

LAW OF GEORGIA

ON OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

The Georgian language is a historical and cultural heritage of Georgia and it is essential for its statehood. It is an element of common national identity for all citizens of Georgia. The State of Georgia performs all its functions in this language, protects it and determines the policy for the development and functioning of this language as of the official language of the State.

The State of Georgia, at the same time, protects and strengthens the centuries-old tradition of coexistence and harmonious development of languages and cultures in the country. It considers it to be unacceptable to show disrespect for any language, to violate rights of citizens of Georgia to speak any language and to prevent actions that are against the constitutional principles of the official language policy.

Chapter I - General Provisions

Article 1 - Scope of the Law

1. This Law consolidates the constitutional status of the official language, establishes legal grounds for its use and protection, and regulates legal relations related to the functioning of official and non-official languages.
2. This law applies to citizens of Georgia, stateless persons having a status in Georgia, to stateless persons and to aliens.
3. This Law does not apply to personal relationships.

Article 2 - The Legislation of Georgia on the official language

1. The Legislation of Georgia on the Official Language consists of the Constitution of Georgia, treaties and international agreements of Georgia, this Law and other legal and subordinate normative acts.
2. The Parliament of Georgia defines key directions of the official language policy.

Article 3 - Definition of terms used in this Law

The terms used in this Law have the following meanings:

- a) official language – the language (languages) that is (are) granted this status by the Constitution of Georgia and that, in accordance with historical tradition, is (are) the basic means for the execution of powers by the State and for communication by citizens and other natural and legal persons of Georgia;
- b) non-official language - any language, except for the official language, that is used in private or public lives by citizens of Georgia and other persons residing in Georgia;
- c) language of the national minority – non-official language that is traditionally used by communities of the citizens of Georgia settled in a certain part of the territory of Georgia;
- d) literary language – the literary, standardised type of the official language that serves all fields of official and business relationships, education, science, culture, and mass communication;
- e) the Department of the Official Language – a legal entity under public law, the state control of activities of which is implemented by the Government of Georgia. It is a body that ensures the protection and popularisation of the constitutional status of the official language and the establishment and introduction of standards and special terms of the Georgian literary language, as well as the implementation of the unified policy of the official language;
- f) A unified program of the official – a unified document that determines the basic directions of the development, technological support, normalisation and standardisation of the official language, which is developed by the Experts Committee of the Official Language and approved by the Government of Georgia on the recommendation of the Department of Official Language;
- g) transliteration – expression of phonemes (sounds) of one language by alphabet letters of another language.

Article 4 - Status of the official language

1. In accordance with Article 8 of the Constitution of Georgia, the official Language of Georgia is Georgian and the official language of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia is Georgian as well as Abkhazian.



2. The State ensures the protection of the constitutional status of the official language throughout the whole territory of Georgia.
3. The State continually facilitates the preservation and exploration of the Kartvelian Languages and dialects, which is one of the most significant preconditions for maintaining viability and resilience of the official language.

Article 5 - Guarantees for protecting the official language

1. The State is a major guarantor of the protection, use and development of the official language.
2. Guarantees for the protection of the official language are established by the Constitution of Georgia, this Law and other legal acts.
3. The State and local self-government authorities shall ensure the establishment of organisational, material and technical resources in all fields of state and public life that are necessary for the functioning and maintaining the purity of the official language.
4. The State shall ensure implementation of the unified program of the official language.

Article 6 - Guarantees for using official and non-official languages

1. The State shall ensure appropriate conditions for exploring and using the official language.
2. Citizens of Georgia, in accordance with the General Administrative Code of Georgia, are provided with official information in the official language, except for the cases, when official information is prepared in a non-official language.
3. Public servants, in accordance with the legislation of Georgia, are provided with service information in the official language.
4. Public servants are obliged to speak the official language.
5. The State shall provide persons employed in the public service with opportunities to study the official language.
6. Persons may use non-official languages freely, unless a constitutional status of the official language is abridged.

