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Border and Migration Management Action for Georgia

BMMAG

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<https://georgia.iom.int/visa-free-europe>

Introduction

Dear reader,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) – Mission to Georgia has the pleasure to share with you the second newsletter of the project “Border and Migration Management Action for Georgia (BMMAG)”. This project is funded by the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia and co-funded by the State Migration Secretariat of the Swiss Confederation. IOM implements this project in partnership with UNHCR – the United Nations Refugee Agency.

This newsletter reports on key activities that IOM implemented in 2023, focusing in particular on capacity building activities aimed at supporting the Government of Georgia to cement compliance with the visa-free travel benchmarks.

Table of Contents

- ▶ VISA-FREE TRAVEL TO EUROPE - latest developments **1**
- ▶ Activities conducted with the co-funding support by the State Migration Secretariat (SEM) of Switzerland **2**
- ▶ Integrated Border Management – news in brief **3**
- ▶ Migration Management– news in short **5**

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VISA-FREE TRAVEL TO EUROPE – latest developments

In the context of visa-free travel for citizens of Georgia to the Schengen + Zone, in recent years the EU expressed concern about the high number of unfounded asylum claims lodged by citizens of Georgia in the EU. The EU's sixth visa suspension

mechanism report, released in October 2023, evaluated Georgia's efforts to curb irregular migration from the country and noted the following findings:

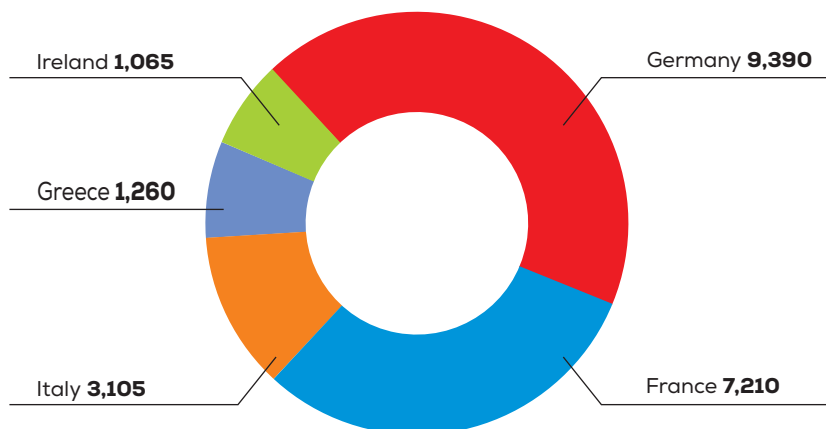
“ **Overall, Georgia continues to fulfil the visa liberalisation benchmarks and has taken action to address the Commission's previous recommendations. However, further efforts are needed.** ”

Despite this acknowledgement of progress, in the same report the EU recommended that the following issues be further addressed:

“ **Align Georgia's visa policy with the EU's list of visa-required third countries, in particular with regard to countries presenting irregular migration or security risks to the EU.** ”

“ **Step up action to address the issue of unfounded asylum applications and irregular stays in Member States.** ”

While the number of first and secondary asylum applications lodged by citizens of Georgia in 2023 was almost 13 per cent less than in 2022, those numbers were still quite high in several EU Member States. The below chart provides the details as concerns the top-5 host countries of asylum seekers from Georgia in 2023 (source: Eurostat).



Activities conducted with the co-funding support by the State Migration Secretariat (SEM) of Switzerland

High-profile international conference

On 6 and 7 November 2023, the international conference conference “[Migration from Georgia to Europe and the Schengen Area - Multi-sectoral Cooperation to Counter Irregular Migration, Migration-Related Crime and to Better Regulate Health-Driven Migration](#)” was held in Tbilisi. This timely event provided a forum for EU Member States and Switzerland to discuss in depth amongst each other and with the Government of Georgia the issues caused by irregular migration from Georgia to Europe. A separate panel discussion focused on what joint measures can be taken to deal with the challenges caused by health-driven migration that affects a number of European countries, such as France, Switzerland and Germany, among others. IOM, through the support provided by SEM, joined the Embassy



of France and the EU-funded “Prometheus II” project in co-funding this conference. This event preceded the launch of another project funded by the State Migration Secretariat SEM, colloquially referred to as the “Georgia Cares” project.

