

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

CONTRIBUTION OF NON-PROGRAMME COUNTRIES TO THE EU YOUTH WIKI

CHAPTER V: GEORGIA PARTICIPATION

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Published: February 2023

CONTENTS

5.1. GENERAL CONTEXT	2
5.2. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY	4
5.3. YOUTH REPRESENTATION BODIES	5
5.4. YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION IN POLICY MAKING	8
5.5. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO INCREASE YOUTH PARTICIPATION	9
5.6. SUPPORTING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS	11
5.7. “LEARNING TO PARTICIPATE” THROUGH FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING	11
5.8. RAISING POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE	14
5.9. E-PARTICIPATION	16
5.10. CURRENT DEBATES AND REFORMS	16

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5.1. General context

Main concepts

The [State Youth Strategy 2023-2026](#)¹ defines youth participation as having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity, and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society. This definition coincides with the meaning described in the [European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#). This perception nevertheless does not always match the interpretation made among decision makers and civil servants at local and national levels. Youth participation is often reduced to the physical presence of young people at events, regardless of how much space young people have for involvement in the decision-making process. The perception of the concept of youth participation is also ambiguous among civil society organisations themselves, although most of them are aware of the nature of meaningful participation per se. Overall, the notion of participation in general and youth participation in particular appears quite inconsistent within the broader society, including young people, as it varies from person to person and from institution to institution, depending on their background and competences in participation.

Young people are defined in the Georgian National Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030 as people between 14 and 29 years of age. The State Youth Strategy 2023-2026, however, identified its target group as children and youth from 6 to 29 years.

Institutions of representative democracy

Georgia is a representative democratic parliamentary republic² with a multi-party system. The president of the country is the ceremonial head of state, and the prime minister is the head of government. The prime minister and the government wield executive power.

Legislative power is vested in both the government and the unicameral Parliament of Georgia.

One hundred and fifty members of the Parliament of Georgia are elected in a unified multi-seat electoral district.

The Georgian state governance is highly centralised, except for the autonomous republics of Adjara and Abkhazia, and Tskhinvali region (the former autonomous region of South Ossetia).³

Self-government is organised on the basis of the [Constitution of Georgia](#), the [European Charter of Local Self-Government](#) (ratified by Georgia in 2004), and the [Organic Law of Georgia - Local Self-Government code](#).

In the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, local self-government is regulated by the [Law of Georgia on the Status of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara](#).

[The Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories](#) defines the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region as occupied territories, while the issue of self-government can only be regulated once Georgian sovereignty has been restored in these territories.

¹. Adopted by the Government of Georgia in December 2022.

². In 2018, Georgia moved to a parliamentary system of governance as a result of significant constitutional amendments in 2017.

³. The autonomous republic of Abkhazia and former autonomous region of South Ossetia are occupied by the Russian Federation.

A local self-governing unit is a municipality.

Local self-government bodies (municipal bodies) are the representative body of a municipality – *sakrebulo*, directly elected for a 4-year term – and the executive body of a municipality – the mayor, directly elected for a 4-year term. A city hall is an institution subordinated to the executive body of the municipality, which ensures the exercise of powers of the mayor.

Voting in Georgia is non-compulsory and is cast by ballot.

5.2. Youth participation in representative democracy

1. Young people as voters

According to the [Election Code of Georgia](#), any citizen of Georgia who has attained the age of 18 before or on the day of an election/referendum/plebiscite and who meets the requirements defined by the Election Code of Georgia, shall enjoy active suffrage, except for those persons who, under the Constitution and/or the Election Code of Georgia have a restricted active suffrage.

A citizen of Georgia who, by a court judgment, is placed in a penitentiary facility for a particularly serious crime or by a court decision is recognised as a beneficiary of support and placed in a relevant inpatient medical institution, does not have the right to participate in elections, referendums and plebiscites.

All Georgian citizens who have reached the age of 18 are automatically registered in the voters' lists. All citizens who are unable to reach the polling station (sick people, prisoners) have access to assistance to exercise their right to vote. Citizens of Georgia residing outside the country can vote in the diplomatic representation of Georgia in their country of residence.

According to the [Central Election Committee of Georgia](#), young people make up 18-20% of Georgia's voters.

