance indices, its incorporation does add an important methodological and empirical missing link. Georgia, as a EU's neighbor country, significantly depends for its democratization quest on the EU and the USA. Literature on democratization often mentions practices such as lesson-drawing, emulation, conditionality, diffusion, and adoption of democratic norms to underline the external dimension of democratization. Based on this, it is assumed that Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration and democratization are positively correlated, and a degree of Euro-Atlantic approximation as well as peaceful management and adaptation to security risks can be considered as one of the criteria or prerequisites of further democratic consolidation.

## Index Structure

Based on the conceptual framework of embedded democracy, the Georgia Governance Index (GGI) examines the performance of Georgia in four key areas of good governance. Each of the key areas are further divided into four subcategories, which are then individually analysed by the authors of the index and scores are assigned by the respondents to the survey.

- **Democratic governance (Democracy and human rights)**
  - o Civil and political rights
  - o Electoral regime
  - o Horizontal accountability
  - o Civil society and non-state actors
- **Effective governance (stateness and state institutions)**
  - o Public administration
  - o Alternative forms of legitimacy
  - o Informal governance
  - o Corruption control
- **Socio-economic governance (social and economic policies)**
  - o Public services and competition
  - o Tax and budget policy
  - o Social Policy
  - o Social care and healthcare
- **External governance (Euro-Atlantic integration, foreign and security policy)**
  - o European integration
  - o Relations with the NATO and the US
  - o Peaceful management of existing and new risks
  - o Responsiveness to regional and global developments

The detailed definitions of individual categories and sub-categories are provided in the glossary, at the end of the report.

## **Research Methods**

The index utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. The survey of policy experts was used as the main quantitative research tool to measure Georgia's performance in individual categories and sub-categories. The survey data is further supplemented by qualitative content analysis of Georgia's performance in each category. The integration of qualitative and quantitative parts as well as triangulation of the research results were further supported by a rigid review process which involved both local and international experts of surveys and indexes.

### ***Expert Survey***

The universe of respondents to the Index's survey consists of scholars and academics, policy experts, representatives of civil society, NGO community and the think-tank community. In each area 10 respondents were selected, based on the criteria of political impartiality and academic or policy-relevant subject area expertise.

Respondents from academia were selected based on the following criteria:

- At least one publication on Georgia in a peer-reviewed journal excluding predatory-publishing journals and financed articles;
- No affiliation with a political party or movement.

Respondents from civil society and the policy community are selected based on the following criteria:

- co-authorship of reports & analysis about relevant topics on Georgia and/or frequent public appearances in Georgian/international media;
- No affiliation with a political party or movement.

The expert survey was conducted by using Google forms and was fully anonymised. The experts were asked to grade Georgia's performance on respective issue areas in different categories as well as to provide their views on major challenges, steps forward and the needed reforms.

## ***Narrative analysis***

The expert surveys are supplemented by qualitative content analysis carried out by the GIP task force, which consists of resident and affiliated junior and senior analysts. The qualitative analysis draws on content analysis of primary and secondary sources (governmental documents, reports, interviews, speeches, meeting protocols and newspaper articles). To supplement desk research-based data analysis several semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with area experts. Each part of narrative analysis underwent a multi-step review process by local and international experts. Narrative parts on their own do not provide grading scores for respective issue areas, and incorporate expert assessments as a semi-quantitative tool without critical reflection.

## **Limitations**

There are a few important methodological limitations to be acknowledged. Firstly, the index lacks a point of reference since this is a pilot study. Therefore, we cannot compare the 2021 scores of Georgia's performance in different governance areas to the scores from previous years. Secondly, this is a single country case study which also lacks point of reference and absence of variance comparison to other countries. The study does analyze, however, different governance categories and sub-categories which allows for within-country, multi-sectoral comparison of the country's effectiveness. In terms of data collection, the authors of the study struggled with finding up-to-date data on recent developments. This is also because, unlike many similar indexes, the current index analyzes the developments from the current year not the past year. Finally, since the report is mostly qualitative with a small-N semi-quantitative survey, we cannot exclude that some information may contain academically biased perspectives.



# Democratic Governance



## Key insights and main challenges

- Although some positive steps were made with the changing of the central election administration composition and amending the legal framework, the election of the head of the CEC by an anti-deadlock mechanism was a missed opportunity for increasing trust in the elections
- Appointment of supreme court judges amid criticism from the international partners and local watchdogs remains a challenge
- The expert survey illustrates that none of the political players among either the ruling party or the opposition play a positive role in democratization of the country.
- Civil society remains strong and vibrant, yet harassment of journalists and media polarization remains a challenge.

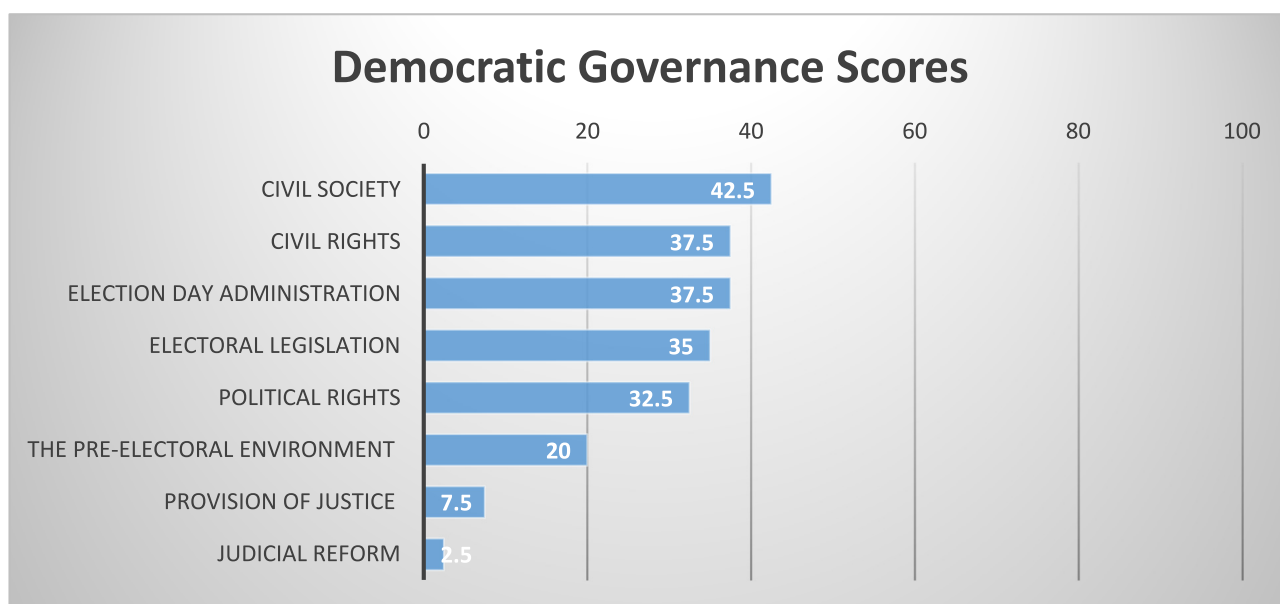
2021 was rather rocky and full of challenges and setbacks for Georgian democratic governance. The year started with a protracted political crisis over-hanging from 2020, and continued to be full of dynamic developments. Those included the resignation of the then-Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, the arrest of the leader of the opposition party, the several rounds of the EU-facilitated mediations between the political actors that were not signed by the largest opposition party in the country, withdrawal of the ruling party from the brokered agreement, arrest of former President Saakashvili, and municipal elections held in a highly polarized political environment, to mention just a few.

These developments suggest that the political landscape in the country, as in previous years, has remained extremely polarized and this radical partisan division is still a key challenge to Georgia's democratic development. This year was also an election year and was marked by the presence of aggressive discourses on both sides, including political hate speech, routine use of insults and mutual accusations - which divided and confused voters (Georgian Institute of Politics 2021). Freedom of expression and assembly, as well as a critical media, suffered a major blow as the authorities were unable to protect journalists at the anti-LGBTQI rally held in Tbilisi.

The GGI Expert Survey reflected negative developments throughout the year. None of the issue areas related to democratic governance were assessed positively (figure 4). Overall, democratic governance came last, after the other three governance areas analyzed in the report.



Figure 4: How would you assess Georgia's performance on the following headings related to democratic governance in 2021? (Aggregated and standardized on a scale of 0-100 (best))



## Civil and Political Rights

Civil and political rights in Georgia experienced major blows throughout 2021, which were also reflected in the expert assessments (figure 4). Overall, civil rights received slightly higher scores than political rights (figure 4) which is understandable considering the major problems, with pressure on media and freedom of assembly. Overall, the freedom of the press is guaranteed and protected by the constitution and the Georgian media environment remains rather plural and diverse. Yet, the media environment remains extremely polarized along political and business interests (OSCE 2021a). Of more concern are the cases in the courts against the owners and founders of all the main TV channels that still loom over the media environment in Georgia. One of the shareowners of the *TV channel Mtavari*, Giorgi Rurua, remained in prison for some months, faced with questionable accusations (Transparency International Georgia 2021a). He was only released with the president's pardon in late April of this year, thanks to the agreement mediated by the European Union (EU) between the political parties.

In the summer of 2021, the court also resumed hearings on what is being perceived by many as politically motivated, the case of alleged money laundering that include among the accused, the father of the founder of another TV channel that is critical of the governing party – *TV Pirveli* (Apriamashvili 2021). Similarly, the appeal to the court of the Ministry of the Defense against the former minister David Kezerashvili, who is charged with alleged money embezzlement while in office and currently owns the shares of Formula (one more opposition-leaning media channel in Georgia) raises questions on whether this is a politically motivated move against critical media (Radio Liberty 2021a).

In addition to these cases, there were instances of individual attacks on journalists that brought further deterioration in the media environment. In February 2021, a journalist of the opposition-leaning TV channel Formula was physically assaulted when he was not on duty. The attackers were sentenced to 6 months in prison, which was described by local watchdogs as insufficient to show that justice had been executed (Formulanews 2021). However, the major blow to the media environment as well as freedom of assembly and expression in Georgia, came with the 5th of July developments.

The Georgian constitution protects freedom of assembly and expression for each citizen regardless of his or her religion, sexual orientation or political views. However, the Georgian authorities were not able to provide security guarantees for LGBTQ+ activists and supporters to hold Tbilisi Pride. The organizers had to cancel a planned march on the grounds of safety concerns as far-right and radical Orthodox Christian groups had raided their office, attacked journalists and random passersby who in appearance or clothing did not look heteronormative (BBC News 2021, Civil.ge 2021a). According to the letter from the EU ambassadors to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, the government failed to protect the freedom of expression and assembly of the LGBTQI+ activists (Delegation of the European Union 2021). The Public Defender's Office has called on the authorities to open criminal cases against the host of Alt-Info, Zurab Makharadze and a priest Tsiphurishvili, who were among the main promoters and organizers of the violence. Yet, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there was not enough evidence (Civil.ge 2021b).

Despite this being perceived by the local watchdogs as a blow to the freedom of expression, in April 2021 parliament adopted amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences, increasing the period of administrative detention and fines for minor offences (Pertaia 2021). On November 10th, the police arrested 46 protesters from opposition parties, some of whom received fines or administrative detention for allegedly blocking the office of the State Security Services (Gvadzabia 2021).

In 2021 the privileged position of the Georgian Orthodox Church vis-à-vis other religious groups in Georgia remained a challenge to the current state of freedom of religion and minority rights. The privileged treatment the Georgian Orthodox Church enjoys was illustrated by the developments around *Nino Tsminda* boarding school that is run by the GOC. The administration of the school refused to allow the Public Defender to enter the institution for inspection despite such behavior going against the constitution (Radio Liberty 2021c).

Regarding the current state of protection of property rights and rights for economic entrepreneurship, according to the 2021 Index of Economic Freedom, Georgia has slightly improved its position and ranks 12th in the world and 7<sup>th</sup> in Europe (Amerikis Khma 2021a). On the other hand, after months of social protests ENKA, an Istanbul-based company, issued a statement on its intention to terminate the Namakhvani HPP project contract in Georgia, and implying a possibility that the dispute between the parties could go to international arbitration in Paris (Civil.ge 2021c). These developments might impact and damage the credibility of Georgia.

## Electoral regime

In October 2021 Georgians went to the polling stations to vote for mayors and representatives of the City Councils. Yet, this election was about more than just representation in the municipalities as, according to the agreement mediated by the EU, from which the ruling party withdrew later, there was 43% threshold agreed that should have determined the fate of snap parliamentary elections (Civil.ge 2021d).<sup>2</sup>

Partly in accordance with the agreement, several changes were introduced in the electoral code. These amendments included an increase in the proportional component for the local elections, extended time-frames for addressing disputes as well as how the Central Elections Commission (CEC) is being composed and its members appointed. However, despite these important changes, a whole range of ODIHR recommendations (on limitations in voting rights or measures to counter misuse of state and administrative resources) were not addressed and remain a challenge (OSCE 2021a) The expert survey results reflected this as, despite those changes, the electoral regime or administration was not described as effective by any of those surveyed, while the pre-election campaign was clearly assessed as negative (figure 4).