Article 7 - Language of instruction

1. The State shall provide early and preschool education, general, vocational and higher education in the official language. The matter of receiving education in a non-official language and languages of national minorities is regulated by the legislation of Georgia.
2. In general education institutions, where the language of instruction is not Georgian, and which are established in the territory of Georgia, in the manner established by the legislation of Georgia, teaching of the Georgian language, as a school subject (the Georgian language, as well as the Abkhazian language shall be taught in non-Abkhazian general education institutions in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia) is compulsory.
3. The higher education institutions, in which the language of instruction is not the official language, and that are established in the territory of Georgia in the manner established by the legislation of Georgia, shall offer appropriate persons special courses of the Georgian language, while higher education institutions, where the language of instruction is not Abkhazian and that exist in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, shall offer special courses of the Abkhazian language.

Law of Georgia No 5374 of 8 June 2016 – website, 24.6.2016

Law of Georgia No 501 of 23 March 2017 – website, 27.3.2017

Article 8 - Principles of international official language policy

Taking the norms of International Law and treaties and international agreements of Georgia into consideration, the State shall promote:

- a) teaching and popularisation of the official language outside Georgia;
- b) widening the scope of studies in the sciences of the Kartvelian and Abkhazian languages;
- c) disseminating scientific, and scientific popular literature, organising scientific forums and public events.

Chapter II - Legal Principles of Using the Official Language

Article 9 - Rights and obligations of citizens of Georgia in the field of the use of language

1. All citizens of Georgia are entitled to require the State to provide them with necessary conditions for the protection, exploration and development of the official language and to ensure the guarantees established by this Law and other legislative acts.



2. All citizens of Georgia, in accordance with this Law and the General Administrative Code of Georgia, are obliged to communicate with public authorities and local self-government authorities in the official language, except for the exclusive cases established by the legislation of Georgia.

3. The State shall provide communication of persons belonging to national minorities, with public authorities and local self-government bodies in the language of that national minority with the help of an interpreter, in the municipalities that are settled with representatives of national minorities.

Article 10 - Rights of citizens of Georgia to receive official documents and information in the official language

All citizens of Georgia, in the manner established by law, have the right to request and receive information on them existing in the public authorities and local self-government bodies and to request and receive official documents in the official language except for copies of documents that are issued in the original language of the documents.

Chapter III - Language of Activities of Public Authorities and Local Self-Government Bodies, Official Case Management and Legal Proceedings

Article 11 - The language of official case management of public authorities and local self-government bodies

1. Public authorities and local self-government bodies carry out official case management in the official language, except for the cases provided for in paragraph 4 of this article.

2. Communication and correspondence between public authorities and local self-government bodies are conducted in the official language.

3. Public authorities and local self-government bodies receive, consider and respond to applications, complaints and offers from natural and legal persons in the official language except for the cases established by the legislation of Georgia.

4. In the municipalities where representatives of national minorities are settled in communities, public authorities and local self-government bodies are entitled to establish procedures that are different from procedures provided for by the General Administrative Code of Georgia, in accordance with which, if necessary, translation of applications and complaints submitted to the local self-government bodies by persons belonging to the national minorities, and translation of the responses thereto may be required in the language of those national minorities. Hereby, only originals of appropriate texts shall be valid.

Article 12 - Language of law-drafting and legislative activity

1. Normative acts shall be drafted and promulgated in the Georgian language, and in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia they shall be drafted and promulgated in the Georgian as well as Abkhazian languages. Normative acts may be promulgated in non-official languages, but such texts are not officially valid.

2. In a municipality where representatives of national minorities are settled in communities, local self-government bodies, if necessary, shall provide translation of normative acts adopted by them in the language of respective national minorities. Hereby, only originals of appropriate texts shall be valid.

3. Draft laws and legislative proposals shall be submitted to the Parliament of Georgia in the Georgian language under the procedures for submitting legislative initiatives.

Article 13 - Language of legal proceedings

Legal proceedings are conducted in the official language in accordance with the Constitution of Georgia and procedural legislation. An interpreter shall be assigned to a person who does not speak the official language.

Article 14 - Use of language in the military and other paramilitary forces of Georgia

1. The military and other paramilitary forces of Georgia perform their official activities in the Georgian language, except for the cases that are otherwise provided for by law or treaties or international agreements of Georgia.