Age-disaggregated data of voter turnout is not available, but according to a [public opinion survey, conducted by the Centre for Insights in Survey Research](#) as part of a project of the International Republican Institute in 2020, 68% of young people responded that they were very likely to participate in the parliamentary elections in 2020, while 16% responded that they were somewhat likely to vote.

2. Young people as political representatives

According to the Election Code of Georgia, all citizens of Georgia who meet the conditions determined by the Election Code of Georgia shall have passive suffrage, except for those whose passive suffrage has been restricted under the Constitution of Georgia, Election Code of Georgia, the Law of Georgia on Combating Drug-related Crimes, and the Law of Georgia on Combating Crimes against Sexual Freedom and inviolability.

According to the [Organic Law of Georgia on Political Association of Citizens](#), any citizen of Georgia with electoral rights can establish a party and participate in its activities. However, there are no mechanisms to promote or encourage the participation of young people in political parties. According to the law, a youth organisation (youth wing) as a structural unit of a party may be established without the capacity of a legal person and shall be approved by the board of the party, unless otherwise provided for in the party statute. On the other hand, the youth wings of parties are allowed to register as non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities. Nevertheless, youth

wings of political parties in Georgia (except for young socialists) are not registered as separate legal entities and operate as informal groups or structural unit of a political party.

According to the Election Code of Georgia, a citizen of Georgia who has attained the age of 21 by polling day and has resided in Georgia for at least 5 years may be elected as a member of a municipality representative body – *sakrebulo* (city council) – while a citizen of Georgia over the age of 25 with the right to vote who has resided in Georgia for at least 5 years may be elected as the mayor of a city/municipality.

There are no quotas for young candidates, nor other mechanisms for enhancing youth representation in governmental bodies on a municipal level.

Currently, 11 (six male, five female) out of the 50 members of the city council of the capital Tbilisi (22%) are young people.

There are no statistical data on the number of young mayors and young members of local city halls in the municipalities of Georgia.

As stated in the Election Code of Georgia, a citizen of Georgia over the age of 25, having the right to vote, and who has lived for at least 10 years in Georgia may be elected as a member of the Parliament of Georgia. The law does not provide for a quota for young people or any other mechanisms for increasing youth representation in the central legislative body of the country. Three out of 150 elected parliament members were young people during the last parliamentary elections in Georgia in 2020.

According to the election code of Georgia, young people in Georgia cannot stand for president. Candidates must be at least 40 years of age.

5.3. Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

Georgia has no government-run youth parliament or similar structure on a national level.

Several projects under the title “Youth Parliament of Georgia” and “Student Parliament of Georgia” have been introduced by different national and international organisations during the last decade. However, all were designed as parliamentary simulations and served educational purposes.

Youth councils/youth advisory boards

Youth advisory board

The youth advisory board is established on a national level and functions under the [Youth Agency](#). The Youth Agency is a state institution responsible for youth affairs under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs of Georgia. The board involves a gender-balanced group of 22 young people between the ages of 14 and 29, individuals as well as representatives of youth organisations and organisations working for youth. Board members were selected by a temporary intersectoral selection committee through a two-level selection procedure, with assessment of application packages and interviews of shortlisted candidates.

The youth advisory board consults the Youth Agency on youth needs, the relevance of potential programmes, and helps with youth needs assessment. It officially gathers quarterly, and additionally if necessary, and reports to the Youth Agency twice a year. The youth advisory board is financed by the Youth Agency of Georgia.

Municipal youth councils

The establishment and functioning of youth councils on a municipal level is based on the Local Self-Government Code of Georgia. The law does not specify youth structures as a separate form of citizen participation, however, according to the law, “In addition to the forms of citizen participation in the exercise of local self-government, a municipality may, under the relevant administrative-legal act, determine other forms of citizen participation in local self-government that do not contravene the legislation of Georgia.”

Municipal youth councils as a tool of youth participation were introduced by civil society. A majority of municipal youth councils (boards) in Georgia have been established as a result of programmes and projects initiated by civil society organisations in partnership with local self-government bodies.