Support to the state's migrant reintegration assistance capacities

IOM actively supports the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs in enhancing the scope of the State Reintegration Programme. According to the [2023 Action Plan](#) implemented in the context of the [Migration Strategy for the years 2021-2030](#), the Ministry prioritized the development of an electronic portal to manage the provision of reintegration assistance to returned migrants in a more systematic and professional manner. This system is referred to under its acronym RMAP, which stands for Returned Migrants Assistance Portal. Thanks to the Swiss co-funding component, this portal is expected to enter into use by the end of 2024.

In 2023, IOM has supported the same Ministry in refurbishing a building on the outskirts of Tbilisi to turn it into a suitable space for the accommodation of those vulnerable Georgian returnees, who have no place to stay when they return to Georgia. This may for example concern people who sold their private accommodation before they migrated abroad. The intention is that this facility will open its doors in 2024 and will be staffed by experienced caretakers, who will provide solace to their returned compatriots.

Unified Migration Data Analytical System: a source of evidence-based policy development in Georgia

Over the past decade-and-a-half, IOM has actively supported the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) and its constituent member ministries and agencies in the development of UMAS: Unified Migration Data Analytical System. In 2023, one of the main goals in further developing this central migration data repository development focused on the expansion of data sources that feed into this system.

Ultimately, the aim of UMAS is to act as a source of evidence-based development of migration policies in Georgia.

In February 2023, IOM and the SCMI organized a workshop for all relevant government, donor and other project stakeholders to take note of the achievements of 2022 in the development of UMAS and to discuss the ambitions of the SCMI and its constituent ministries for 2023 and beyond. The representatives of the two donors of IOM's BMMAG project, the EU and the Embassy of

Switzerland, expressed its continuous support to the UMAS development and welcomed the scheduled inclusion of additional data sources. At the same time, both donors highlighted the desire to receive concrete outputs from the system for public consumption and thus better understand and appreciate the added value of UMAS for evidence-based migration policy development in Georgia.



Integrated Border Management -

news in brief

Integrated Border Management (IBM) has been defined as “national and international coordination and cooperation among all the relevant authorities and agencies involved in border security and trade facilitation to establish effective, efficient and coordinated border management, in order to reach the objective of open, but well controlled and secure borders”.

Globally, IOM's Integrated Border Management (IBM) activities are directed at supporting governments create policies, develop legal, institutional and operational capacities and provide the necessary solutions to respond effectively to diverse migration challenges. In Georgia, IOM's IBM portfolio contributes to the development of key aspects of integrated border management and includes a

broad range of procurement and capacity building components. IOM has a long-standing and fruitful cooperation with all border management authorities in Georgia, which dates back more than a decade.

The Border Police

of Georgia and the Revenue Service of Georgia received donations of trucks and passport reader appliances from the EU and IOM

In the second half of 2023, IOM concluded two major procurement operations for the benefit of several state entities that are in charge of Georgia's border control.

The official handover ceremony of 10 trucks took place in October 2023 at the facility of the Red Bridge Border Division of the Border Police of Georgia and was attended by high-level officials of the EU Delegation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and IOM. These trucks, funded by the EU and procured by IOM with a total value of EUR

790,000 (GEL 2.25 million), will further develop the abilities of Georgian Border Police in efficiently supplying border guards serving at remote border divisions and sectors with required provisions and materials. The donation of 10 trucks with a short wheelbase, which are capable of accessing remote localities with extremely rugged terrain, will positively boost the Georgian Border Police's capabilities to provide their personnel in remote green border areas with the required supplies that they need to perform their border guard duties. Ultimately, the use of these vehicles will reduce the supply costs and ensure logistical effectiveness and efficiency of border units at the green border.

The EU Delegation to Georgia produced a comprehensive video of the handover event, which is available on this [link](#).



In September 2023, the MIA and the Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance hosted the EU Delegation to Georgia and IOM for an official handover ceremony at Tbilisi International Airport. Attended by high-level officials of all four parties, the EU and IOM formally donated 105 passport reader appliances to the MIA's Patrol Police Department (60 pieces) and the Revenue Service's Customs Department (45). This sophisticated equipment has been deployed at border crossing points across Georgia to improve the effectiveness of border checks, strengthen capacities to detect document fraud and identify potential violators, thus preventing irregular migration and cross-border crime. The advanced devices are capable of scanning the full data page of passports and other identity documents, while also capturing data from an electronic repository embedded in those documents to enhance the verification process.

