



The European Union
for Georgia



GEORGIA'S YOUNG AMBASSADORS 2019 – Implementation Review

An overview of major takeaways, challenges and good practices of implementation of Georgia's Young Ambassadors Programme in 2019

April 2020



International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)
Gonzagagasse 1
A-1010 Vienna
www.icmpd.com

International Centre for Migration Policy Development
Vienna, Austria

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission of the copyright owners.

The contents of this Publication are the sole responsibility of ICMPD



Contents

Introduction.....	2
Chapter 1 - Background and Major Takeaways	4
2. Chapter 2 – Good Practices and Challenges.....	7
2.1 Good Practices.....	7
2.2. Challenges	9
Chapter 3 - Recommendations.....	12



Introduction

The “Sustaining Migration Management in Georgia” (ENIGMMA 2) project is funded by the EU-Georgia Financing Agreement, signed in May 2017 within the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) 2016 Technical Cooperation Facility II Programme. The project broadly builds on the results of previous activities of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in Georgia, including the recently implemented EU-funded “Enhancing Georgia’s Migration Management” (ENIGMMA) project which supported the Government of Georgia in the implementation of migration-related areas of the Visa dialogue between the European Union and Georgia.

The ENIGMMA 2 project runs from September 2017 to November 2021. It is implemented by ICMPD and the State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) of Georgia in close cooperation with the EU MS experts.

The overall objective of the ENIGMMA 2 project is to contribute to the sustainable enhancement of the mobility and people-to-people contacts between the EU and Georgia. The action seeks to achieve the overall objective by addressing identified and possible migration-related risks of visa liberalisation regime in Georgia and the EU Member States, and supporting the Government of Georgia in the implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of the impact of Migration Strategy and by implementing joint measures. Taking into account the multi-disciplinary nature of the ENIGMMA 2 project’s interventions, the programme of the project is clustered into thematic components. Consequently, the main focus of Component 2 of the ENIGMMA 2 lies on supporting Georgian diaspora and migrant communities abroad; more specifically, on facilitation of negotiations related to the regularisation of status of Georgian citizens in the EU, protection of their social and other rights, optimisation of the existing legal information in the destination countries and ensuring trust-building among the Georgian Government and Georgian diaspora and migrant communities in the EU Member States. One of the activities of the component is implementing Georgia’s Young Ambassadors’ Programme.

Originally referred to as “Become the Young Ambassador of Your Homeland”, initiated by ICMPD within the framework of previous projects, Georgia’s Young Ambassadors Programme has been carried out with great success over the last few years, with the main objective to engage youth in popularising Georgia’s culture and intellectual potential around the world as well as strengthening people-to-people contacts through legal and organised mobility channels. Currently, the programme is a joint activity between ICMPD and the Diaspora Relations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. Every year, up to 20 young representatives of Georgian diaspora are selected from more than 15 destination countries, with the aim to support them in implementation of cultural, educational or other cooperation-related activities among Georgian youth in the respective countries. In order to achieve their envisaged goals, the selected ambassadors develop an action plan to carry out various activities in the destination countries within their one-year mandate.



During several years of implementation of the programme, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ICMPD as implementing partners, have collected a number of takeaways, good practices and successful cooperation examples. On the other hand, certain challenges have occasionally arisen which required further discussion, planning and potential changes to the overall programme design. Consequently, in February 2020, the project held a roundtable discussion to analyse the lessons learned of the Young Ambassadors Programme. The discussion gathered representatives of the Diaspora Relations Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and ICMPD. In this way, the participants have identified and discussed the challenges of the programme and drew up recommendations for the upcoming programmes in the future.

Additionally, the project team has coordinated written testimonials from the Young Ambassadors in 2019 to further include their feedback on the programme and recommendations. Participant testimonials from the Georgia's Young Ambassadors Programme 2019 confirmed the overall success of the programme. The evaluations of Young Ambassadors particularly underlined the importance of the programme for personal and professional growth of participants, increase of their knowledge on links between migration and development and diaspora engagement tools and methods. The programme motivated young Georgians to generate new ideas and continue actively representing Georgia abroad. The programme provided the participants with an opportunity to maintain close ties with their homeland as well as promote Georgia beyond its borders. This was an excellent opportunity for many young professionals to gain knowledge and skills of project management and effective communication, too.