Youth councils (boards) have been introduced in around one third of the municipalities of Georgia. In some municipalities, youth councils are officially adopted by local government, while in others they function and co-operate with local self-government bodies informally. Each independent youth council is free to identify its structure, mission, vision, objectives and strategy, the process of recruitment of members and their role in the council. In the case of youth councils established by local government bodies, the statute and strategy of the council are designed by the respective representatives of local government bodies in co-operation with local young people.

Higher education student unions

The [Georgian Student Organisations' Association](#) (GSOA) is an independent, non-governmental, membership-based organisation, which unites students' representative bodies and student unions from up to 40 higher educational institutions of Georgia. The GSOA was established in 2016. It has been a full member of the European Student Union since 2019.

The main governing body of the GSOA is a general assembly, which meets quarterly. The main executive body of the GSOA is a board which involves a minimum of 7 and maximum of 13 elected members of the organisation. The board meets bi-weekly.

The governing and representative powers of the organisation are carried out by the head of the board, which is elected by the general assembly for a 1-year term.

Any student representative body in a higher education institution authorised/accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, as well as any registered student organisation and non-registered student union/initiative group, is eligible to become a member of the GSOA.

The main aims/roles of the GSOA are the following:

- to represent interests and defend the rights of students at national and international levels;
- involvement in educational policy, improvement of educational standards and enhancing equal access of students to education;

- contributing to the integration of students in international educational space and enhancing the involvement of students in this process;
- supporting student organisations and unions, their institutional development, and enhancing their co-operation with international student unions;
- strengthening co-operation between the member organisations of the GSOA, supporting them to establish efficient co-operation at national and international levels;
- supporting processes needed for the establishment of democratic values and strengthening the civil society in Georgia.

The GSOA is represented in the councils for higher education authorisation and accreditation of educational programmes.

Membership fees and grants from various donors are the main sources of income of the GSOA.

Different thematic student unions as well as national representations of international student organisations are established at national level, and within specific educational institutions.

School pupils' unions

There is no information available regarding national, regional or municipal level school pupils' unions in Georgia.

National Council of Youth Organisations of Georgia

The [National Council of Youth Organisations of Georgia](#) is an umbrella organisation. NCYOG was established in 1995 and unites 75 youth organisations. It has been a full member of the European Youth Forum since 2000.

NCYOG's mission is to act as an independent and transparent platform of youth organisations, which unites children and youth organisations of Georgia, represents their interests, and advocates for their initiatives.

Its vision is to be the voice of young people in Georgia and beyond, to support them in the realisation of their potential, and to create an environment where the opinions of each young person will be considered, and where young people will have an opportunity to actively engage in social and political changes.

Democracy, human rights, diversity, participation and involvement are the main values of NCYOG.

NCYOG is a membership-based organisation.

The main roles of the council are the following:

- supporting democracy, human rights, diversity and active citizenship;
- representing common interests of voluntary-based youth organisations;

- creating solidarity among members;
- advocating around topics which affect young people’s lives;
- strengthening member organisations through empowerment of their human resources, and involving them in international projects and programmes, co-ordinating the process of their co-operation;
- sharing national and international youth work practices with member organisations;
- advocating for the development and implementation of youth policy;
- supporting dialogue between public bodies and civil society;
- supporting the process of development and recognition of non-formal education in Georgia.

The supreme decision-making body of the council is the general assembly, which is called no less than once a year. The number of delegates to the assembly is determined by the board.

In the period between congresses, the board is considered to be the permanent supreme governing body of the council. The board consists of nine members elected at the general assembly for a term of 2 years, including the chairman and the secretary general, with a right to extend the term.

The following types of organisation are eligible to be members of the NCYOG:

- student associations;
- minority organisations;
- children and student associations;
- international youth organisations;
- national membership-based voluntary organisations;
- youth organisations working in environmental protection;
- youth organisations operating in youth work;
- other youth organisations, whose statute and values match the statute and values of the umbrella organisation.

5.4. Young people’s participation in policy making

One of the main priorities of both the [Georgian National Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030](#)⁴ and the [State Youth Strategy 2023-2026](#) is the “active involvement of young people in public life and democratic processes”. However, up to now no concrete mechanisms for youth participation in policy making are designed and promoted at national and local levels.