Regarding the democratic quality of the conduct of the elections, both the interim and the preliminary conclusion reports from the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission remarked that generally the elections were well-administered, and most of the contestants did not raise any concerns regarding their abilities to campaign freely (OSCE 2021a). Nonetheless, there were instances right across the country of candidates being pressured into removing their candidacy from the lists (OSCE 2021a). The possibility of making an informed choice from the voters' side was further inhabited by the highly polarized political environment and the aggressive political discourse, as well as a sharp division of the media landscape along partisan lines.

Some of the recommendations from ODIHR regarding the party finances remained unaddressed for the 2021 elections as well. These were lowering the limits on donations and spending, strengthening the oversight mechanisms, and the requirement to publish the State Audit Office reports prior to the election day (OSCE 2021a). A special concern for the local or international watchdogs has been the increased number of people being dismissed from their jobs (Transparency International Georgia 2021b).

2021's pre-election environment was not that different from previous years in regard to the use of administrative resources that put the ruling party in an advantageous position vis-à-vis the rest of the political parties (Transparency International Georgia 2021b). An-

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<sup>2</sup> European Council President Charles Michelle was personally involved in trying to find a solution to the political crisis in Georgia. He proposed an agreement that included amnesty for Melia and Rurua, the leader of the UNM and the owner of shares of the main opposition channel respectively, and snap parliamentary elections in case the ruling party received below 43% of the proportional votes in 2021's municipal elections.

nouncing major infrastructural projects and pardoning all the fines for violating COVID-19 related regulations, was seen by many as voter-buying (Transparency International Georgia 2021b). International and local observers also registered several instances of violence between the party activists and supporters (Transparency International Georgia 2021b). The possibility for voters to make an informed choice was further inhibited by the aggressive hate-filled cross-country campaign by supporters of the ruling party with banners and posters containing homophobic messages and depicting the leaders of the critical media and civil sector covered in blood. Such influence on the pre-election environment does not leave space for voting according to party programs and ideological beliefs.

Developments in 2021 also proved that the gender quota for the party list introduced for the first time for the 2020 parliamentary elections is still quite fragile and needs some reinforcement mechanisms. According to ISFED's preliminary assessment of the pre-2021 municipal election period, political parties Girchi and Alliance of Patriots managed to use loopholes so that there would be no female parliament member from their side in the parliament (Publika 2021a).

## Horizontal Accountability and System of Checks and Balances

Georgia is a parliamentary republic which means that the legislative organ is the main institution with oversight and control over other branches of government. From the existing oversight mechanisms, the Minister's Hour in Parliament (i.e. when a specific minister has to report to the MPs and answer their questions) has been used six times in 2021 so far (Parliament of Georgia 2021). The legislative body has also used its power to launch an investigative committee to examine fraud allegations in the parliamentary elections of 2021. However, most opposition parties refused to participate in the process (Publika 2021b). The effectiveness of the oversight mechanism has largely suffered from the existing polarization and the ongoing political crisis.

The justice system remains an Achilles heel of Georgia's political system. It is no surprise that "provision of justice" and "judicial reform" received the lowest scores among all categories (7.5 and 2.5 out of 100, see figure 4). The independence, transparency, and effectiveness of the judiciary in Georgia has been tainted by the "clan" of judges that are in the court system in Georgia and their informal influence has been a matter of criticism from local and international watchdogs. On 1<sup>st</sup> of April this year, Parliament adopted several changes in the Law on Common Courts that included amendments in the procedure of selection of the candidate judges for the Supreme Court. However, the changes were criticized by the CSO Coalition for Independent and Transparent Judiciary for being completely out of touch with existing reality (Civil.ge 2021e).

On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Georgian Parliament approved six candidates out of nine for the Supreme Court amid criticism and protests. The selection procedure, according to the ODIHR

and other international partners, did not meet the standards set out in the 19<sup>th</sup> of April Agreement mediated by the EU (Civil.ge 2021f). These appointments were called extremely disappointing by the US ambassador to Georgia as they went against the spirit of the agreement (Civil.ge 2021g). Furthermore, neither the Public Defender's office nor the absolute majority from the members of the CSO Coalition for Independent and Transparent Judiciary participated in this process, further illustrating the controversies and problems with these appointments and the judiciary in general. The Georgian government were denied EU micro financial assistance due to the failure of reforming the system (Caucasus Watch 2021).

This year was also marked by the police raid and arrest of the leader of the opposition party, Nika Melia, which was largely seen by civil society as a politically motivated court ruling (ISFED 2021). The day before the polling stations opened Georgia saw another case of alleged politically motivated execution of justice. The treatment by authorities of the former President, Mikhail Saakashvili, after his arrest and embarking on an almost two-month-long hunger strike, has raised questions regarding political motivations behind this act and the international community has been urging the Georgian authorities to provide Saakashvili with fair treatment and a fair trial (Civil.ge 2021h). This case is still ongoing, as of writing, and it will be yet another litmus test for the Georgian judiciary.

## Civil Society and Non-state Actors

In the GGI Expert Survey the category of civil society received the highest score among all categories of democratic governance (42.5 out of 100, see figure 4). This is not surprising since civil society is the most diverse and active player in Georgia. However, the public trust towards CSOs is low. According to the East-West Management Institute CSO assessment report, the reason for this low trust and the questions on public legitimacy of CSOs is the absence of effective and understandable communication with the general public. The language that most of the CSOs employ is targeted at public institutions and the international community and not to the ordinary citizens, which creates a great gap between CSOs and the public (EWMi 2019). The reputation of CSOs in the eyes of the people is also undermined by the fact that there are some CSOs affiliated with political parties and these often participate in the elections as observers so it is easy to identify how subjective they are in terms of assessment of the whole electoral process.

Despite lack of public trust, most of the CSOs play an important role in the country's democratic development. This happens in spite of the fact that most of them are financially unsustainable, depending on grants from international donors. The efforts of the CSOs was emphasized by the EU mediator Christian Danielsson, who named Georgian civil society as vibrant and which one day would manage to turn the page and change thinking to help a move towards an ambitious future (European Union in Georgia 2021). CSOs work actively both on national and local policy levels and in legal terms they have access to important

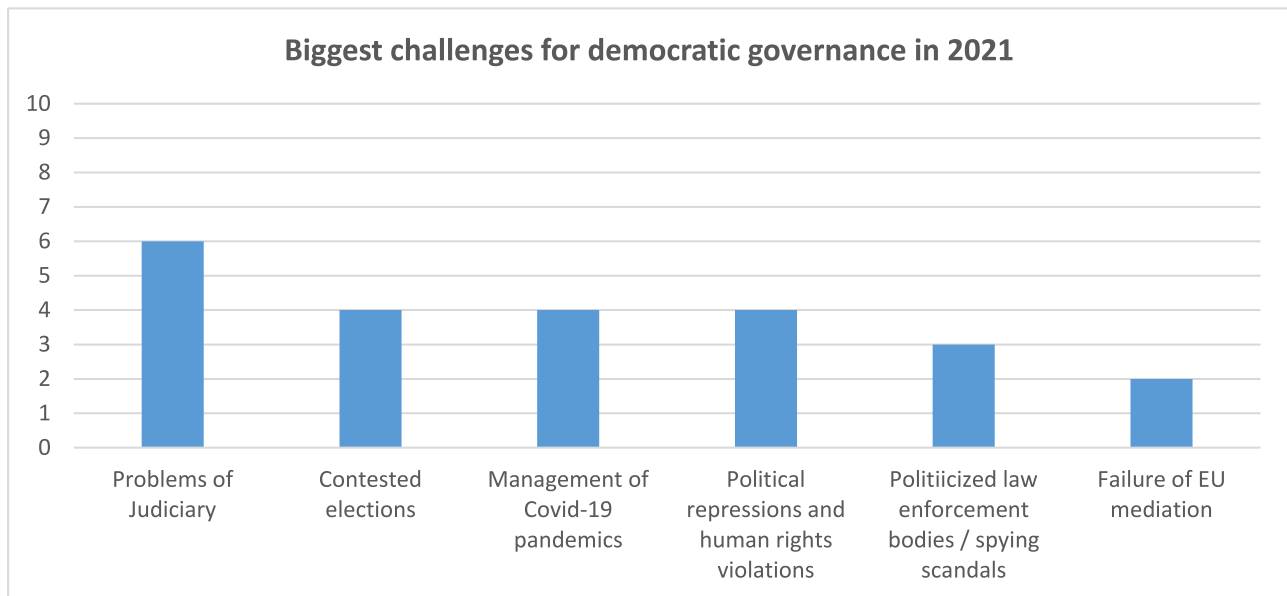
tools for participation, such as the right to petition, the submission of comments to draft laws, participation in the budgetary process, etc. In spite of this, CSOs are not always allowed to take part in policy planning and sometimes draft laws, strategic documents and action plans are adopted without consultation with them (CSO Meter 2020).

One of the focal points of civil society is the media. The media landscape in Georgia is free, vibrant and pluralistic, and over-polarized. Media outlets are often the target of aggressive groups with different political standings. According to the World Press Freedom Index, 2021, Georgia (with a score of 28.64), ranked 60th among 180 foreign countries (World Press Index 2021). This means that it falls in the category of “Problematic Situation”, based on evaluated facts on abuses and acts of violence against journalists. The leading media outlets in Georgia are also subject to political influences. (CSO Meter 2020). Moreover, some journalists started publicly expressing their political preferences (Kavtaradze 2021), which might have caused more confusion and frustration among the TV viewers. The similarity between the CSOs and media organizations is that both lack public trust and legitimacy despite the fact that both put quite a lot of effort into their work and in support of freedom of speech and assembly.

## Summary

Both our own assessment and the GGI Expert survey show that despite some positive changes in the electoral law and effective administration of the election process, Georgia still needs drastic and ambitious reforms. The GGI survey identified problems with the judiciary as the most detrimental area for Georgia’s democratic governance (figure 5). It is followed by contested elections and flawed management of Covid-19 pandemics. Interestingly, several respondents also identified failure of EU mediation as another detrimental factor for Georgia’s democratic development (figure 5 ). In terms of steps forward the experts surveyed found it hard to identify progress in any of the areas related to democratic governance. The most frequently mentioned positive development was the emergence of new political parties and newly found political pluralism in the opposition.

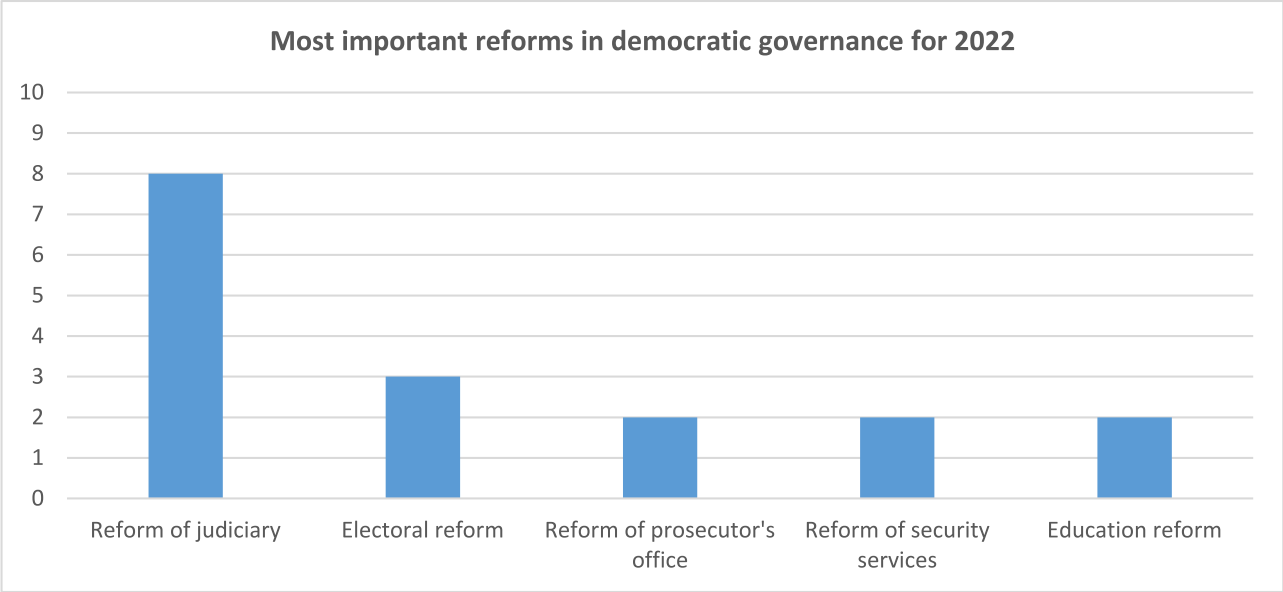
Figure 5: In your opinion, what were the three largest challenges related to democratization and human rights in 2021 in Georgia? (Only challenges with two or more mentions, GGI Expert Survey)



The judiciary also tops the list of the mostly needed reforms for 2022 (figure 6 ). Most of the experts surveyed for this report mentioned the reform of the judiciary as the key sphere that has to be a focus for Georgia in the upcoming years. A strong and independent judiciary will be an important step towards addressing the challenges mentioned in this report. The second most popular recommendation from the experts was electoral reforms (figure 6) as 2021 illustrated that the trust in the election results among the opposition parties remains quite low. Although some changes in this direction have already taken place, more is needed, especially in terms of electronic voting and other modern technology that minimizes the human factor in the process. The country will also need to increase the oversight mechanisms on the State Security Services, as mentioned along with reforms of the prosecutor's office by the experts surveyed (figure 6 ).