Many of the participants from the Georgia's Young Ambassadors Programme 2019 also provided their suggestions on how the activity can further be enhanced for the future. The authors of this paper have incorporated these suggestions into the recommendations chapter (please see the Chapter on Recommendations).



Chapter 1 - Background and Major Takeaways

Georgia's Young Ambassadors Programme is currently run by the Diaspora Relations Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, in close cooperation with ICMPD ENIGMMA 2 project team. When selected as Georgia's Young Ambassador, young Georgian migrants (regardless of their occupation status) gain an opportunity to semi-officially represent their country, inform the youth in their respective countries of residence about ongoing developments in various sectors of Georgia's economy, culture, sports, politics, and raise knowledge on Georgia's culture and history abroad.

The selected Young Ambassadors have the mandate to carry out events of cultural, educational or athletic nature, with an emphasis on popularisation of Georgia abroad over a period of one year. The programme also entails establishment of a network that connects Georgian youth across the countries. The programme thus enables the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish closer ties to the younger generation of the diaspora abroad and further support them in implementing cultural-educational initiatives.

Accordingly, the programme aims to:

- popularise Georgia abroad;
- establish a network of Georgia's young friends from abroad;
- network with Georgian diaspora;
- support Georgian youth abroad with potential employment or internship opportunities at Georgian state institutions.

Each year, there are approximately 15 – 20 finalists of the competition that are selected to represent Georgia in the respective countries of residence. In 2019 MFA selected 15 Young Ambassadors residing in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, and USA.

The call for applications is announced on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, in addition to the social media pages as well. Furthermore, the call is then disseminated and shared online by diaspora organisations, other international or non-governmental organisations as well as the youth themselves. The MFA has established selection criteria for the participation in the Young Ambassadors Programme which are applied without any discrimination and other limitations. The applicants have to:

- be Georgian citizens officially residing abroad;
- be at least 18 years old, but not older than 29;
- speak at least one foreign language;
- have experienced working with youth.



During the selection procedure, the advantage is given to persons who have contacts with the existing Georgian diaspora organisations in their country of residence, as well as previous work experience with public/private sector. The participants are selected by a jury for the purposes of transparency and fairness; the selection jury comprises of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Science, Culture and Sport and ICMPD.

The first event, officially attended by the new selected Young Ambassadors, is the Ambassadorial meeting in Tbilisi. During the meeting, the young people meet each other and have a chance to network and in addition, present their initiatives and one-year activity programme to MFA, other stakeholders and each other. The ambassadors also meet representatives of different Georgian state and non-state institutions (cultural, political, economic, diplomatic and other sectors) and obtain necessary information that would be relevant in order to implement their activities in the future.

One of the most important and motivating elements of the programme is that it financially supported by the Georgian Government. Each selected Young Ambassador receives 7,000 Georgian Lari (approximately 2000 EUR) as a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided for the young ambassadors in order to carry out events abroad throughout their one-year mandate. The Young Ambassadors have to report on their implemented activities and executed budget at the end of the programme.

The majority of activities implemented in 2019 by the Young Ambassadors, could be clustered in the following groups:

- **Cultural Activities:**

For instance, in the United States, the Young Ambassador held Culinary Classes (including workshops on specific Georgian cuisine) where the general public was invited to participate and network with the youth in the country. Furthermore, YA in Spain held Georgian culture and history presentation and networking activity. All the YA held various cultural events, including presentations on Georgia, culture, traditions, or culinary workshops.

- **Educational Events:**

The YA in Italy organised several educational conferences, including a public lectures, an Autumn School and several presentations on topics such as “South Caucasus in the International Areas”, “Civil Rights and Hate Speech in Modern Era”, “Georgia the Country God Wanted Himself” – a book presentation. YA in Spain also held several educational events, including a Photo Exhibition, participation in several diplomatic events. Also, YA in Poland organised a presentation on “100 Years since the First Democratic Republic of Georgia”, open to the general public, in addition to organising Georgian students’ tours in the University of Warsaw, participated in panel discussions on Georgia’s post-soviet Transformation among others, and was invited for interviews at the Polish Radio station. Many of the YAs were actively involved with the Sunday Schools in the respective countries, teaching children Georgian language or participating in their activities.



- **Engagement through Social Media:**

All the YA had a very strong social media presence, especially on Facebook, that enabled them to advertise the events and cultural activities.