Activities promoting young people’s participation in policy making carried out by the Youth Agency, such as regional youth forums or the involvement of young people and youth organisations in the discussion of certain documents, are sporadic and not systematic. There have been 10 regional youth forums (one per region) organised by the Youth Agency between 2020 and 2021. In 2022 youth forums were organised locally in around half of the regions of Georgia.

⁴. A national cross-sectoral policy concept, adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in July 2020.

The participation of young people in policy making at the local (municipal) level lacks an explicit legal basis, though Article 85 of the Local Self-government Code of Georgia describes the principles and forms of citizen participation in the exercise of local self-government in general. According to the code mentioned above, municipal bodies and officials shall be obliged to provide the organisational, material and technical conditions for receiving and meeting citizens, and for ensuring their participation in the activities of municipal bodies. According to the same code, any person may, within the scope of the legislative framework, participate in the exercise of local self-government using, without any limitation, forms of citizen participation, such as the general assembly of a settlement, a petition, the council of civil advisers, participation in sessions of the *sakrebulo* (city hall) or the commission, hearing reports of the mayor or a member of the *sakrebulo*. The code states that in order to ensure citizen participation in the exercise of local self-government, a municipality may incorporate relevant programmes in the municipal budget. It is worth noting that, according to the code, in addition to the forms of citizen participation in the exercise of local self-government, a municipality may, under the relevant administrative-legal act, determine other forms of citizen participation in local self-government that do not contravene the legislation of Georgia.

Despite the flexibility of the legal framework and recommendation presented in the Municipality Development Planning Manual, developed and adopted by the Government of Georgia in order to “Ensure civic participation and transparency – access to information, openness and publicity of the process, involvement of stakeholders and citizens at every stage of policy-designing” – there are no concrete mechanisms for youth participation at municipal level in the country. The Youth Agency recently started a programme of empowerment of local youth councils, with 21 councils involved.

Several practices of successful participation of young people in policy making at the local level exist within or as a result of interventions implemented by youth agency and civil society organisations. As an example, young people have been involved in youth needs assessment as well as development of municipal youth development strategy and the action plan in the frames of several schemes of municipal youth policy development initiated by the youth agency and civil society organisations between 2016 and 2022, such as [Municipal Youth Policy Development Programme](#) of the Youth Agency, “School Youth Networks of Collaboration for Sustainable Solutions” implemented by World Vision Georgia and the EU-funded project [“Empower for Change”](#), implemented by the Academy for Peace and Development. In some municipalities, young people attend budget discussions.

5.5. National strategy to increase youth participation

The Georgian National Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030 is a national cross-sectoral policy concept, adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in July 2020. It aims to create an environment that ensures the participation of youth as fully fledged members of society, decent employment, healthcare and well-being, as well as equal access to resources and opportunities for development. Among others, the document provides for the following strategic priorities and expected outcomes:

- active participation of young people in public life and democratic processes;
- increased participation of young people in decision-making processes;
- increased engagement of young people in volunteering activities;

- state support available for youth organisations and initiative groups throughout the country;
- promoting youth development and realisation of their potential; the institute of youth workers is introduced and operationalised in Georgia;
- quality non-formal education opportunities are available throughout the country;
- increased involvement of young people in mobility activities;
- youth policy at the central and municipal levels is built on an evidence- and rights-based approach.

According to the resolution on the adoption of the concept, the Government of Georgia was supposed to develop the action plan for the implementation of the Georgian National Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030 by 1 April 2021, and to co-ordinate the process of its implementation and monitoring. However, due to the reform implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, adoption of the State Youth Strategy and the action plan was delayed. The State Youth Strategy 2023-2026 and the action plan for 2023 were adopted by the Government of Georgia on 29 December 2022.

Under its strategic goal No. 4, Active involvement of young people in public life and democratic processes, the State Youth Strategy 2023-2026 provides for the achievement of the following tasks in relation to youth participation:

- strengthening civic responsibility among young people;
- promotion of voluntary service;
- promotion of youth participation in decision-making processes;
- development of programmes and services addressing the needs of young people with fewer opportunities, young people with disabilities, young people representing ethnic and religious minorities;
- development of programmes and services addressing the needs of young people living in occupied territories of Georgia.