Study VISIT to Italy and France on cross-border cooperation

In November 2023, IOM organized a three-day study visit for six representatives of the MIA (four) and Revenue Service of the Ministry of Finance (two) to the Police and Customs Cooperation Centre, located at the border between Italy and France. In the framework of this visit, the delegation met with different law enforcement authorities of both countries and visited the Ventimiglia/Menton border crossing point, as well as Nice International Airport. During the discussions at the Centre, the hosting Italian and French authorities shared with their Georgian counterparts the replicable best practices of inter-agency coordination as well as cross-border cooperation and information sharing, in line with EU's concept of Integrated Border Management.



Capacity building for implementing pre-departure checks for the Patrol Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

In July 2023, IOM conducted training courses on pre-departure checks of Georgian nationals departing to the European Union Member States for the border control officers of the Patrol Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. The trainings were held in Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi to train the staff from all three international airports, as well as Sarpi border crossing point. IOM invited an expert from France to share his experience on border checks and interviewing of Georgian nationals arriving to France. The training sessions familiarized Georgian border control officers with the French perspective on irregular migration trends and patterns, in order to enhance their skills in checking Georgian nationals who intend to travel to destinations in the Schengen Area. The sessions focused on practical aspects and real case scenarios, interview questionnaires and complementary documents that are commonly requested by French border officials at airports of destination. The overall goal of this activity was to prevent irregular migration and abuse by Georgian nationals of the asylum systems in the EU, as foreseen by the visa liberalization benchmarks.

Physical exercise equipment accessible to detained migrants

In February 2023, IOM formalized the handover to the MIA Migration Department of an outdoor set of physical exercise equipment. As a result, the Temporary Accommodation Centre (TAC) of the MIA's Migration Department now hosts an outdoor gym facility that can be used by detained migrants during their recreational hours. These facilities have enabled the MIA Migration Department to offer more opportunities for outdoor activities to all accommodated migrants at the centre, who may experience extended stay in detention while waiting for expulsion decisions and, where relevant, the provision of new travel documents replacing lost or expired documents.



Migration Management – news in short

Updates on legal labour migration to EU member states

2023 has been an eventful year in the area of labour migration. In May 2023, the Parliament of Georgia enacted a set of legislative amendments to the Law of Georgia "On Labour Migration". These changes aim to enhance the rights of migrant workers by introducing monitoring and oversight mechanisms for intermediaries that recruit Georgian nationals for employment abroad, as well as employers hiring foreign workers for employment in Georgia. IOM contributed to this process by commissioning a desk review of international

standards and practices of regulation of private agencies, and by facilitating the organization of several meetings to present the legislative changes to various stakeholders, including private recruitment agencies.

According to these amendments, the Labour Inspection Office (LIO) has been tasked to monitor the compliance of intermediary companies with the certification requirements, as well as to inspect sites where foreign citizens have been contracted in Georgia. To duly prepare the LIO for this new task, IOM engaged labour inspectors in capacity-building activities. In September 2023, a representative of the Ministry guided a large audience of labour inspectors through the details of the newly adopted amendments. In December 2023, thematic specialists working at IOM's global headquarters introduced LIO officials to the internationally accepted principles of ethical labour recruitment, focusing on the role of the labour inspectorates in monitoring and enforcement of recruitment regulations.



IOM continues supporting the development of regular labour migration schemes, thus enhancing opportunities for citizens of Georgia to work abroad legally, thus contributing to reducing the pressure on citizens of Georgia to resort to irregular migration channels.

In order to promote concrete implementation modalities of the bilateral labour migration agreement between France and Georgia, IOM, in cooperation with the Embassy of France local authorities and employers in a north-western French region piloted a temporary labour migration scheme for the employment of Georgian argon welders in France. This process prompted the creation of a retraining course in argon welding, developed at the Railway Vocational Education Training (VET) College, with the support of the Skills Agency of Georgia. IOM facilitated the visit of a French local government official and private sector representative to Georgia. The French expert attended the delivery of regular training at the VET college and provided observations to the educational module. These efforts have resulted in the selection of two Georgian argon welders, who graduated from the Railway VET College, for employment as welders in France.



IOM's safe migration campaign

Since 2002, IOM has been operating Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs) in the IOM offices in Tbilisi, Telavi, Kutaisi, Poti and Batumi. The IOM counselors in these offices provide information to all interested individuals on a full range of topics related to safe migration, including conditions of visa free travel to Europe, rights of migrants, risks of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings. The key slogan of the IOM's MRCs work is "Informed Migration, Boundless Opportunities".

In 2023, IOM continued the dissemination of information on safe migration in the framework of IOM's safe migration campaign. Information was disseminated through a series of community outreach meetings, individual counselling and by means of social media platforms. A total of 144 community outreach meetings were conducted by the MRC staff, reaching 2,792 potential migrants in 29 municipalities throughout Georgia.