2. Chapter 2 – Good Practices and Challenges

2.1 Good Practices

The programme has proved to be successful overall, with many good practices and achievements. Several of them are presented in this chapter.

2.1.1. Development and Maintenance of Cooperation Networks

One of the most important results is related to development and maintenance of cooperation networks. On the one hand, this supports implementation of the one-year programmes, and on the other – provides valuable contacts for Young Ambassadors to extend their engagement in the life and development in Georgia after the completion of the programme. In particular, throughout the programme, Young Ambassadors actively cooperated with the Georgian government representatives (Embassy/Consulate), with the state institutions in Georgia and private sector, as well as the national authorities, diaspora organisations and migrant communities in each of the destination countries. Selected participants of previous YA programme continue to share their experiences with current young ambassadors on fostering cooperation and sustainable links with the Embassy staff as well as prominent diaspora members and active diaspora organisations. Moreover, as the popularity of the programme has increased, Georgian state institutions have expressed their interest to become more actively involved in the activities organised by the Young Ambassadors. Consequently, Young Ambassadors should be thoroughly informed of the cooperation opportunities.

2.1.2. Engagement in Economic Development

Engagement into economic development is equally important to cultural and social cooperation. Consequently, development of networks with the private sector is another success story of the Young Ambassadors programme. For instance, throughout the year 2019, Young Ambassadors established contacts with such businesses as Georgian wine-making (producing) companies, tourism agencies, Georgian fashion companies, and other producers, etc. Often, these companies provided their products for cultural activities, thus financially contributing to the activities, but also advertising their production abroad.

It could be further recommended to include Young Ambassadors in diaspora forums, Georgian producers' fairs in Georgia and abroad, etc. to further increase the outreach for spreading business and export opportunities in Georgia.



2.1.3. Capacity Building on Specific Migration and Communication Issues

In March 2019, a study visit to Vienna was held, where young ambassadors participated in various educational activities, including several workshops on:

- migration and media;
- integration and citizenship;
- migration and development;
- communication techniques, including communication on social media management;
- planning the activities and developing a timeline and a workplan, and more.

In addition, the study visit entailed working meetings with the African Diaspora Youth Forum in Europe where the participants had opportunity to get acquainted with the activities implemented to attract and engage other diasporas and also had an opportunity to network with the Georgian diaspora representatives in Austria.

Obviously, the capacity building activities increased efficiency of the Young Ambassadors respective programmes. It also strengthened their interest and understanding of the ways of future engagement in the developments in Georgia. It is highly recommended to continue capacity building activities for selected Young Ambassadors within the current programme.

2.1.4. Contribution to Georgia's Promotion Abroad

One of the ultimate goals of the programme is to strengthen promotion of Georgia abroad. In this regard, the representatives of the round table discussion, as well as Young Ambassadors agreed that the programme achieved this goal. As a result of previously implemented Georgia's Young Ambassadors Programme, its popularity has drastically increased both in Georgia and abroad. In 2019, the programme has attracted high attention from the media. Young people often advertise their events on social media – which is particularly popular among youth in the destination countries, they use existing university networks and programmes abroad to increase the outreach – all of this successfully contributes to spreading information about Georgia across participating countries.



2.2. Challenges

2.2.1. Financial Reporting

As it became apparent over the last few years, most of the selected young ambassadors lack basic financial knowledge/skills, including budgeting and financial reporting. As already mentioned, in 2019, each ambassador received 7,000 GEL as a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to plan, organise and implement specific activities in the countries where they reside. Nonetheless, many of the Young Ambassadors returned leftover funds back to MFA, as they were not able to plan their activities and expenses ahead and accurately assess their spending, and as a result the grants were not fully spent on the activities. At the end of the programme, all ambassadors have to provide a financial report outlining all financial transactions in detail, that also was not completed successfully in many instances due to lack of financial reporting knowledge or skills. Noticeably, there is a need to provide the selected finalists of the programme with basic skills for appropriate distribution of funds, financial management and reporting.

2.2.2. Project Management Skills

Another challenge related to the overall performance of young ambassadors lies in creating a comprehensive timeline of activities. As the programme lasts for a year, it is essential to organise events and activities on a regular basis throughout the year. During the mandate year 2019, there were several cases when a large part of events was held in the beginning of the programme, with little to no follow-up activities for the rest of the year. Here, there is a need to provide the youth with a training on basic project management, where they would learn how to distribute the activities and resources available for these activities throughout the year evenly.