The action plan, adopted by the Government of Georgia in December 2022, includes a series of specific measures for implementation of the above-mentioned tasks, such as:

- improvement of the legal framework of volunteering, development of recommendations for better co-ordination and co-operation in this direction, and introduction of measures for better promotion of volunteering;
- development of programmes of regional and international co-operation for enhancement of mobility of young people;
- development and piloting of the platform of structured dialogue with young people;
- implementation of project-strengthening awareness and competences of young people and youth stakeholders on youth rights and meaningful participation;
- implementation of projects supporting creation/development of youth councils;
- creation of virtual and physical youth spaces;
- designing awareness-raising measures for young people representing ethnic minorities;
- development of recommendations for better involvement and active participation of young people with fewer opportunities, youth representing ethnic and religious minorities in the process of implementation of youth policy, in youth organisations, youth projects and services.

- implementation of measures for better access of young people living in occupied territories of Georgia to education, services and participation in peace-building activities and many others.

5.6. Supporting youth organisations

The [Law of Georgia on state support of children and youth unions](#) provides the legal basis for the support of youth organisations. According to the law, support for children and youth unions can be provided in the form of supplying information to children’s and youth unions about activities planned in the framework of national youth policy; conducting training courses and seminars for them; designing state programmes in order to support children and youth unions; and supporting them financially.

After adoption of the Law of Georgia on state support of children and youth unions, a children and youth development fund was established in 2001 under the State Department of Youth Affairs. Later, the children and youth development fund was subordinated to the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs (2010-2019). In 2019, the grant provision function was transferred to the Youth Agency, which launches calls for proposals for children and youth organisations through the “Development Fund” programme.

Fourteen initiatives (one umbrella organisation and 13 local organisations) have been supported (equivalent to around €270 000 in total) through the call launched in the frames of “One million Fund Grant Programme” in 2020. In 2021, as part of the reform implemented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the process of funding of local initiatives was cancelled after the evaluation phase and was reintroduced in the second part of 2022 with five projects supported (equivalent to around €75 000 in total) through one call for proposals.

Strategic goal No. 4 of the State Youth Strategy 2023-2026 includes “development of supporting mechanisms for youth organisations and initiative groups” as one of its tasks.

The action plan for 2023 envisages development of recommendations on establishment/development of transparent mechanisms of funding and sustainable development of youth organisations, organising grant schemes and information campaigns, designing specific measures for organisational development of youth organisations and other activities.

5.7. “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy framework

There is no separate national strategy covering social and civic competences of young people. The mechanism for the development of civic and social competences of young people through formal education is incorporated in the [National Curriculum](#).

The Georgian National Youth Policy Concept 2020-2030 includes a number of points regarding the development of civic and social competences of young people through non-formal education.

Under strategic goal No. 4 of the State Youth Strategy 2023-2026, Active involvement of young people in public life and democratic processes, the following activities are planned in the action plan for 2023:

- development of the module of learning by community service in the frames of the national curriculum of middle level of general education;
- development of educational resources for enhancing civic responsibility, competences of the culture of democracy, intercultural dialogue and peace building among young people;
- implementation of programmes for elaboration and providing educational resources for development of high-quality volunteering opportunities.

Civic education has been included in the National Curriculum for public schools of Georgia since 2010, covering all three levels of school education. The educational process is based on the principle of continuous learning and takes into consideration age-specific traits of students.

As per the national curriculum, civic education aims to assist students to perceive themselves as a part of society, to acquire socialisation and self-expression skills and the ability to act adequately and ethically, to take care of health and safety for themselves and their family members, and to assist them to acquire ethics and moral values in accordance with their age. Civic education further aims to teach students the forms of civic participation, helping them to acquire the competences of active citizenship, to understand democratic principles and the rule of law, and to acquire the culture of participation in civic and political life.

“Learning to participate” through non-formal and informal learning is carried out within existing self-government bodies in educational institutions.