Figure 6: In your opinion, what are the three most important reforms or ideas related to democratic consolidation for Georgia for 2022? (Only ideas with two or more mentions, GGI Expert Survey)







# Effective Governance



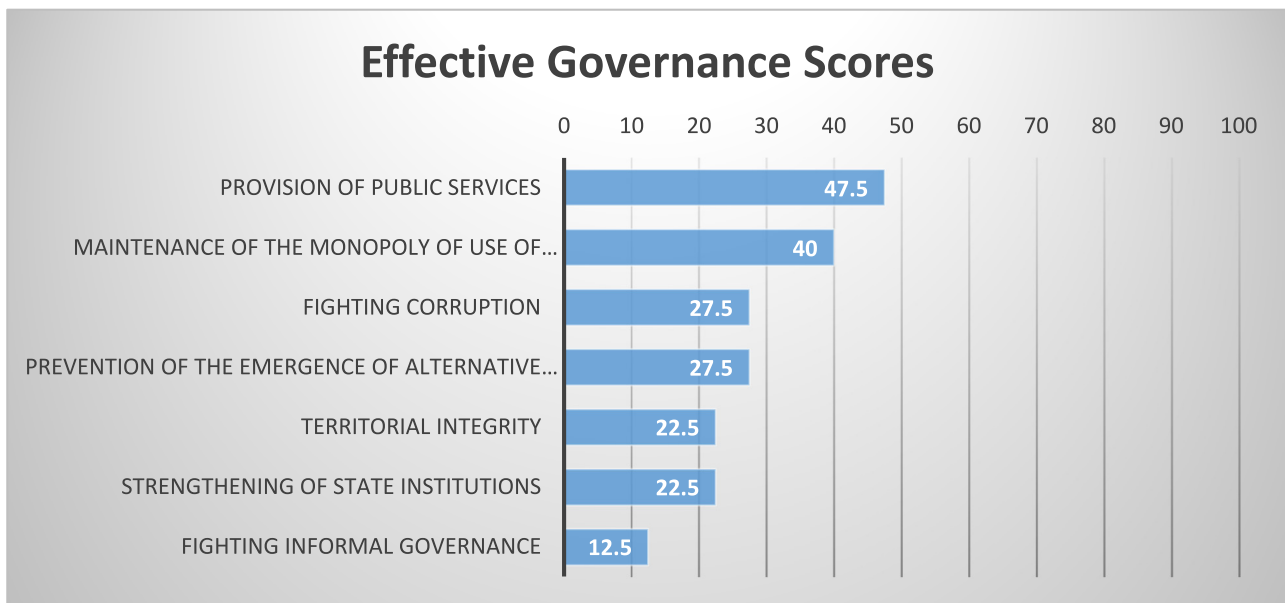
## Key insights and main challenges

- The monopoly on the use of legitimate force does not extend to the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Furthermore, judging by the events that unfolded in 2021, the monopoly on the use of legitimate force is weak in relation to the Georgian Orthodox Church and far right groups.
- The international community plays an important role in the monitoring of the situation in the Russia-occupied territories and in addressing humanitarian crises. The ECHR ruling of 21 January 2021 further emphasized the role of the international community in the establishment of legal mechanisms in relation to the occupied territories.
- The informal influence of the founder of the ruling party, billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, over all the three branches of government remains a key challenge in terms of informal governance and alternative forms of legitimacy. Anti-corruption reforms have also been stalled in the country while political corruption is the main challenge in terms of corruption control.
- There is a tendency of dependence of PAR implementation on political changes. Due to the political changes, less attention is drawn towards the development of the new PAR strategy and roadmap.

The performance of the country in the area of effective governance and state-building is assessed per four categories: 1) the monopoly on the use of legitimate force, 2) informal governance and alternative forms of legitimacy, 3) the control of corruption and 4) public services and competition. This section of the report measures the result received in effective governance and state-building in 2021, based on the analysis of GIP researchers and an expert survey.

The GGI Expert Survey assigned the second lowest score (27.5) to the category of effective governance, among the four governance categories. In doing so, experts' opinions reflected the mostly negative developments in the categories of effective governance. The sub-categories of informal governance and corruption control (figure 7) received particularly low scores. The provision of public services received the highest score (47.5) among all sub-categories of effective governance followed by the maintenance of the monopoly on the use of legitimate force (40) (figure 7).

Figure 7: How would you assess Georgia's performance on the following related to effective governance in 2021? (Aggregated and standardized on a scale of 0-100 (best))



## The Monopoly on the Use of Legitimate Force

Since the 1990s, Russia has been exercising effective control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two occupied regions in Georgia. Hence, territorial control is the country's main challenge from the perspective of the monopoly on the use of legitimate force. These problems persisted in 2021 as well, including the illegal borderization process along the administrative boundary lines of occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Civil.ge 2021i, Mtavari TV 2021a, Radio Liberty 2021d, Interpressnews.ge 2021a) and abduction of Georgian citizens from the territories adjacent to the boundary line (SSS of Georgia 2021a, SSS of Georgia 2021b, SSS of Georgia 2021c). The government was able to achieve the release of abducted citizens only through meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) and the Geneva International Discussions (SSS of Georgia 2021d, SSS of Georgia 2021b, SSS of Georgia 2021e, SSS of Georgia 2021f, SSS of Georgia 2021g). In addition to its role in monitoring the existing situation in the occupied territories and mediating between the parties during humanitarian crises, the importance of the international community was emphasized in terms of developing legal mechanisms in relation to the occupied territories. In particular, in its ruling released on January 21, 2021, the ECHR ruled that the Russian Federation was responsible for mass crimes committed against Georgian citizens in the occupied territories and thus provided a crucial international legal basis for the protection of the rights of people affected by the Russia-Georgia conflict (MFA of Georgia 2021a).

The events that unfolded in 2021 have shown that the monopoly on the use of legitimate force also has challenges on Tbilisi-controlled territory. In particular, the monopoly on the use of legitimate force was somewhat limited to a certain extent in relation to particular

social segments, such as the Georgian Orthodox Church and far-right groups. In April 2021, at the instruction of Bishop Spiridon of Skhalta, the Public Defender was once again denied a monitoring visit to an orphanage in Ninotsminda which is run by the Georgian Orthodox Church (Ombudsman of Georgia 2021a). Also, the state did not undertake adequate preventive and proactive measures against far-right groups and representatives of the Orthodox Church during the assault on July 5, 2021 (Pride week). Organizers of the aggressive counter rally had announced their intentions to assault peaceful demonstrators well ahead of that day (Ombudsman of Georgia 2021b), however, the government, citing the lack of sufficient police resources to contain those groups, did not undertake any effective preventive mechanisms to stop the expected violence (Police.ge 2021a). Moreover, the state did not apply relevant legal measures against the leaders of far-right groups and representatives of the Orthodox Church that organized the violence (Ombudsman of Georgia 2021b). Even more, there was direct interference in the state's monopoly on the use of legitimate force when the Patriarchate applied punitive measures against the Deacon Spiridon Tskipurishvili, giving him a "severe reprimand" and temporarily suspending him from conducting religious services (Gvadzabia 2021).

In summary, it can be concluded that there are both particular territorial and social segments which are not subject to the legitimate force of the state in 2021. However, while objective factors limit the capacity of the Georgian government in relation to the occupied territories, the state authorities might not exercise the monopoly on the use of legitimate force against the Church and extreme right-wing groups deliberately for political reasons (Zurabashvili 2021).

## **Informal Governance and Alternative Forms of Legitimacy**

Fighting informal governance was the weak spot of effective governance in Georgia throughout 2021. This was confirmed both by GIP's analysis and the GGI Expert Survey which assigned the lowest score to this area (Figure 4). According to studies conducted before 2021, founder of the ruling party and billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili maintained his informal influence over all branches of government without holding any formal public office (Konończuk et al, 2017, Transparency International Georgia 2020). Given the scale of informal governance and alternative forms of legitimacy, this has been assessed as state capture (Transparency International Georgia 2020).

The tendency of informal governance and alternative forms of legitimacy continued in 2021 too. In particular, key positions in the executive government of Georgia are still held by persons who have been distinguished for their loyalty to Bidzina Ivanishvili or previously worked in his companies, according to the 2020 report of Transparency International Georgia (Transparency International Georgia 2020). Worth noting in this regard are: current Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Gharibashvili, who held leading positions in Bidzina Ivanishvili's companies such as JSC Cartu Bank and the Cartu Foundation (Government of

Georgia 2021); Minister of Internal Affairs Vakhtang Gomelauri (Police.ge 2021b) served as the head of Ivanishvili's personal guard (Rekhviashvili 2019); Head of the State Security Service Grigol Liluashvili (SSS of Georgia 2021a) previously held leading positions in a number of companies belonging to Bidzina Ivanishvili (Transparency International Georgia 2018); Irakli Karseladze, the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure since February 2021 (MRDI of Georgia 2021), held various positions in companies related to Ivanishvili (Transparency International Georgia 2020); Health Care Minister Ekaterine Tikaradze (MoH of Georgia 2021a) was the director of multifunctional hospital in Sachkhere (Bidzina Ivanishvili's home municipality) which was funded by Ivanishvili's Cartu Foundation (Transparency International Georgia 2020); Head of the Special State Protection Service Anzor Chubinidze (SSPS of Georgia 2021) was the head of Bidzina Ivanishvili's personal bodyguard service (Transparency International Georgia 2020).

Bidzina Ivanishvili has continued to wield influence over the judiciary as well in 2021. Currently, the Deputy Chair of the Supreme Court is Shalva Tadumadze, Bidzina Ivanishvili's private counsel (Supreme Court of Georgia 2021). According to the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, based on a deal struck between the influential clan of judges closely linked to the ruling party and the government, the judges were appointed to the Supreme Court on July 17, 2021 (GYLA 2021).

Since the 2020 parliamentary elections resulted in the Georgian Dream party gaining once again a constitutional majority (CEC of Georgia 2020), the parliament continued to be ineffective in 2021 in terms of controlling the executive branch and the judiciary and balancing Ivanishvili's informal influence over them.

In summary, it can be said that one of the key challenges of the country in 2021 is the influence of informal governance over all the branches of power and the alternative source of legitimacy.

## The Control of Corruption

Fighting (political) corruption seems to have become another problematic area in effective governance in Georgia which is also confirmed by the low score assigned by surveyed experts (27.5 out of 100, see Figure 7). According to NGOs specializing in issues of corruption, in the past few years, the Government of Georgia has ceased implementing reforms in the fight against corruption: the Open Government Partnership (OPG) reform has been suspended for two years too and as of the end of 2021, an anti-corruption action plan for 2021-2022 has not been adopted (Transparency International Georgia 2021c). The Open Government Interagency Coordination Council, a body responsible for determining, monitoring, and assessing the country's anti-corruption policy as well as fulfilling international recommendations, has not convened for two years. On October 26, 2021, the government of Georgia refused to approve the report on anti-corruption environment in Georgia, draft-

ed by the Anti-Corruption Network of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/ACN), which, among others, studied the existence of risks of high-level corruption in the country (Transparency International Georgia 2021c). That move, in the opinion of NGOs, clearly demonstrated the absence of political will in the country to combat corruption (Transparency International Georgia 2021c). Although Georgia's legislative framework is seen as effective to prevent all main forms of corruption (Transparency International Georgia 2021d), the enforcement of the law is a challenge due to lack of political will, which is especially problematic when it comes to high-level corruption (Transparency International Georgia 2021d).

Based on reports from open sources, it is apparent that 2021 has not seen any improvement in the effectiveness of corruption control. The data published by the state anti-corruption agency shows that the agency undertook anti-corruption measures mainly against bureaucratic corruption (ssg.gov.ge 2021i\*) (See Appendix 1) while ignoring cases of alleged corruption exposed by local NGOs and the media and/or which involved the interests of Bidzina Ivanishvili and persons from his close circle or of high officials and persons closely linked to the ruling party (Transparency International Georgia 2021e).