2. The language of military services and commands in the military and other paramilitary forces of Georgia is Georgian.

Article 15 - Language of the texts of seals, stamps, postmarks and letterheads

Public authorities and local self-government bodies shall prepare the texts of seals, stamps, postmarks and letterheads in the official language. If necessary, appropriate texts may be prepared in one of the non-official languages.



Article 16 - Language of foreign relations

When carrying out foreign relations, representatives of public authorities of Georgia shall use rights that are applicable in the field of the official language and that are provided for in the norms of international law.

Chapter V - Language of Elections, Referenda, Plebiscites, Competitions, Attestations and official Events

Article 17 - Language of elections

In the process of elections candidates are registered, appropriate documents are prepared and election procedures are performed in the official language, except for the cases provided for by the organic law of Georgia - Election Code of Georgia.

Article 18 - Language of referenda and plebiscites

1. Referenda and plebiscites are prepared and conducted in the official language, except for the cases provided for by the organic law of Georgia - Election Code of Georgia.
2. Ballots for conducting referenda and plebiscites are issued and decisions as a result of referenda and plebiscites are made in the official language, except for the cases provided for by the organic law of Georgia - Election Code of Georgia.

Article 19 - Language of the procedure for selecting staff and attestations

Public authorities and local self-government bodies conduct selection of staff and attestations as provided for by the law of Georgia on Public Service and prepare documentation related to them in the official language.

Article 20 - Language of official events

1. Official events of public authorities, local self-government bodies, institutions, organisations, and enterprises are conducted in the official language, unless otherwise provided for by the legislation of Georgia. If a speaker of the official event uses a non-official language, his/her speech shall be translated into the official language.
2. In the municipalities, where representatives of national minorities are settled in communities, local official events (except for sessions of local self-government bodies) may be conducted in the language of those national minorities.
3. The first paragraph of this article does not apply to international official events to be conducted in the territory of Georgia.

Chapter VI – Language of Proper Names and Other Denominations

Article 21 - Naming geographical features

Matters related to geographical naming are regulated by the law of Georgia on Naming Geographical Features.

Article 22 - Writing first names, patronymics and surnames

1. First names, patronymics and surnames of persons permanently residing in Georgia are officially registered in the official language in the manner established by the legislation of Georgia.
2. First names, patronymics and surnames are transliterated from the official language into other languages and from other languages into the official language in accordance with transliteration procedures established under the norms of appropriate literary language.

Article 23 - Language of names of public authorities, local self-government bodies, institutions, organisations and enterprises

1. Official names of public authorities and local self-government bodies are created and used in the official language. These names may be used in one of the non-official languages alongside the official language, and in those municipalities where representatives of national minorities are settled in communities, these names may be used in the language of those national minorities as well.



- Names of institutions and organisations are registered in the State Registry in the official language.
- Legal entities under private law are named in the manner established by the legislation of Georgia.
- Any inconsistency of the names provided for by paragraph 1, paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 of this article with relevant norms shall be corrected in accordance with recommendations of the Department of Official Language.

Chapter VII - Language of Public Information and Mass Media

Article 24 - Language of public information

Texts of statements, notifications, titles, posters, signboards, placards, advertisements, and other visual information intended to inform the public are prepared in the official language. If necessary, appropriate information may be indicated in a non-official language, and in those municipalities where representatives of national minorities are settled in communities, appropriate information may be indicated in the language of those national minorities as well.

Article 25 - Presentation and placement of inscriptions intended for the public information

- Inscriptions intended for the public information shall be presented in the official language.
- Procedures for presenting inscriptions in non-official languages (including in the languages of national minorities), intended for public information, shall be developed and approved by the Department of Official Language.
- In the cases provided for by this Law, when writing official names both in the official and non-official languages, the text written in the official language shall be placed first (to the left, or above) and the text written in the non-official language shall be placed afterwards (to the right, or below).
- When writing official names in the Georgian, Abkhazian and non-official languages, the Georgian text shall be placed first (to the left, or above), the Abkhazian text shall be placed in the middle, and the texts written in the non-official languages shall follow them (to the right, or below).
- In the cases different from those provided for by paragraph 3 and paragraph 4 of this article, the text written in the official language shall be placed in front of the text written in the non-official language (to the left, or above).
- When texts are written both in non-official and official languages, the font of the text written in the non-official language shall not be larger than the font of the text written in the official language.