Student self-government bodies

Student self-government bodies are student representative bodies within each higher education institution. The establishment and functioning of such a body is regulated by [the Law of Georgia on higher education](#). According to the law:

1. The students’ self-government bodies, elected for each main educational unit, shall be established within a higher education institution on the basis of universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot.
2. The unity of students’ self-government bodies, elected within the main educational units, shall constitute the self-government of a higher education institution that develops regulations for the students’ self-government bodies.
3. Under its regulations the students’ self-government bodies shall:
 - ensure the participation of students in the management of the higher education institution;
 - facilitate the protection of students’ rights;
 - elect representatives to the council of the main educational unit;
 - have the right to prepare proposals for improving the management system and quality of studies at the higher education institution, and submit such proposals to an appropriate body;
 - exercise other rights determined by the regulations.

According to the same law, the administration of a higher education institution may not intervene in the activities of the students' self-government bodies.

In practice, most higher education institutions have established and functioning student self-government bodies.

Self-government of pupils

Self-government of pupils is part of the self-government of a general educational institution, along with a board of trustees, an administration, a teachers' council and a disciplinary committee. The self-government of pupils is regulated by the [Law of Georgia on General Education](#). The main provisions related to school self-government are described in Chapter X of the law, Self-government of pupils of general educational institutions.

School pupils' unions are supposed to develop recommendations regarding the internal regulations of a school; be authorised to submit suggestions to the board of trustees regarding all important issues for the school; elect their representative to the board of trustees; participate in the disposal of grants obtained as provided for by the statute of the school and the legislation of Georgia; and establish school clubs upon the initiative of one-fifth of their members. It is worth mentioning that pupils' self-government unions select their representative to the board of trustees.

The development of civic and social competences of young people through non-formal education is mainly implemented by international organisations, as well as national and local representatives of civil society through various projects and programmes, in some cases in partnership with public institutions.

One of the good practices in this area is the Project [“Democracy Starts in Schools – Engaging School Children in Decision Making Processes in Schools and Communities in Georgia”](#), which is implemented by the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) in 2022-2023.

The objective of the project is to strengthen democracy in Georgia through greater participation of young people in decision-making processes at the local level through democratic citizenship education and practices in schools.

The project is based on the Council of Europe approach to civic education: a holistic view of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, a focus on democratic school development and an integration of young people's civic experiences in the wider community.

The project began in March 2022 and will run until the end of 2023.

The [Civic Education Teachers' Forum](#) is a non-governmental organisation established in the framework of the USAID-funded Applied Civic Education and Teacher Training Programme (ACETT), which was implemented by PH International in partnership with the Centre for Training and Consultancy (CTC) and 11 regional partner NGOs from 2010 to 2014. The programme was supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia. Currently, the Civic Education

Teachers' Forum, in partnership with PH International and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, is implementing a 5-year civic education programme, which aims to raise young people with high civic awareness who are involved in civil processes. The programme provides for the introduction of technologies in the learning process, the development of a culture of democracy in schools, and connecting schools with the business sector. Six hundred and fifty public schools from 11 regions of Georgia are involved in the programme.

Recognition of learning outcomes from non-formal education is regulated within the framework of non-formal education, developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

According to the framework, the objective of recognising non-formal education is to confirm the learning results achieved outside formal education for people seeking recognition of non-formal education for the promotion of lifelong learning, personal development, continuing education and/or qualification and/or employment/career growth/self-employment. The Law of Georgia on Education describes the procedures of the process of recognition.

5.8. Raising political awareness among young people

Raising awareness of young people on political issues is one of the main sub-competences of the [youth work key competence framework](#), developed by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs in 2016. However, the framework has never been institutionalised, and consequently, no programmes on the national level have been designed in this regard.

Information providers/counselling structures

The function of informing young people about democratic rights and values is partly covered by the civic education domain in the framework of the national curriculum. There are no specific public authorities or bodies responsible for disseminating information about democratic rights and democratic values for young people.

There is no framework for youth information and counselling structures (including their recognition and funding).

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

There is no information available on youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and values conducted by public institutions. A number of campaigns and educational actions have been organised by national and international civil society organisations.

Some of the best practices are listed below:

“Awareness raising on elections among young people” – this 5-month project was implemented by the [Georgian Institute of Politics](#) with financial support from the Embassy of Lithuania in Tbilisi between May and October 2016. The project was aimed at raising awareness and acquiring knowledge on elections among young people living in the regions of Georgia.