Furthermore, with the municipal elections scheduled for October 2, 2021, various forms of political corruption became more conspicuous in the country. Firstly, the problem of clientelism has become more noticeable, which manifested in awarding contracts to companies affiliated with or close to the ruling party in exchange for contributions to election campaigning (Transparency International Georgia 2021f, Transparency International Georgia 2021g, IDFI 2021a, IDFI 2021b). Moreover, ahead of the election, the government initiated state programs for certain social groups which raised reasonable suspicions of efforts to buy votes for ruling party-backed candidates (Transparency International Georgia 2021h, Transparency International Georgia 2021i). While in the run up to the local election the targets of vote buying were voters, after the election there were cases of alleged buying of opposition party members. According to an audio recording released by the United National Movement (Mtavari TV 2021b), the ruling party made attempts to bribe a UNM member on the Batumi City Council, Nugzar Putkaradze. It is worth noting that on one occasion, as a result of the election when the Georgian Dream faced the risk of losing a majority in several city councils, a ruling party member openly declared that the Georgia Dream was in talks with opposition party members elected to these city councils to "put them on the right path" (Pertaia 2021). Consequently, the attempt to buy Putkaradze could be linked to the efforts of Georgian Dream to maintain single-party governance on the Batumi City Council. Yet another problem that persisted in 2021 were incomplete asset declarations filed by high officials and activities conflicting with their positions held (Transparency International Georgia 2021j, Transparency International Georgia 2021l, Transparency International Georgia 2021m). Moreover, 2021 saw the application of corruption-risk-prone principle of a "revolving door" whereby a former public official who moves to a private company then uses their former connections and influence in the government to lobby and secure an unfair advantage for that company (Transparency International Georgia 2021n).



In terms of preventing and properly responding to corruption, the lack of an independent anti-corruption body remains a persistent shortcoming. Transparency International Georgia prepared a draft law for the establishment of such a body and submitted it to the parliament twice – in September 2020 (Radio Liberty 2021e) and in June 2021 (Transparency International Georgia 2021o). However, the parliament has not deemed it suitable yet to continue the consideration of the mentioned bill.

In summary, Georgia is more or less effective in dealing with bureaucratic corruption. However, the fight against political corruption remains a problem, which is closely linked to the influence of the founder of the ruling party, Bidzina Ivanishvili, over all three branches of the government and a total concentration of political power into the hands of the ruling party.

## Public Services and Competition

Georgia's performance in providing public services received the highest score in the GGI Expert Survey. This is not surprising as Georgia had established a strong record of reforms in this area over the last two decades. Nevertheless, when zooming in to details we can see many gaps in implementation and enforcement.

Well-functioning and transparent public administration are important prerequisites of effective democratic governance. According to the European Commission 2021 progress report on the AA implementation, Georgia is committed to public administration reform (PAR) in line with the EU Principles of Public Administration. The SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management 2020) baseline assessment on policy development showed a need to further strengthen policy planning, coordination, monitoring, and reporting. The new classification and remuneration systems are applied to all civil servants, the new performance appraisal approach should be applied in all institutions.

The Decree of the Government of Georgia No.629 “On the Approval of the Rules of Procedure for Development, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents” (adopted on December 20, 2019 and in force from January 1, 2020), as well as the Handbook on Public Policy Making, are praised in the EU report as effective tools to ensure evidence-based policy development. However, its incorporation in practice requires a great effort to train public sector representatives. One of the challenges that the public sector faces nowadays is the lack of capacity to ensure the harmonization of policy planning and budget management. While the mandatory Regulatory Impact Assessment for specific legislation has been introduced, proper implementation depends on how qualified, experienced, and trained the people in public agencies will be to use this tool effectively. Thus, the amendment made in the Law on Public Service was adopted in February 2020 regarding the rules of internal competition in the public service sector, which affords the possibility of career development and promotion to individuals already employed in the public sector. Before

that, public sector employees and individuals outside the system competed with each other; this put these individuals under unfair competition conditions. In 2021, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) in cooperation with the UNDP held several forums on various topics to improve the skills and capacity of public servants (CSB 2021). In cooperation with a number of international partners, handbooks on management, e-governance and adaptation of new employees were developed and published, as were research products on female managers, sexual harassment in the workplace, and other topics useful for civil servants' career development (CSB 2021).

It should be mentioned that there are four types of competitions in the public sector: open, closed, internal and simplified public competitions. Since 2020, the public sector slowly started launching closed and internal competitions for already employed civil servants in order to encourage their merit-based and fair promotion, by depriving department heads to subjectively appointing people. Overall, there are four level ranks: fourth rank junior specialists, who are allowed to participate in open competition; third rank – those who can participate in closed competitions; second rank is the middle management link and the first is the head of the department. Currently there is a transition period and open competitions are also announced, though they are slowly closing. As for the internal competition, it is only for employees of an institution where the vacancy is announced. Simplified competitions are only announced for employees with service contracts, i.e. non-staff members. The Civil Service Bureau has the exclusive power to monitor the implement the ranking system, the competition process, field and discuss complaints and develop handbooks. However, the Civil Service Bureau does not have enough human and financial resources to effectively monitor, evaluate this process and at the same time support HR departments in the public sector. For that reason, they often cooperate with organizations such as the UNDP, GIZ and others who fund the programs in order to not only evaluate the process but also increase the capacities of the public servants, which is still not enough, especially on the regional level. Moreover, there is not much done in terms of monitoring cases of nepotism and corruption, how salaries are distributed, who gets bonuses and for what. Those factors are not any less important than the monitoring of quality and fairness of competitions.

Moreover, the 2019-2020 PAR action plan considered the development of various electronic services, a process which was hastened due to Covid-19. The central portal integrating various electronic services is accessible on the website of the unified portal of electronic services [my.gov.ge](http://my.gov.ge), which provides almost 500 services (Maisuradze 2020) for citizens, as well as the websites of the Public Service Development Agency ([sda.gov.ge](http://sda.gov.ge)) and in addition to this, the government created another LEPL, called the Digital Governance Agency, whose website is not yet accessible. In spite of the positive steps in the direction of e-governance, Georgia's e-government score is 0.72 (UN E-Government Survey 2020) which puts it in 65th place among 193 countries according to the UN e-governance survey. This is a step down from 2020. Overall, obligations in public services have not been entirely fulfilled. One of the reasons for their postponement has often been named the pandemic without any further clarifications. However, some experts working on PAR have the impression that public agencies were unprepared (interview with expert 1). The delay in the process may indicate

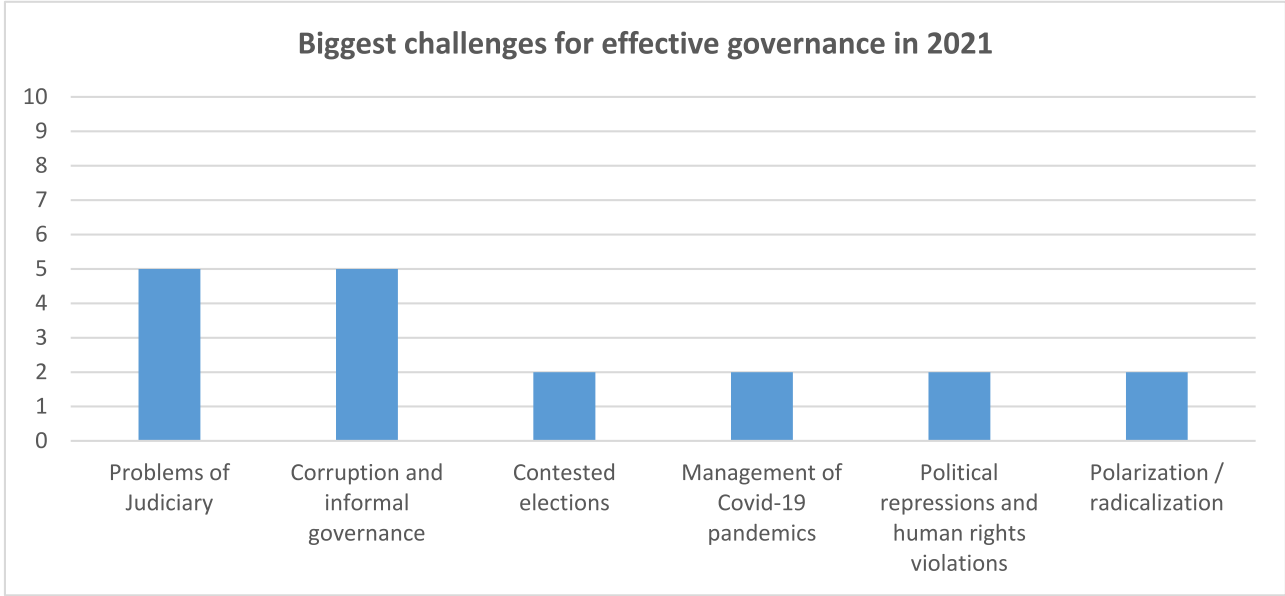
that there are shortcomings in coordination between the agencies and the second reason may be that this direction is not considered a key priority for the authorities.

The EU allocated a tremendous amount of funding for PAR development and in cooperation with the public sector, organizations like IDFI, GYLA, the UNDP, and others who actively support the PAR implementation by actively engaging in the action plan development, and with alternative assessment annual reports development and creating different support tools. In spite of the effort of the EU, non-governmental organizations, and the public sector, the public is still not well informed about the public services. As an example, the majority of ID cardholders (84%) had never used cards (IDFI & GYLA 2021) for electronic operations. There are serious problems caused because of improper strategic planning of service delivery, monitoring, and control of the quality of service delivery and the delay in creating the new action plans, the most visible example of which is that the PAR roadmap (2015) and action plan expired at the end of 2020 (gov.ge), however, the new one has not been adopted even during the second half of 2021 (IDFI & GYLA 2021).

## Summary

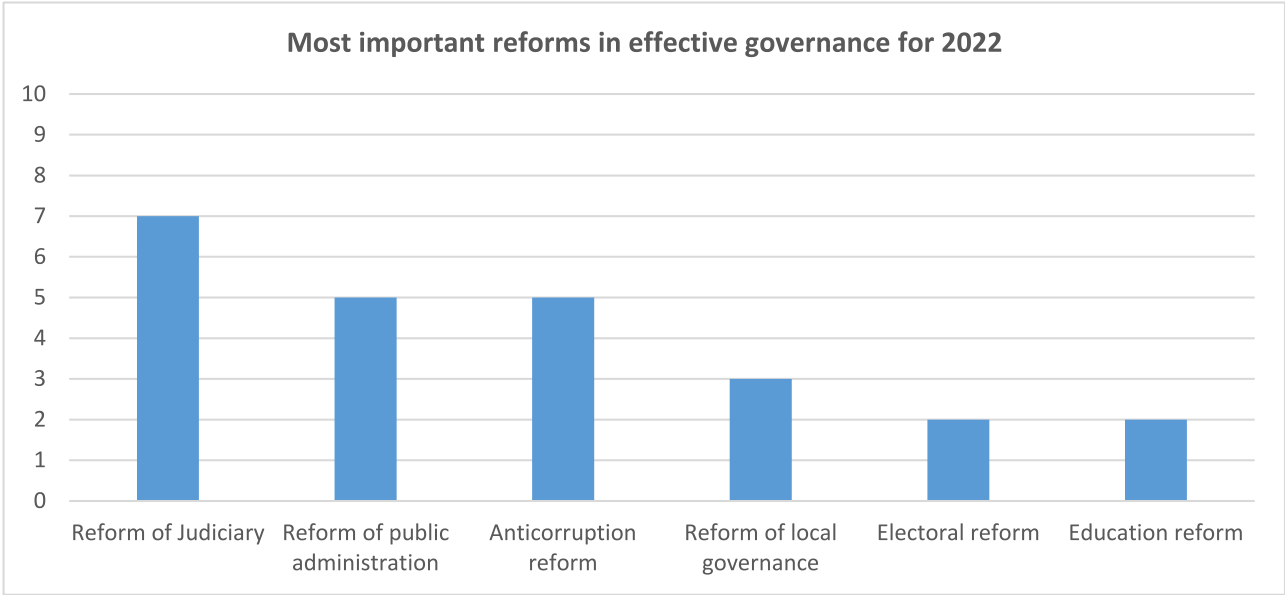
When considering the effectiveness of the Georgian state, the key challenges in the areas of effective governance and sustainability of state institutions are: informal governance, monopolization of all branches of government by a single group, strengthening of an influential clan in the judiciary and increase in political corruption in the country. This is also confirmed by the GGI Expert Survey, which identified problems in the judiciary, corruption and informal governance as three major challenges for Georgia throughout 2021 (Figure 8 ). Other challenges identified by experts include contested elections, management of the Covid-19 pandemic, polarization and human rights issues (Figure 8). In terms of steps forward, many experts identified improved electoral legislation as a major breakthrough for 2021.

Figure 8: In your opinion, what were the three largest challenges related to effective governance in 2021 in Georgia?