Article 26 - Language of reference materials

- Reference materials to be disseminated in Georgia are issued (published) by public authorities, natural and/or legal persons in the official language.
- Reference materials issued in the non-official language shall be accompanied by the translation in the official language, except for the case, when these materials are intended for the non-official language speaking consumers only.

Article 27 - Language of broadcasting

Matters related to the language of broadcasting are regulated by the law of Georgia on Broadcasting.

Article 28 - Language of advertisements

Matters related to the language of advertisements are regulated by the law of Georgia on Advertisements.

Chapter VIII - Use of the Official Language in Other Fields

Article 29 - Rights of consumers to receive information in the official language

- Consumers may request and receive information in the official language in the manner established by the legislation of Georgia.
- Services shall not be refused to be provided to a person if he/she does not speak the official language.



Article 30 - Use of language in the field of science

1. In order to obtain academic (scientific) degrees in higher education (scientific) institutions of Georgia, the works shall be submitted and defended officially in the official language, except for the exclusive cases established by the legislation of Georgia.
2. Results of scientific researches conducted in state scientific institutions, as a rule, shall be registered and disseminated in the official language.
3. If results of scientific researchers are planned to be published in the territory of Georgia in the non-official language, they shall be accompanied by summaries prepared in the official language.
4. Common terminology shall be used in the technical documentation as well as in the case management. Norms for determining and using terminology shall be defined by the Experts Committee of the Official Language

Article 31 - Use of language in the field of informatics

1. The State shall facilitate the use of the Georgian language in all information technologies.
2. Computer (software) technologies used by public authorities and local self-government bodies, by legal entities under public and private laws, shall enable their users to prepare texts in the official language.

Article 32 - Use of language in the field of culture

For the purposes of the development and effective functioning of the official language the State shall promote:

- a) translation of fiction, as well as scientific, political and other literature of other languages into the official language and their publication;
- b) translation of audio visual works into the official language and their publication.

Chapter IX - Requirements Related to the Knowledge of the Official Language

Article 33 - Compliance of a person with requirements related to the knowledge of the official language

Compliance of a person with requirements under Article 6(4) of this Law is verified by:

- a) a document certifying the completion of general and higher education institutions with the official language of instruction;
- b) a document certifying the completion of general education institutions, the language of instruction of which is not the official language, and which are established in the territory of Georgia as provided for by the legislation of Georgia;
- c) a certificate of passing the official language examination.

Article 34 - Official language examination

1. The legal entity under public law – the National Assessment and Examinations Centre, in agreement with the Department of Official Language, shall develop procedures for conducting official language examinations, which shall be approved by the Government of Georgia.
2. The legal entity under public law – the National Assessment and Examinations Centre shall conduct the official language examination.
3. Taking results of the official language examination into account, the Department of Official Language shall issue a document (certificate) verifying the compliance of a person with requirements related to the knowledge of the official language established by the legislation of Georgia.

Chapter X - State Control of the Protection of the Official Language and Authorities of Appropriate State Institutions in this Field

Article 35 - State control of the protection of the official language

State control of the protection of the official language shall be carried out by the following bodies within the scope of their authority:

- a) the Parliament of Georgia;
- b) the Government of Georgia;
- c) the local self-government bodies;



d) the Department of Official Language.

Article 36 - The Department of Official Language

1. The Department of Official Language shall ensure protection and popularisation of the constitutional status of the official language and establishment and introduction of the standards of the Georgian literary language within the scope established by this Law and other legislative acts. The Department of Official Language is a legal entity under public law established on the basis of this Law.

2. The Government of Georgia shall approve the regulations of the Department of Official Language.

3. The Prime Minister of Georgia shall appoint to and remove from the office the chairperson of the Department of Official Language.