The Facebook group “Visa free to Europe” which reached over 20,700 members by the end of 2023, offered 289 posts on developments in migration policies and practices in the EU.

In 2023, 194 consultation sessions were delivered to individual beneficiaries through IOM Georgia FB instant messenger. In addition, 778 beneficiaries were provided with individual counseling by IOM MRCs via phone communication (229 beneficiaries), face-to-face consultations in the IOM offices (205), during community outreach meetings (158), Visa-free to Europe Facebook group (154 questions) and email communication (32 emails).

Assisted Voluntary Return from Georgia and Reintegration in countries of origin

IOM's mission to assist and promote safe and orderly migration continues, including by means of the “Assisted Voluntary Return from Georgia and Reintegration in Countries of Origin” programme. In 2023, 78 stranded migrants were helped to depart from Georgia return to their home countries.

Top 8 countries of return:



Uzbekistan



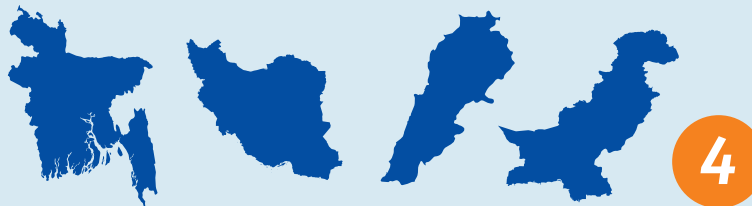
Iraq



India

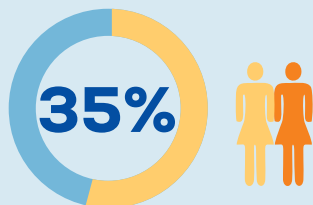


Kazakhstan

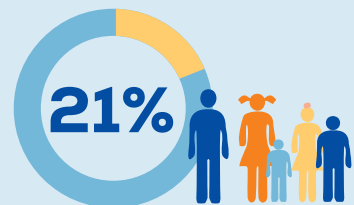


Bangladesh, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon and Pakistan

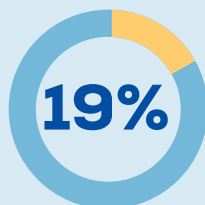
Share of women migrants:



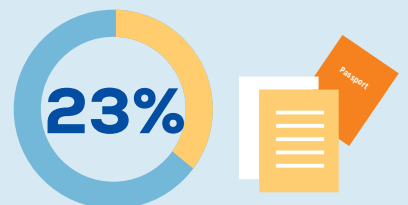
Share of children (all accompanied):



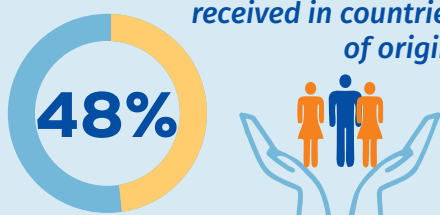
Voluntary return from the MIA's Temporary Accommodation Centre:



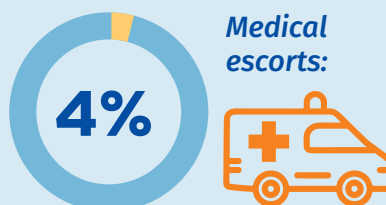
Travel document mediation with embassies:



Reintegration assistance received in countries of origin:



Medical escorts:



Victims of Trafficking



How to contact the International Organization for Migration

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ABOUT MIGRATION



WHO WE ARE

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) established its operations in Georgia in 1993. Across the country IOM provides a comprehensive response to the humanitarian needs of migrants, internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities through humanitarian direct assistance, recreational activities, and a variety of other efforts. Learn more about [IOM in Georgia](#).

IOM Global

With 175 member states, a further 8 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.

The IOM Constitution recognizes the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development, as well as to the right of freedom of movement.

IOM works in the four broad areas of migration management:

- Migration and development
- Facilitating migration
- Regulating migration
- Forced migration.

IOM activities that cut across these areas include the promotion of international migration law, policy debate and guidance, protection of migrants' rights, migration health and the gender dimension of migration.

IOM GENERAL INFORMATION FOLDER



PAGE
Latest IOM Snapshots



PUBLICATION | 12 Jul 2018
Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF)



PAGE
Members and Observers



PAGE
IOM Strategic Plan 2024-2028



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