In terms of necessary reforms, respondents identified the reform of judiciary as the most important reform for 2022 (Figure 9), which will strip influential judges working in collusion with the government of their influence and will depoliticize the judiciary. Next to the judiciary, public administration and anti-corruption reforms were also mentioned as necessary reforms for 2022 (Figure 9). The public administration reform will contribute to the depoliticization and separation of the public administration from the ruling party. Effective anti-corruption reform will define a policy to combat high-level corruption. Furthermore, the establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency has been proposed to ensure the effectiveness of the fight against political corruption.

Figure 9: In your opinion, what are the three most important reforms or ideas related to effective governance in Georgia for 2022? (Only ideas with two or more mentions, GGI Expert Survey)





# **Socio-economic Governance**



## Key insights and main challenges

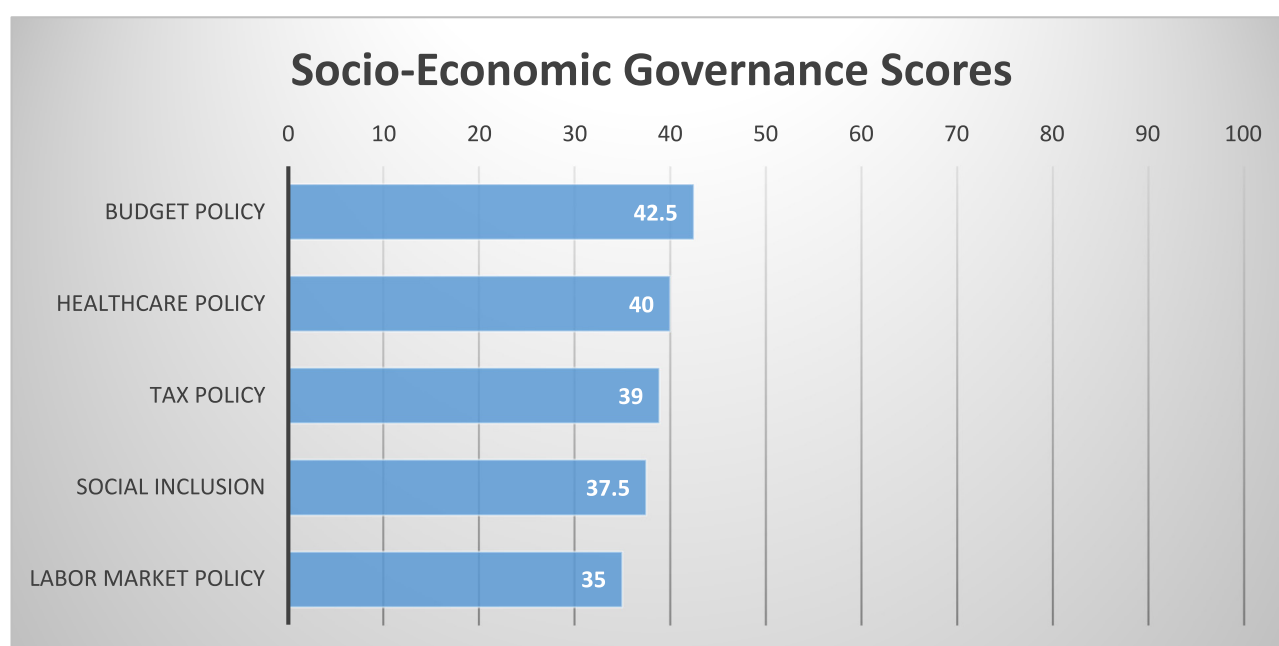
- The economic recovery is stronger than expected, but high inflation and tight monetary policy still threaten economic growth and inclusiveness.
- The renewed political uncertainty and delays in vaccination undermine public trust towards governance. It also negatively affects the business environment and the inflow of FDI.
- There is no comprehensive educational reform agenda and active labor market policy on the way to implementation which would address unemployment and poverty.
- The 2021 municipal election campaign showed that party and political interests superseded the interests of public health. The information campaign about vaccination practically failed, thus the statistics of vaccinated people are dramatically low.
- The circular migration mechanism of the labor force could not be assessed as effective and needs refinement in terms of recruitment and monitoring.

The COVID-19 crisis has severely affected growth, jobs and household incomes, and increased poverty throughout 2021. A strong growth in remittances, robust exports and an upturn in tourism were observed which mainly supported a V-shaped economic recovery. But inflation has also accelerated. High inflation and dollarization remain a challenge for economic growth. A 10-year development plan covering a wide range of structural reform priorities was introduced by the Government. However, a comprehensive reform agenda is still lacking to realize more inclusive growth by reducing unemployment and poverty. Recent data show that there is an urgent need to introduce effective policies to attract foreign direct investments, as well as to address problems in governance.

The GGI survey assigned the lowest scores to the labor market (35) and social inclusion (37.5), followed by tax policy (39). The experts give high scores to the budget (42.5) and healthcare policy (40), but they are still in the negative range. This is also partially explained in the analyses. Negative developments in the labor market are reflected in an increase in poverty and emigration in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and calls on active labor market policy. The quicker economic recovery than expected supported by the pick up in tourism sector and exports helped strong growth in tax receipts and despite Covid-19 related spending to decline the fiscal deficit, respectively. But fiscal deficit and public debt remains still high.



Figure 10: How would you assess Georgia's performance on the following related to socio-economic governance in 2021? (Aggregated and standardized on a scale of 0-100 (best))



## Economic Framework and Labor Market

Growth in the Georgian economy has been severely affected by COVID-19, pushing employment and household incomes down and intensifying poverty. Real GDP fell by 6.8% in 2020, due to a sharp decline in net exports and investment (Keshelava & Babych 2021). The government provided significant support to vulnerable households and businesses (3.8% of GDP in 2020, and a further 2.9% of GDP in 2021, mainly to the health sector), contributing to a sharp increase in the fiscal deficit and public debt to 9.2% and 60% of GDP respectively. Substantial foreign assistance helped to meet the increased financing needs (IMF 2021b).

In 2021 a V-shaped economic recovery could be observed in Georgia, supported by external demand and fiscal stimulus<sup>3</sup>. Official statistics have it that 2021 growth is projected to reach 10%, implying that output will exceed its 2019 level in 2021. Georgia's economy grew by 6.9% y/y in October 2021 and cumulatively, in 10M2021, growth is estimated at 10.5% y/y. Based on Geostat's rapid estimates the real GDP growth will be at 10.5% in 2021 (Geostat 2021).

Between the end of 2019 and April 2021, the lari depreciated by around 20% against the dollar. However its net effective exchange rate remained stable due to appreciation against major trading partners, including Russia and Turkey. Due to the high dependence of the

<sup>3</sup> Strong growth in remittances, robust exports and an upturn in tourism have further supported the economic recovery (IMF 2021b).

<sup>4</sup> The share of imported food in the consumer basket accounts for about 80% of the food. In 2020, the self-sufficiency ratio of wheat was 15%, 49% of meat in general, 63% of vegetables and 34% of poultry.

Georgian economy on food imports<sup>4</sup>, food prices in Georgia are more sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations and international price fluctuations. The prices for almost all major food products increased on an annual basis (IMF 2021a). From February 2020, monthly prices for food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by an average of 9.3% on an annual basis. Annual CPI inflation came in at 12.5% in November, after a 12.8% inflation in October and CPI inflation is now expected to reach 13.1% by the end of 2021, well above the NBG's target of 3%. By categories, annual inflation was mainly driven by price changes in food and non-alcoholic beverages (+17.0% y/y), transport (+20.2% y/y), housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels (+11.5% y/y), health (+8.5% y/y) (Galt & Taggart 2021c). The political and economic situation related to the October 2020/2021 parliamentary and local elections in Georgia, as well as the slow tempo of vaccination, have created an unpredictable environment in the country and negatively affected expectations, which has further increased the pressure on the exchange rate and prices.

The excessive lari volatility could become disruptive to financial stability as Georgia remains a dollarized economy<sup>5</sup>. It continues to complicate monetary policy and increase risks to financial stability. The National Bank of Georgia kept the key rate unchanged at 10.0% in October 2021 and said that increased inflation remains a challenge for Georgia, as consumer price inflation is likely to remain high through first quarter of 2022 (Galt & Taggart 2021a).

The COVID-19 pandemic has merely exacerbated the problems and economic vulnerabilities that were already causing a decline in FDI inflows into Georgia (in 2020, Georgia received its lowest volume of investment since 2005, which was 57% lower compared to 2019). The total volume of FDIs entering the country during the first six months of 2021 was USD 366.4 million, which is the lowest volume of FDIs for the first half of a year over the last 11 years. The main problems remain in attracting and in using this investment effectively to achieve higher economic growth (PMCG 2021a).

The 10-year development plan covering a wide range of structural reform priorities in economy published by the Ministry of Economy in July 2021 highlights important reforms in governance of public corporations (to be in line with OECD requirements), in the energy sector (further liberalization of the energy market and the unbundling of power generation and transmission), as well as in capital market development (the establishment of the Pension Agency should help mobilize domestic currency savings<sup>6</sup>. The Ministry of Economy noted it is continuing to work on free trade agreements with South Korea, Israel and other countries, which should further enhance opportunities for private sector development (MOESD of Georgia 2021).

Unemployment in Georgia has been high by international standards and a large share of

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<sup>5</sup> About 55 per cent of the banks' loan portfolio is in foreign currency, mainly US dollars and euros, while 61 per cent of deposits are denominated in foreign currency (IMF 2021a).

<sup>6</sup> The Agency is still in its initial phase and has so far only invested in bank deposits. It is expected that more diversified investments will be made soon.

the labor force is employed in the agricultural sector, which contributes little to GDP. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to weigh on the labour market. The unemployment rate increased from 16.6 percent in 2019 Q4 to 22.1 percent in 2021 Q2, even as labor force participation increased from 50.5 to 51.4 percent and in 2021 Q3 unemployment rate stood at 19.5%. Notably, the unemployment rate decreased in 2021 Q3 for the first time after growing between 2014 Q4 -2021 Q2, however it still exceeds pre-Covid levels. The labor force participation rate (52.8%) exceeds pre-Covid levels, meaning that more people are seeking jobs and this also drives the unemployment rate higher (Galt & Taggart 2021b). Georgia's youth unemployment is one of the highest in the region and almost half of the unemployed are less than 34 years old. There is a problem with the school-to-work transition in the Georgian labor market (Badurashvili 2019). The government has announced a comprehensive reform of the education system, the most important pillar of which is the tightening of qualification requirements for teachers and the increase of teachers' salaries. Importantly, efforts are being made to strengthen vocational education and training, supported by a number of donors. The implementation of the reform seems to have slowed due to COVID-19, but remains a priority for the government.

## Tax and Budget Policy

In July 2021, parliament passed the revised 2021 budget. The main purpose of the budget revisions was to promote economic recovery and address COVID-19. In the renewed budget, the government revised the growth forecast for 2021 upwards to 9.5% (from 7.7%) and set the deficit at 6.9% of GDP (from 7.6%) and government debt at 54.6% of GDP (from 60.1%) for 2021. In the revised macroeconomic framework, the fiscal deficit returns to 3.0% of GDP and government debt to 48.6% of GDP in 2023, with significant improvements in these parameters compared to the previous medium-term fiscal framework. In the revised budget, the government maintains a high investment rate in 2021 and also in subsequent years (8.0% of GDP in 2021 and 7.3% in 2022-25), which supports growth. Current expenditure is also projected to increase in 2021, mainly due to the increase in COVID-related health spending. Higher-than-expected tax revenues and the acceleration of privatisation are the main sources of financing for the increase in expenditure, while borrowing does not increase (Transparency International Georgia 2021).

In August 2021, the Minister of Finance presented reforms that are important for economic growth and maintaining macroeconomic stability under its 10-year development plan. According to the presentation, the main task is to normalise the budget deficit and reduce the debt ratio. The ministry is working on four main directions: growth-oriented tax policy, friendly tax administration and capital market reforms. With the acceleration of the economic recovery, tax revenues have risen strongly since April. Higher VAT refunds, which have risen since the system was introduced in November 2020, were more than offset by an increase in other (gross) tax revenue (MOF of Georgia 2021).

## Social Policy

The pandemic-related downturn lowered average household incomes and the share of the population below the national poverty line (defined as the amount of money needed to meet the basic needs of one able man ) increased to 21.3 percent in 2020, undoing all of the poverty reduction since 2017 (PMCG 2021b). The government provided substantial support to vulnerable households and businesses during the pandemic (3.8 percent of GDP in 2020). The supplementary budget this year prioritized again the COVID-19 health response and social assistance to vulnerable families with children. The social assistance to vulnerable families with children was doubled to GEL 100 per child per month and the threshold increased to 120,000 points on the country's social security scale (IMF b).