4. The Government of Georgia shall carry out state control of the activities of the Department of Official Language.

5. The Department of Official Language is funded from the State Budget of Georgia.

6. The Department of Official Language shall:

a) implement the unified policy in the field of protection, development and use of the official language;

b) prepare and issue normative acts necessary for the protection and development of the official language;

c) supervise implementation of this Law;

d) establish the Experts Committee of the official language and submit norms of the Georgian literary language and terminology standards developed by the Committee to the Government of Georgia for approval.

e) develop the unified program of the official language and coordinate its implementation.

f) give recommendations to public authorities and local self-government bodies, legal entities under public and private laws for outrooting existing violations in the field of language use.

g) address public authorities with a request to use sanctions established by the legislation of Georgia against persons violating this Law and the norms of the Georgian literary language.

h) ensure informational and methodological supportive measures in the field of the official language.

i) exercise other powers determined by regulations of the Department of Official language.

7. The chairperson of the Department of Official Language shall appoint the chairperson and members of the Experts Committee of the official language.

8. Norms of the Georgian literary language and terminology standards approved by the Government of Georgia in accordance with recommendations provided by the Department of Official Language shall be followed.

9. The Department of Official Language may obtain any public information from public authorities, legal entities under private and public laws and from individual enterprises in order to perform tasks and functions provided for by this Law.

10. Presentation of incorrect or incomplete information by public authorities and persons provided for by paragraph 9 of this article to the Department of Official Language shall be construed as failure to provide such information. Information shall be presented to the Department of Official Language within 10 working days after the request is made.

Article 37 - Unified program of the official language

1. The Department of Official Language shall submit the unified programme of the official language to the Government of Georgia for approval upon the recommendation of the Experts Committee of the official language.

2. Public authorities designated by the Government of Georgia shall ensure implementation of the unified programme of the official language.

3. The unified programme of the official language aims to:

a) meet maximum requirements of persons who are willing to learn the official language; prepare methodological and educational resources in order to teach the official language and to raise linguistic culture; teach the official language in accordance with contemporary requirements, and to introduce a bilingual teaching programme for the groups of linguistic minorities.

b) conduct researches in the field of the structure, history and functional features of the official language in a consistent manner; ensure a unified lexicography of the contemporary Georgian language and provide a full set of norms and terminology standards of the Georgian literary language;

c) provide complete technological support of the official language; create contemporary and comprehensive digital database of linguistic data (texts); develop search, analytical-operative and translation software.

4. The unified programme of the official language is funded by the State Budget of Georgia.

5. The State shall enhance the attraction of investments for the implementation of the unified programme of the official language.



Chapter XI - Liabilities for the Violation of the Legislation of Georgia on Official Language

Article 38 - Liabilities for the violation of this Law

A person shall be liable for the violation of this Law in accordance with the procedures determined by the legislation of Georgia.

Article 39 - Persons liable for violation of the legislation of Georgia on Official Language

1. Heads of public authorities and local self-government bodies, institutions and organisations shall be personally liable for the violation of the legislation of Georgia on Official Language by persons acting in the field subordinated to them.
2. Institutions and organisations acting in the service sector shall compensate for damages incurred by the State or natural persons for the violation of this Law by officers or employees of respective sectors, in accordance with the legislation of Georgia.

Chapter XII - Transitional and Final Provisions

Article 40 - Measures to be implemented with regard to the entry of this Law into force

1. Before 1 February 2016:
 - a) the Government of Georgia shall approve the regulations and structure of the legal entity under public law – the Department of Official Language and shall determine procedures for establishing its assets;
 - b) the Prime Minister of Georgia shall appoint the chairperson of the Department of Official Language.
2. The Government of Georgia shall approve the following before 14 April 2016:
 - a) the unified programme of the official Language;
 - b) the norms and terminology standards of the Georgian literary language;
 - c) procedures for conducting the official language examinations.
3. The Ministry of Finance of Georgia shall include the budgetary allocations determined on the basis of this Law in the process of drafting the law of Georgia on the State Budget for 2016.

Article 41 - Entry of this Law into force

1. This Law shall enter into force from 1 January 2016 except for Article 33, Article 34, Article 36 and Article 37 of this Law.
2. Paragraphs 1-5, paragraph 6(a-f) and (h-i) and paragraphs 7-10 of Article 36 of this Law shall enter into force from 1 February 2016.
3. Article 33 and Article 34, Article 36 (6)(g) and Article 37 of this Law shall enter into force from 14 February 2016.

President of Georgia

Giorgi Margvelashvili

Kutaisi,

22 July 2015

No 4084-6b