2.2.3. Application Procedure

One of the challenges is related to the current design of the application system. Currently, the applicants are required to provide the following documents when applying for the programme: filled-out application, action plan, motivation letter, photo, CV in Georgian, copies of passport and legal residence documents, personal recommendations, certificates or other diplomas. These documents are to be submitted to the Diaspora Relations Department per email. The specifically appointed jury selects the finalists. The timeframe between the announcement of the Call for Applications and the deadline for applying is very short: only two to three weeks. Furthermore, the call for application is announced at different times every year. These circumstances result in the situations when potential applicants do not have enough time to prepare their application package, design the intervention programme, as often they even cannot anticipate the announcement. There is a need for a new and modern application procedure, preferably an online platform with clear rules and regulations that



would apply to every applicant equally. In addition, the platform could provide free of charge recommendations on budgeting and programming rules in form of recorded training videos or written guidelines. The programme should be implemented in the established cycle so that potential applicants could review the requirements and guidelines in anticipation of the new call for applications.

2.2.4. Thematic Priority Areas

Young Ambassadors of Georgia are devoted and motivated to engage into the development in Georgia. However, in many cases, they lack practical experience in choosing the right methodology, or even topical area for their engagement. This was confirmed during the round table discussion, highlighting that support in proper identification of activities needs to be provided to selected Young Ambassadors during the Inception Phase. Additionally, this support would strengthen exchange between the MFA and the Young Ambassadors. In this way, newly proposed activities would build on results and success of previous actions in the respective countries. Further, this would allow the Young Ambassadors using existing contacts and networks for better outreach and coherency.

For instance, the following areas of common interest were identified in 2019:

- **Conferences/networking** events about Georgia (history, heritage, politics, diplomatic relations of Georgia with the destination countries);
- **Information provision** on tourism and investment opportunities in Georgia, national migration legislation and access to rights (where/how to get this information);
- **Engaging with other Georgian students** in destination countries: establishing social media groups, sports clubs, providing information to students on internship/summer school opportunities in Georgia;
- **Promoting Georgian culture** via movie screenings, exhibitions (50 Prominent Georgian Women a photo-exhibition with material available at MFA and provided by the Embassies, fairs, organising events promoting Georgian Alphabet, celebrating Georgian literature (Knight in Panther's Skin), sharing traditions;
- **Cooperation and organisations of joint activities** with other youth networks (for instance, EU YA Programme), diaspora organisations, local NGOs, Georgian diplomatic representations, local academic and state institutions.

Identification of priority areas for the Programme would also support the better planning of the activities and development of timeline. In order to enhance this holistic approach, the young ambassadors could implement similar thematic activities in their countries of destination at one and the same timeframe (in same month or date).





Chapter 3 - Recommendations

Evaluation of the implemented programmes so far, carried out through feedback session and survey of the 2019 Young Ambassadors, as well as stakeholders' roundtable discussion, provided a number of recommendations. Listed below, these suggestions should improve the overall implementation of programme and further increase their efficiency.

3.1. Financial Reporting and Budgeting Skills

As discussed during the working group roundtable about the lessons learned from the Young Ambassadors Programme of 2019, it became clear that the youth struggle with financial management and reporting skills. A solution to this issue is to provide the selected young ambassadors with on basic budget/finance skills in order to effectively manage the grant they receive. The following could be considered:

- a one-day training on budget/finance management implemented during the Young Ambassadorial meeting at the beginning of the project;
- Provision of established financial reporting templates;
- Provision of budgeting and reporting guidelines (could be considered already at the application stage);
- Mid-term monitoring on budget execution during one of the joint events organised for Young Ambassadors (for instance, during similar study visits organized in 2019 to Vienna).

In addition, one of the recommendations from the participants was that the incoming ambassadors should be advised to exchange the given funds (7000 GEL) to their local currency, altogether, and keep the receipt, which will make the budget execution process at the end of the year much simpler, as many experienced it in 2019, it was very difficult for many.

Recording transactions and monitoring their progress throughout programme can be used as an efficient tool for managing the budget. Specifically, medium-term budget reporting can help young ambassadors to measure actual achievement against pre-established budget. Furthermore, medium-term budget reporting also provides an opportunity for the MFA to give recommendations to young ambassadors on future activities and expenses.