By August 2021 the percentage of the population receiving handouts increased to 16.7%. Informal economy workers are highly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The State Employment Agency of Georgia introduced the approach used to self-identify workers in the informal economy eligible for unemployment assistance and registration in the country. Around 97% of Georgians receive at least one social benefit. While older people are somewhat protected from the rise of poverty by state pensions, there is no developed safety net for the prime-age population, apart from targeted social assistance payments for the most vulnerable. There is a lack of concrete measures to address high unemployment and inequality, including education reforms, a review of social protection and strengthened active labour market policies. (Danish Trade Union Development Agency 2021). The sharp rise in prices is particularly acute for the vulnerable. As of October 2021, the subsistence minimum is 224.2 GEL, which is an increase of 36.5 GEL, or 19.4% compared to the previous year, such a high increase is due to sharp increases in food prices. Consequently, the volume of key living expenses by the vulnerable population has increased (Business Media 2021b). The prime minister recently announced new initiatives which envisage tightening the provision of social assistance to this population, and according to which this group of citizens should be offered a job instead of assistance. But this initiative is short on details at this time.

## Social Care and Healthcare

The most important mechanisms adopted in accordance with the AA in the direction of labor are meant to be the Social Partnership Tripartite Commission and the mediation tool for solving the collective disputes in which 17 mediators are selected. In 2021, there were 15 requests for mediation out of which only 3 were solved (Parliament of Georgia 2021a).

The Employment Agency, which started operating in 2020, has several functions includ-

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<sup>7</sup> The numerical value of this indicator is not publicly available.

ing consulting, subsidizing, organizing recruitment forums and training as well as creating perspectives for people with disabilities to get employed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during 2020, the role of this agency was mostly operating under the anti-crisis action plan for ensuring the social packages for self-employed people and also for people who lost their jobs. In 2021, 370,000 people received single-time social aid, amounting to 300 GEL. 158,245 people who lost their jobs received 200 GEL for six months. The Employment Agency started full functioning with its real duties from 2021 and started training-retraining programs.

Georgia enacted labor migration (circular migration) schemes led by the Employment Agency, which recruits individuals looking to work in Europe. This program was launched on February 15 with the first large-scale project in Germany, which was meant to see 5,000 Georgians work temporarily in Germany. However, according to the half-year report of the National Action Plan, only 300 people were sent to Germany under this scheme so far (Parliament of Georgia 2021a). Experts believe that this program lacks a well-developed strategy, an information campaign, effective and transparent recruitment, and a monitoring mechanism and that is why it is being implemented with significant flaws. Moreover, according to some economic experts, the outflow of the capable workforce should not be the priority of the state (Business media 2021a). The labor control-regulatory mechanism, namely of the Labor Inspection Agency started functioning in 2020. Currently, there is a recruitment process and vacancies are announced for 120 labor inspectors. However, distinguishing the qualified inspectors, especially in the regions, has turned out to be very challenging. For labor inspection purposes, software has been developed and it is in the last stage of digitalization (Parliament of Georgia 2021a).

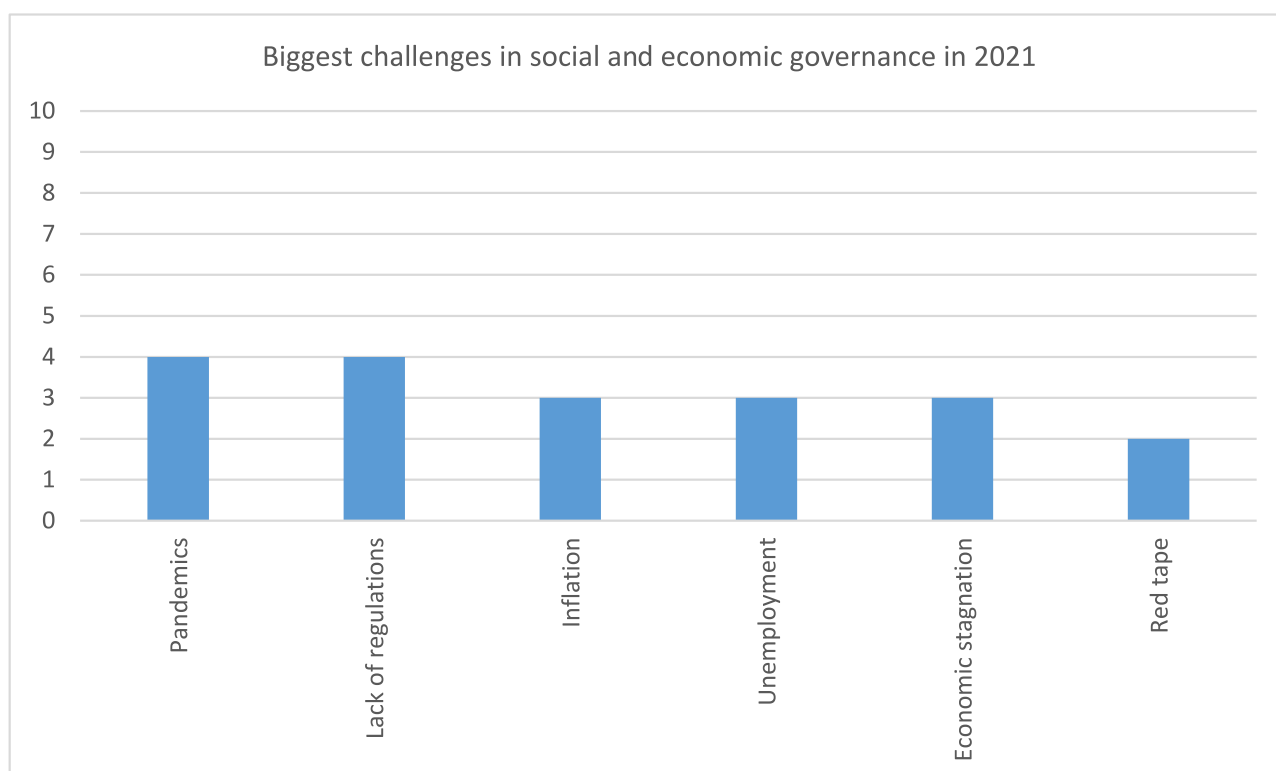
In line with the implemented programs by the ministry, the vaccination process remains the most challenging for the MOH. Apart from the fact that vaccines were brought in to the country late and in low quantities, (Agenda.ge 2021), public awareness regarding the necessity of vaccination is dramatically low. According to NDI survey results from July 2021, 47% of the respondents refuse to get vaccinated and 42% think that they are not well informed about the vaccination process (NDI 2021). The advertisements of an information campaign launched in cities on the initiative of the NCDC were soon replaced by advertisements of the negative political campaign against the opposition leaders, which showed that healthcare is not the top priority of the Georgian government. The failure of the information campaign is visible from the statistical data of fully vaccinated individuals, which as of December 5, 2021 is 27.6% (NCDC 2021). This result falls considerably short of the required level (at least 60%) of vaccination needed to effectively deal with the pandemic (Tarkhnishvili 2021). From the second half of November 2021, the rate of vaccination slightly increased as the government of Georgia decided to give 200 GEL as a bonus to pensioners who got vaccinated from November until the end of December. That partly had a positive impact. Moreover, the government of Georgia introduced green passports for individuals who were both vaccinated and who had recovered from Covid-19, which will ease certain restrictions for green status holders and impose restrictions for those resisting vaccination (Provax 2021).

## Summary

The main challenges cited by experts in the country include high unemployment (especially among young people), inflation, increased poverty, inclusive economic growth, increasing bureaucracy but also lack of regulation in certain areas (Figure 11). Against the background of pandemic and political instability, there are negative business expectations from both Georgian and international business representatives.

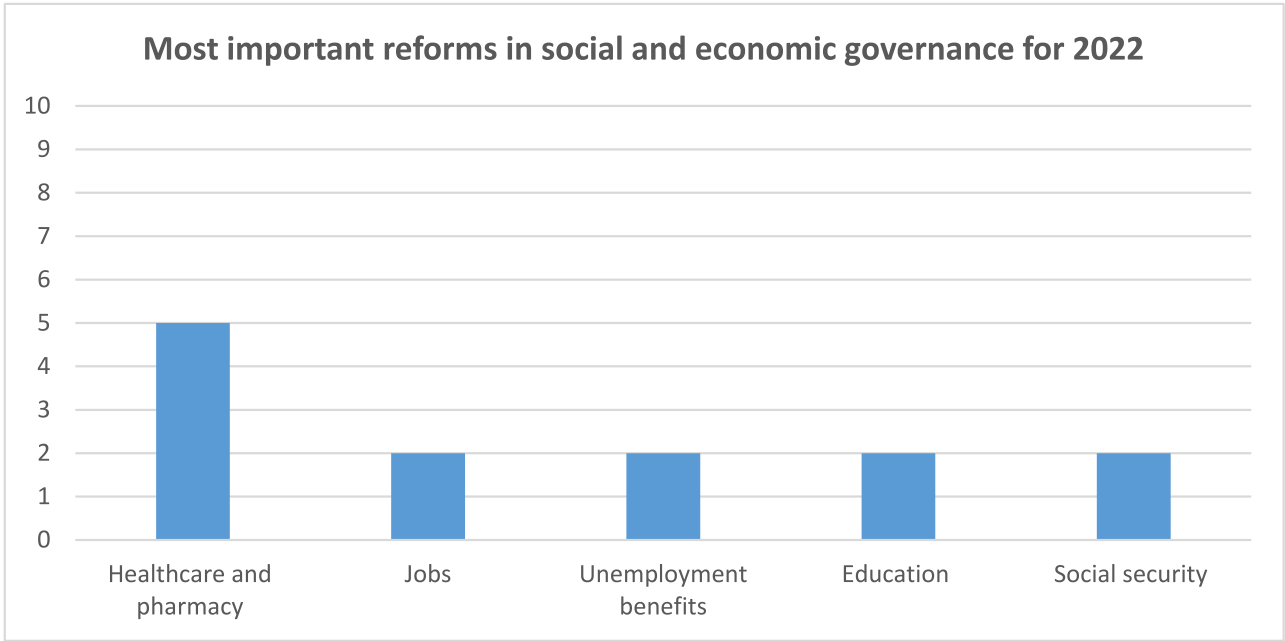
The surveyed experts also identified a few positive developments including the adaption of a new labor code and vocational education reform, working on bilateral free trade agreements, and state support for small and medium-sized businesses.

Figure 11: In your opinion, what where the three largest challenges related to social and economic policy in 2021 in Georgia?



The GGI Expert Survey identified reforms in healthcare and pharmaceutical as the most important reform priority for 2022 (figure 12 ). Other reform recommendations for 2022 include: labour market policies to encourage employment, regional policy putting more emphasis on regional economic development, encouraging economic activity in the regions, implementation of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) by all state support programs, introduction of minimal wages and unemployment insurance, reformation of health and social assistance system as well as education system, ensuring a stable macroeconomic environment, the reduction of dollarization and addressing problems in good governance and judiciary (Figure 12) .

Figure 12: In your opinion, what are the three most important reforms or ideas related to social and economic policy for Georgia for 2022?



# External Governance





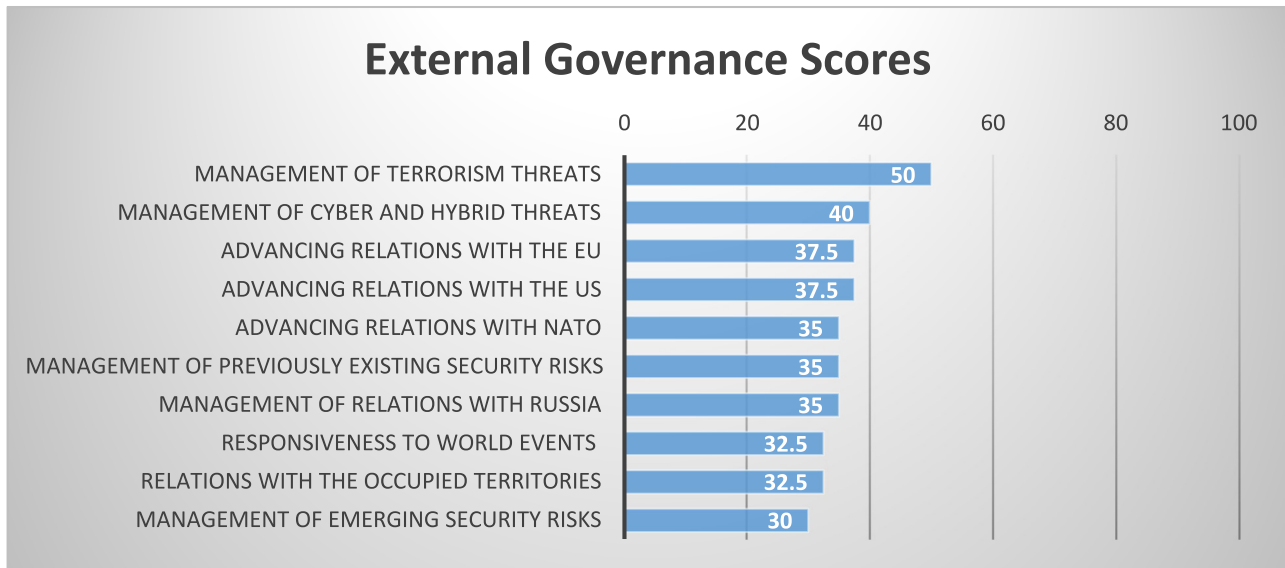
## Key insights and main challenges

- The relationship with the European Union and setbacks in democratic development; the threat of regression in the EU integration process is a growing challenge for the state of Georgia.
- According to the GGI Survey, in terms of external governance, the state of Georgia's performance is ineffective in the area of de-occupation and relations with Russia.
- Russia constitutes the major security threats to Georgia for 2021. Next to increasing Russian influence, the 3+3 format was identified as a major threat by the GGI Survey.
- A new defense agreement with the US and Georgia's diplomacy during and after the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war were identified as major successes.