[DRIVE Democracy: Developing Regional Information and Voter Empowerment for Democracy](#) – this intervention, conducted by the [Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy](#)

[\(EECMD\)](#) between 2019 and 2021 with the financial support of USAID and in partnership [with the Economic Policy Research Centre \(EPRC\)](#), did not address young people as a specific target group, although youth from the age of 18 could participate in the project.

Democracy schools have been implemented in four cities of Georgia since 2011 by the [Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy](#) and later by its successor, the [Eastern European Centre for Multiparty Democracy \(EECMD\)](#).

[Democracy Here/Democracy Now](#) – the Council of Europe youth campaign is ongoing in Georgia in 2022 and aims at revitalising democracy and strengthening mutual trust between young people and democratic institutions and processes. The campaign focuses on access to human rights, meaningful youth participation and the impact of digitalisation as factors of democratisation.

Small and middle-scale initiatives on raising the awareness of young people on European values are implemented by different actors from the civil society sector.

Promoting intercultural dialogue among young people

The [State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030](#) identifies intercultural dialogue as one of its main priorities, and emphasises the importance of intercultural learning among young people.

According to the document, a complex policy aimed at fostering tolerance within society implies raising awareness about the cultural diversity of Georgia, implementing various cultural, cognitive, educational, entertainment and sports activities, and the protection and promotion of ethnic minorities' tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The strategy envisages the promotion of intercultural educational activities, familiarising ethnic minorities, especially young people with Georgian culture, as well as carrying out joint cultural-educational and traditional sports activities for ethnic groups.

[Annual action plans of the strategy](#) include different programmes and projects aimed at supporting intercultural dialogue, such as training courses, study visits, round tables, festivals, publications, supporting museums and libraries, different art projects and other interventions.

Intercultural dialogue is a popular topic among civil society actors. Non-governmental organisations implement different short- and long-term programmes and projects which aim to foster intercultural dialogue between young people belonging to different ethnicities, religions and cultures. One of the best practices is the youth component of the Advancing National Integration (ANI) project, run by the UN Association of Georgia. Thirteen youth clubs focused on intercultural integration were established in the framework of this component.

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

Public consultations, as a measure of civic inclusion and transparency, are in general obligatory according to the [Rule of Elaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Papers](#), adopted by the Government of Georgia in 2019, as well as by the Municipality development planning manual,

although there are no policy frameworks or guidelines on transparent public communication targeting young people in Georgia.

Training for policy makers on youth-tailored communication is mainly conducted in the framework of interventions implemented by civil society organisations.

5.9. E-participation

As of December 2022, the [Youth Platform](#) is the online platform designed by the Youth Agency of Georgia as part of the project “EU4Youth – Better Skills for Better Future”, implemented in Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine. In Georgia, the project was carried out by Save the Children in partnership with the Youth Agency. The Youth Platform is an online space organised in single-window principle, where young people can become familiar with and gain access to different youth opportunities from national and international projects, as well as educational opportunities, grants, volunteering opportunities and internships. It is worth noting that public and private organisations can contribute to the content of the website. In December 2022, the platform operated in test mode.

[Ichange.gov.ge](#) is a petition portal designed as part of the second action plan of the Open Government Partnership. It is an official governmental platform for citizens’ electronic petitions, and allows citizens to draw attention to topics they feel strongly about.

The portal is not youth-specific, but any citizen of Georgia over the age of 18 can create a petition. One petition initiated by young people on the portal addresses the challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in the termination of student status for many young people.

Another youth-run petition on [Ichange.gov.ge](#) is one which called for an end to the process of subordination of the Youth Agency to the Ministry of Culture and to leave it under the Office of the Prime Minister.

An alternative petition portal, established by a non-governmental organisation, is the [manifest.ge](#) portal, which is positioned as a civic initiatives’ platform, and aims to support the involvement of citizens in the decision-making process, to convey the opinions of citizens to the government and to advocate for them.

5.10. Current debates and reforms

The State Youth Strategy 2023-2026 and the Action Plan 2023 were adopted by the Government of Georgia in December 2022. At the moment (February 2023) establishment of an intersectoral co-ordination and monitoring group, consisting of governmental institutions, international organisations and national civil society organisations, as well as thematic subgroups responsible for implementation of the action plan, is in process.

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