3.2. Project Management with Particular Focus on Timeline

In order to combat issues related to the timeline of the programme, including trouble distributing the activities throughout the entire mandate year, a suggestion would be to provide the youth with a basic training on project management, with a special focus on their specific activities planned for that year.



Consistent monitoring from the programme coordinators to make sure the ambassadors are following the action plan accordingly and correctly distributing their activities, would enable the programme to run smoother. The project team could also develop an activity calendar for the youth that would include all the events envisaged in the action plans. Such calendar could be accessible on-line so that other Young Ambassadors could see what activities are currently planned or being implemented. Systematic monitoring of the youth activities and budget would further enable the young ambassadors to have more accountability and ownership of their action plans.

3.3. Improvement of the Application Procedure

It is recommended that the call for applications be announced earlier (For example, at least 3 months prior) until the current ambassador's mandate expires. This is important because it would enable the applicants to have enough time to apply as well as give the outgoing ambassador enough time to properly handover the activity to the new incoming ambassador. In addition, the call for applications should be announced at the same time each year, thus, providing the applicants with enough time to prepare well. In many cases, potential candidates even do not know whether the programme will continue that year or not. Furthermore, the applicants should have more time to prepare the application package, including documents in Georgian (especially those living abroad, they need more time for translation and validation); therefore, it is recommended to provide 3 months for the applicants to prepare as well as expect the call for applications. In addition, applicants should be informed about the interview date at least 2 weeks in advance.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has underlined the importance of creating a new online application system. Online application procedure will make it easier not only for respective staff to easily collect and review applications but also for the youth to apply for the programme in a more organised way. However, according to the previous participants and their assessment of the programme, the call should be more transparent and fair, the same rules should apply to each potential participant. As an example (according to one of the participants from last year) from the 2020 selection process, some of the candidates did not submit a full application, with many important documents missing; instead of the candidate being automatically disqualified, they were eligible to provide the missing documents later, which may be a sign of leniency towards certain candidates.

Creation of sub-section of Young Ambassadors programme on the website of MFA would be also very useful, as it could contain information on previously implemented activities and thus support development of the new activities plans. Additionally, reporting and budgeting guidelines could be provided in advance, which would facilitate submission of the applications. Unification of the application and supporting documents (such as one-year programme timeline and budget) would also simplify selection procedure, and make it more transparent.



3.4. Support in Identification of Priority Areas

It is recommended to establish several priority areas of common interest by MFA during the application procedure; concrete activities should be then further streamlined within the Inception Phase.

It is important to notice that identification of priority areas for the Programme would also support the better planning of the activities and development of timeline. In order to enhance this holistic approach, the young ambassadors could implement similar thematic activities in their countries of destination simultaneously.

3.5. Capacity Building on Communication and Migration Issues

One of the recommendations is to provide a basic training for social media management to the youth. It is also important to continue the Facebook page that the previous Ambassador started, and not create a new one as the Ambassadors change. There should be a proper handover of the Facebook page to the incoming new Ambassador each year. The importance of social media for a programme targeted at youth was further underlined during the working group meeting as well. It is recommended to provide the Young Ambassadors with a training on communication with media and public relations. Training could be organised by the Representative from Press and Information Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and/or previous Young Ambassador who can share practical experience.

Many Ambassadors appreciated the thematic capacity building on various migration and development areas, integration and citizenship, etc. Provision of such capacity building should be continued, considering inclusion of short on-line training sessions to decrease the costs of the programme.

3.6. Broader Involvement with Private Sector

Involvement of Young Ambassadors into the economic development is beneficial for Georgia, and its efficiency may even increase later once the former Ambassadors start their own professional carrier. Therefore, it is recommended to include Young Ambassadors into on-going and planned Georgian diaspora forums, Georgian production fairs in Georgia and abroad and similar events.

3.7. Other

At the beginning of the one-year programme, Young Ambassadors should receive respective materials (including equipment, materials, flags, wine, etc.). Currently, each new Ambassador needs to procure the materials newly. However, these materials should be properly handed over from the outgoing young ambassador to the incoming one. Therefore, extra budget, time or energy will not be spent on



something that exists. The Programme organisers should oversee the proper handover, including banners, materials and social media accounts.

Furthermore, it would be advisable if the Georgian Embassies abroad have detailed information about the Young Ambassadors and be more involved in the programme, also for the Embassy to play a bigger role in the Programme altogether.