From the perspective of external governance and security, Georgia's state policy is assessed by four main categories: (1) European integration, (2) advancing relations with NATO and the USA, (3) responsiveness to external, both regional and global, changes, and (4) effectiveness in the areas of security, conflicts and sustainability. This section of the report measures the performance of Georgia in the aforementioned four areas throughout the year based on narrative analysis and expert survey.

The GGI Expert Survey graded Georgia's performance in external governance at 45 points out of 100. In doing so, in relative terms, Georgia's record in external governance outperformed democratic and effective governance areas and it shares the top spot together with socio-economic governance. Yet in absolute terms, Georgia's performance is still rated poorly and below average. Among the individual components of external governance, management of terrorism threats received the highest score (50), while management of emerging security risks was rated the lowest (30).

Figure 13: On a five point scale, where 5 means very effective and 1 means very ineffective, how would you assess Georgia's performance on the following issues related to foreign policy and security in 2021?



## Advancing Relations with the EU

European integration is the main foreign policy vector of Georgia as defined by its constitution. The first initiative concerning foreign policy adopted by the parliament elected in 2020 was a draft resolution (Civil.ge 2020) stating that the only admissible foreign policy for the country is one aimed at integration into the EU and NATO and the continuation of “pragmatic and principled policy” with Russia (Parliament of Georgia 2020c).

The experts’ assessment of performance in advancing relations with the EU is either “neutral” or rather “more negative than positive”. In terms of its essence, this assessment can be examined in two directions: significant achievements made by the Georgian state in Europeanization and Brussels’ reaction to them, on the one hand; internal political developments, on the other.

The key objective of the Georgian Dream government as regards advancing relations with the EU during its third term in power is to prepare and officially submit an application for membership in 2024 (MFA of Georgia 2020). On May 17, 2021, Georgia signed a memorandum on the “Associated Trio” with Ukraine and Moldova to further deepen European integration (MFA of Georgia 2021b), which was a positive step forward on this path as the three advanced Eastern Partnership countries will be able to fully implement the obligations under the Association Agreement in a more coordinated manner. This, in turn, will be an important factor in speeding up approximation with the European standards, which has been proved by high-level meetings conducted periodically, such as a joint meeting with the EU leadership in early December 2021.

However, a year-long performance of the Georgian government and ruling party raises a number of questions regarding the likelihood of realizing the ambition of EU membership. Georgia's most egregious failure in the area of legislative and institutional approximation occurred in September 2021, when, on the one hand, it came under harsh criticism from the EU for implementing the judiciary reform with important flaws and on the other hand, it sustained an actual loss in the form of microfinance assistance. Moreover, the country experienced political regression in terms of expressing good will towards the principle of conditionality as well as building an image of stability in the eyes of Europe (Samkharadze 2021d).

As regards Georgia's internal democratic process and the development of a local political culture, the failure of the EU-mediated inter-party dialogue must be considered a step backward. Amid unprecedented engagement of the European Union in the process of interparty mediation, the Georgian political parties suffered a failure. At a decisive moment, the UNM refused to sign the final document brokered by President of the European Council Charles Michel. This refusal was used by the Georgian Dream as a reason to withdraw from the agreement, which led to the impression that this confrontation had moved the country further away from European prospects (Samkharadze 2021b).

In terms of internal democratic processes, the biggest setback of the country occurred in the area of human rights: the events of July 5 and the leak of surveillance and eavesdropping files from the State Security Service of Georgia attracted severe criticism from Brussels (Lebanidze & Kakabadze 2021). While the Georgian government harbors even greater ambitions in its third term in power as regards the EU, it would seem it is facing greater setbacks as well. Such a state of affairs is worsened by the rhetoric of ruling party representatives who show little concern about a toughened tone from Brussels. At the end of the day, this dynamic in advancing relations with the EU does not speak of promising developments.

## Advancing Relations with NATO and the US

In the area of advancing relations with the US and NATO, experts said Georgia's performance was rather ineffective. The main challenge remains to work for a larger US presence in Georgia as well as the lack of progress on the path towards NATO integration. In terms of US relations, a significant event during the third term of the Georgian Dream governance was the election of Joe Biden to the US presidency, which will pose new challenges to and has raised new expectations for Georgia (Samkharadze 2021a).

Within the scope of bilateral relations with the US, a significant advancement was observed in the area of defense and security: the purchase of anti-tank Javelin missiles in June 2021 and the visit of US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin in October 2021 indicate active military cooperation between Tbilisi and Washington. Furthermore, during the visit, a coop-

eration agreement was extended in the sphere of defense between the two countries and additionally, the Black Sea security was discussed (Civil.ge 2021j). Georgia continues to work on a Free Trade Agreement with the US (Georgian Dream 2020), though no headway has been observed in this direction so far.

The decision of the new US administration to close down operations in Afghanistan has proven fundamentally significant, actually narrowing the arena for Georgia's interoperability with NATO and international engagement. The Georgian government's plan regarding this issue is ambiguous or it is not known to the public at large. However, Tbilisi has been commended for its active engagement in post-Afghanistan humanitarian operations.

The Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) has been extended and training and interoperability under the SNGP has been enhanced without impediment, as evidenced by visits of the NATO Military Committee to Georgia (Civil.ge 2020b). Visits on such a level and the possibility of communication must undoubtedly be assessed positively, however, with new geopolitical challenges emerging, the government needs to work not only on maintaining this trend but also strengthening it. The lack of an invitation to the 2012 summit in Brussels caused some anxiety as it was for the first time that Georgia, along with Ukraine, was not invited to the summit of the Alliance; however, it was explained by a limited format of the summit due to the pandemic (Amerikis khma 2021b). This need not be interpreted as an indication of a significant decline in the relationship with the Alliance; Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani noted that the invitation of the country to the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in November-December 2021 is proof of Georgia's progress as a country aspiring to join NATO (Interpressnews.ge 2021b). All in all, however, it seems that the country is finding it difficult to make substantial progress in terms of NATO integration.

## **Responsiveness to External Challenges**

In the direction of new external challenges, it is necessary to single out the Second Karabakh War – the course of the war itself as well as the navigation of the post-conflict environment. The pullout from Afghanistan must also be considered. According to a number of opinions, due to the internal political crisis in Georgia, those processes were not paid due attention, which translated into rather negative than positive assessments of experts.

The chronology of the Second Karabakh War closely coincided with the parliamentary elections in 2020 and the ensuing parliamentary crisis. Against that backdrop, the government was frequently criticized for paying inadequate attention to the response to and communication about the war. Greater challenges were posed in the post-conflict context, although Georgia's activity and performance in this case must be assessed more or less positively in two aspects: Tbilisi succeeded in maintaining a neutral stance and avoiding additional complications and, on the other hand, a more significant achievement was the engagement in the mediation process along with the USA (Civil.ge 2021e). A cooperation initiative in a new

3+3 format (encompassing Turkey, Russia and Iran with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) is considered unacceptable for Georgia due to Russia's involvement in it; however, experts criticized Foreign Minister Zalkaliani for his ambiguous rhetoric regarding the refusal to participate in that initiative.

The completion of the mission in Afghanistan has posed significant challenges to Georgia's geopolitical and external aspirations. In practical terms, it may impede the enhancement of interoperability of Georgia's military potential, while in political terms, the termination of partnership in international missions may limit mechanisms of expressing the aspiration to integrate into NATO. Georgia's willingness to participate in the prompt humanitarian evacuation of citizens of various countries and employees of organizations from Afghanistan must be unarguably assessed as a positive move (MFA of Georgia 2021c). However, it should be noted that it is not clear how Tbilisi intends to deepen the integration process with the Alliance in the post-Afghanistan period and to fill up a gap that has been created after the completion of the mission.

## Security Governance

In terms of security, an extremely important event, as noted above, is the signing of an agreement between Georgia and the US extending support to Georgia in the military component for a period of six years. According to the agreement, the US continues to support measures designed to contain the Russian threat. A total defense principle that was developed in the form of a 10-year plan in Georgia rests on bilateral cooperation where priority strategic partnership is based on cooperation with Washington. As regards armament, a decision of the US Congress to sell Javelins is a positive step in terms of active trade with the US. Furthermore, within the scope of US partnership, there is a promise of potentially enabling access to armaments of a higher level (GPB 2021).

In parallel with the aforementioned advancement in the area of security, top priorities of the government include the issue of occupied territories. During the first year of its third term in power, the Georgian Dream government held a series of sessions within the Geneva format (Civil.ge 2020c; 2021k). At the 54th round, the Georgian side raised acute political and humanitarian issues, but no notable achievements in resolving them have been observed.

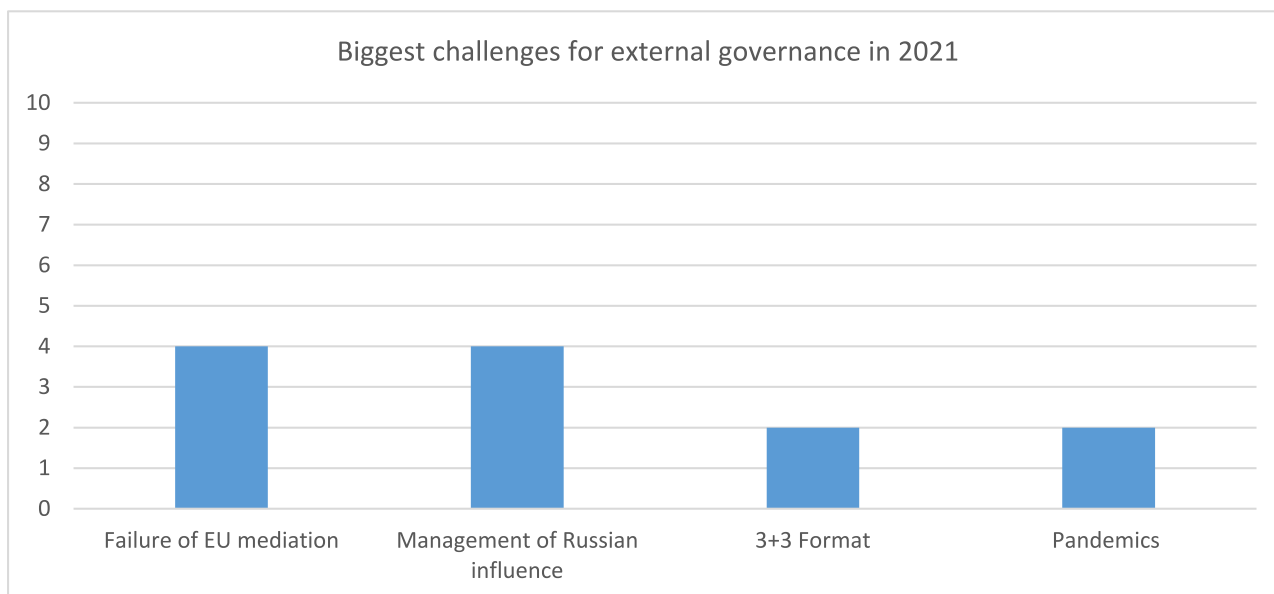
## Summary

When considering the efficacy of the Georgian state in the areas of external governance and security, it is important to emphasize a close interrelation of internal and external policy, especially when it comes to Euro-Atlantic integration. Cooling of relations with the EU is

a challenge for the Georgian state, which, against setbacks in democratic development, creates risks that Georgia's official application for membership in 2024 will not have the effect the Georgian side expects. Moreover, in the experts' assessment, in terms of external governance, Georgia is acting most ineffectively in the areas of de-occupation and defense and security.

In terms of major challenges for Georgia's external governance, two factors occupied the top spot in the GGI Survey: the failure of EU mediation and management of Russian influence (Figure 14). Attempts to establish the 3+3 regional cooperation format in the South Caucasus was identified as another major security threat for Georgia alongside the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 14: In your opinion, what were the three largest challenges related to foreign and security policy in 2021 in Georgia?

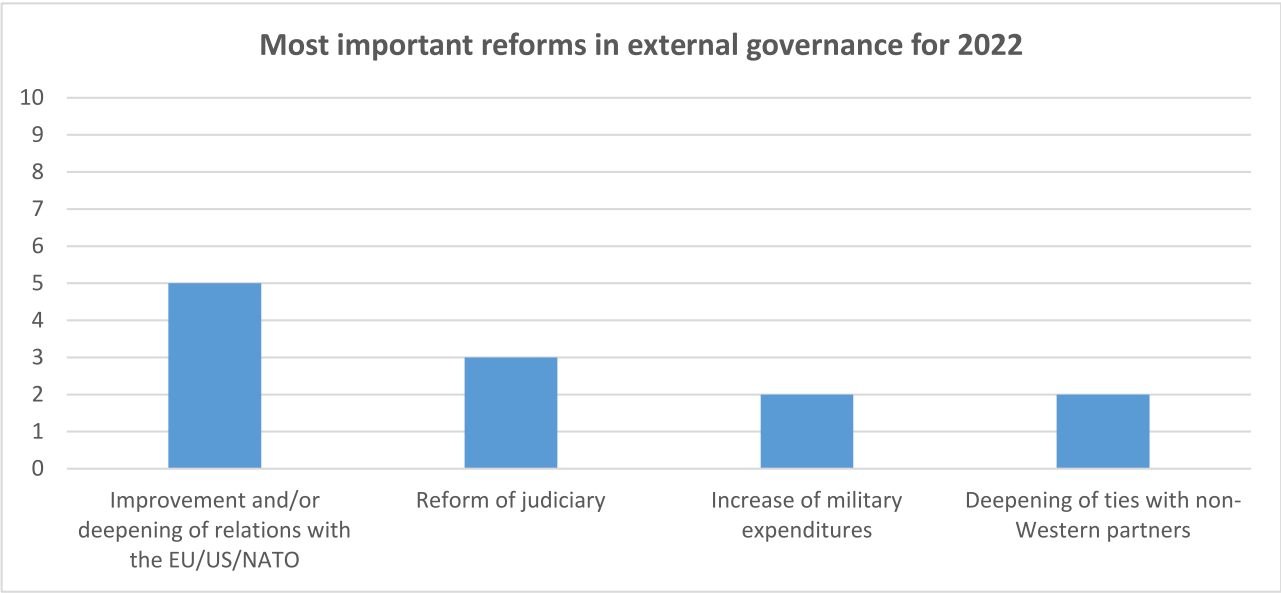


In terms of necessary steps for 2022, the most frequently mentioned recommendation in the GGI Expert Survey was for the Georgian government to restore and deepen strategic ties with Western partners (the US, EU and NATO) (see Figure 15). To improve relations with the EU, it is necessary to enhance democratic reforms, in particular as regards court reform and human rights, where Georgia receives the most critical assessments from the West; it is important to carry out this process in parallel with depolarization and rapid resolution of political crisis.

To step up relations with strategic partners, it is necessary to restore the country's status of a reliable and stable partner in the eyes of the EU; to deepen military relations with the US and fully implement a new strategic partnership initiative; also, to activate the eastern vector in relationships with Asian actors; it is necessary to consolidate the public around democratic values in order to facilitate the handling of hybrid threats coming from Russia.

In the area of security, it is important to work on the strategy of combating hybrid threats, to deepen cooperation with Ukraine, Romania and other Western partners in the context of Black Sea region security; there is a need to improve control on the security zone along the occupation line and undertake technical measures in surveillance and intelligence activities that are necessary to minimize the main challenge to Georgia’s security – threats related to the occupation.

Figure 15: In your opinion, what are the three most important reforms or ideas related to external governance of Georgia for 2022?





## Conclusion

The current report of the Georgia Governance Index was a first attempt to provide a comprehensive assessment of Georgia's performance in four broad governance categories (democratic, effective, social and economic, and external). The GGI Expert Survey graded Georgia's performance in each governance category while the narrative part of the analysis provided a detailed analytical context to expert responses.

The report described Georgia's difficult path towards multiple transformations. Unsurprisingly, Georgia's performance in democratic governance received the lowest assessment in the GGI Expert Survey, mostly due to the very low scores received in the subcategories of "provision and judiciary" and "justice reforms." Accordingly judicial reform was also identified as the reform of first priority for 2022. Georgia's performance in effective governance was also assessed as very weak. Informal governance and political corruption were mentioned as key challenges. The unwillingness of the authorities to provide security for protesters and journalists during protests further weakened the state's monopoly on power.

Social and economic governance and external governance received higher scores yet they too failed to cross the 50-point mark (out of 100). In social and economic areas, positive and negative developments overlapped throughout 2021. Strong economic recovery was accompanied by high inflation and tight monetary policy. The vaccination delay and political uncertainties seemed to have negative impacts on the business environment and foreign direct investments. The lack of a long-term vision of comprehensive reform agendas in education, labor market and other social policy areas further threatens the long-term sustainability of Georgia's social and economic governance.

Finally, external governance received the best assessment in the GGI Expert Survey, yet here we also have a mixed picture of both negative and less positive developments. Georgia's relations with its Euro-Atlantic partners suffered from the country's domestic political crisis and democratic shortcomings. The handling of Russian attempts to influence domestic processes was also negatively assessed. In this regard, the 3+3 regional cooperation format with the inclusion of Russia was praised as a major new threat to Georgia's security and statehood. On the positive side, Georgia's balancing diplomacy between Azerbaijan and Armenia and signing of a military pact with the US were praised as major breakthroughs in foreign and security policy in 2021.

## Index Indicators and Sub-indicators

### Democratic Governance

- **Civil and political rights.** Civil and political rights include rights to protection from discrimination on grounds such as sex, race, sexual orientation, national origin, color, age, political affiliation, ethnicity, social class, religion, and disability, and rights to the freedom of thought, speech, religion, press, assembly and movement.
- **Electoral regime.** The state of electoral legislation and electoral reforms, degree of autonomy and impartiality of the Central Election Commission, the quality of elections, presence of an even playing field between government and opposition parties, instances of violence and intimidation.
- **Horizontal accountability.** Horizontal accountability refers to horizontal separation of powers, the effectiveness of the parliamentary oversight over the executive bodies as well as independence, transparency, and effectiveness of judiciary.

### Effective Governance

- **Monopoly on the use of legitimate force.** The state's monopoly on the use of legitimate force and capacity to adopt and enforce political decisions throughout the entire territory of the country within its internationally recognized borders. The state's monopoly on the use of legitimate force may be limited over a period of time, on a particular territory of the country, in a certain area of policy, towards a particular social group or a particular segment of population.
- **Informal governance and alternative form of legitimacy.** Influence of private actors on the government and political decisions of the government even when decision makers formally act in the context of democratic institutions.
- **Control of corruption.** The capacity of the government to implement effective preventive and proactive measures against bureaucratic corruption (illegal use or misappropriation of state property and other state resources by lower- and mid-level public officials for material gains, also personal wellbeing) and political corruption (abuse of power by political decision makers or their close circle in all the three branches of government for illegal personal or partisan aims).

- **Public Services and Competition.** Public service is the service that is provided primarily by public institutions both on central and municipal levels. As for the competition, here is meant the new competition system that was enacted after starting the implementation of the Public Administration Reform in Georgia, according to which the procedures of civil servant selection has changed.

## Socio-Economic Governance

- **Economic framework and labor market.** This topic addresses the existence of a government's general strategy to support the future-oriented development of its economy through regulatory policy. The questions look at how successful has economic policy been in providing a reliable economic framework and in fostering the country's competitiveness. Labor market addresses a government's strategies to reconcile the following objectives: unemployment reduction and job security, and balancing supply and demand on the labor market by providing sufficient mobility of the labor force according to the needs of potential employers.
- **Tax and budget policy.** Effective tax policy realizes goals of revenue generation, growth promotion and the provision of sufficient financial resources for the country to fulfil its given tasks and obligations also in the long run. Sustainable budgeting should enable a government to pay its financial obligations (solvency), sustain economic growth, meet future obligations with existing tax burdens (stable taxes) and pay current obligations without shifting the cost to future generations (inter-generational fairness).
- **Social Policy.** Social policies designed to enhance sustainability involve maintaining or increasing individuals' opportunities to act and live in accordance with their own values, which thereby ensures a high degree of participation in society. The aim here is to examine domestic policymaking as well as the extent to which governments actively contribute to the provision of public goods in the area of social inclusion, health, families and inequalities.
- **Social care and healthcare.** Social care refers to provision of fair, targeted and effective assistance to people by developing a regulated system of social assistance via special financial and non-financial social packages. Healthcare refers to a set of measures aimed at improving public health, disease prevention and disease control. It also refers to the maintenance of health through diagnostics, treatments as well as cure of illness, injury, disease. Apart from this, this includes services that the state provides in emergency situations, like a pandemic, for citizens. For instance the immunization process, diagnostics and treatment and operations which are free of charge.

## External Governance

- **European integration.** Approximation of legislative and political environment with the EU standards; the process of institutional and economic integration
- **Advancing relations with NATO and the USA.** Deepening of strategic relations in military, economic and political areas; meeting standards of interoperability with NATO and political standards
- **Responsiveness to external regional and global changes.** Adjustment to security, political and economic environment having changed as a result of external events of various scales, which are related to the Georgian state; update and practical adaptation of relevant strategies
- **Security governance.** Is related to effective management of key security risks and threats, such as relations with Russia, occupied territories, great power competition, cyber warfare, terrorism etc.

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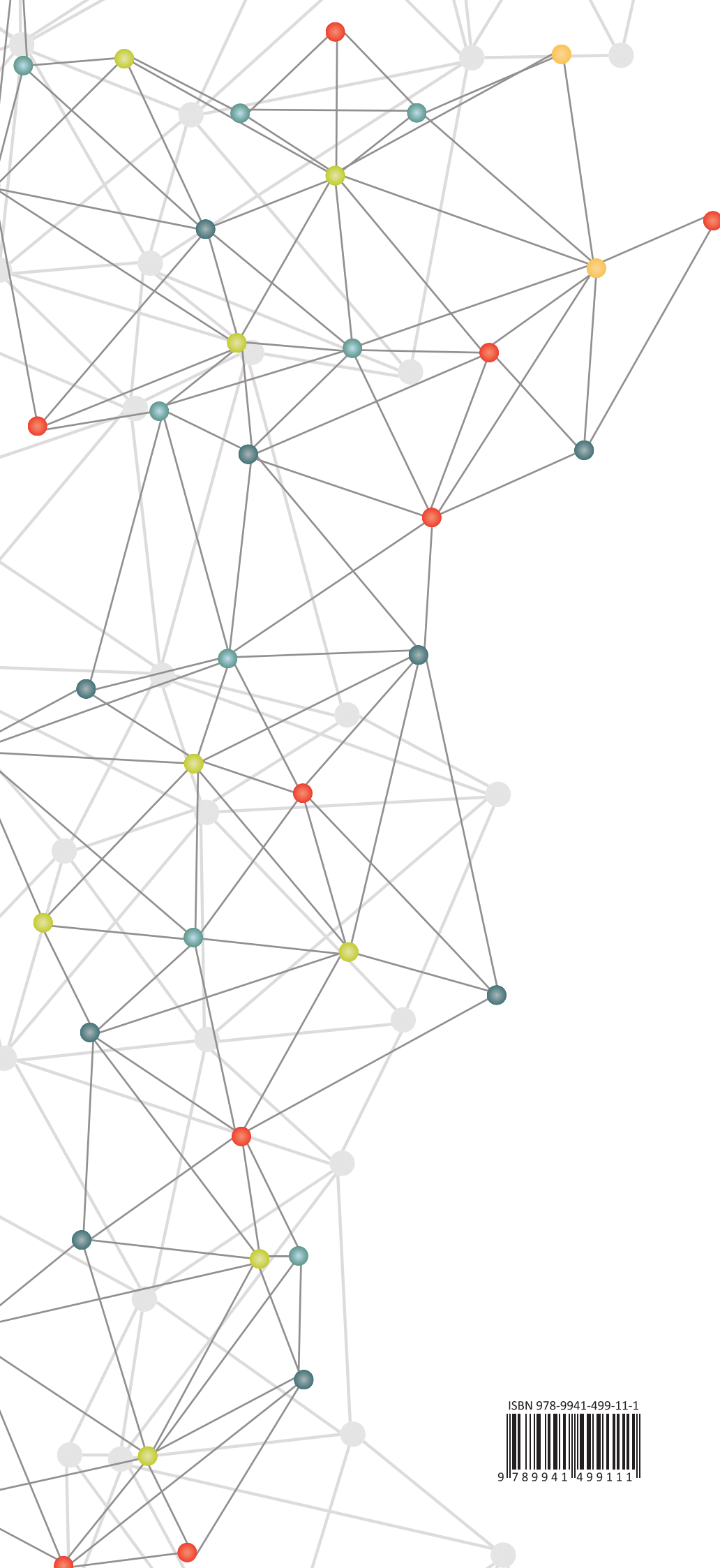
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