ORGANIC LAW OF GEORGIA

ON STATE LANGUAGE

Constitutional Law of Georgia No 1324 of 13 October 2017 – website, 19.10.2017

The Georgian language is a historical and cultural heritage of Georgia and is the necessary condition for its statehood. It is the common national property for all citizens of Georgia. The State of Georgia performs all its functions in this language, protects it and determines the policy for the functioning and development of this language as of the state language.

At the same time, the State of Georgia protects and strengthens the centuries-old tradition of coexistence and harmonious development of the languages and cultures in the country. The State of Georgia considers it unacceptable to show disrespect for any language, to encroach on the linguistic rights of citizens of Georgia and prevents actions that contradict the constitutional principles of the state linguistic policy.

Chapter I – General Provisions

Article 1 – Scope of the Law

1. This Law shall strengthen the constitutional status of the state language, establish legal grounds for its use and protection, and regulate legal relations regarding the functioning of the state and non-state languages.

2. This Law shall apply to citizens of Georgia, stateless persons having a status in Georgia, stateless persons and aliens.

3. This Law shall not apply to personal relationships.

Article 2 – The legislation of Georgia on the state language

1. The legislation of Georgia on the state language shall encompass the Constitution of Georgia, treaties and international agreements of Georgia, this Law and other legal and subordinate normative acts.

2. The Parliament of Georgia shall define the key directions of the state linguistic policy.

Article 3 – Definition of terms used in this Law

The terms used in this Law shall have the following meanings:

a) the state language – the language (languages) that has (have) this status granted by the Constitution of Georgia and that, based on the historical tradition, is (are) the basic means for exercising powers of the State and for the communication of citizens of Georgia and other natural and legal persons;

b) a non-state language – any language, other than the state language, that citizens of Georgia and other persons residing in Georgia use in their private life or publicly;

c) a language of a national minority – a non-state language traditionally used by communities of citizens of Georgia settled in a certain territory of Georgia;

d) literary language – the formal and standardised type of the state language that is used in all fields of official and business relationships, education, science, culture and mass communication;

e) the State Language Department – a legal entity under public law, the state control of activities of which is carried out by the Government of Georgia. It is a body to ensure protection of the constitutional status and promotion of the state language, establishment and introduction of the standards and special terms of the Georgian literary language, and implementation of the unified policy of the state language;

f) a unified program of the state language – a unified document to define the key directions of the development, technological support, normalisation and standardisation of the state language, which is elaborated by the state language experts' committee and approved by the Government of Georgia upon recommendation of the State Language Department;

g) transliteration – expression of phonemes (sounds) of one language by alphabet letters of another language.

Article 4 – The status of the state language

1. In accordance with Article 2(3) of the Constitution of Georgia, the state Language of Georgia shall be Georgian, and the state language of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia shall be Georgian and also Abkhazian.

2. The State shall ensure the protection of the constitutional status of the state language on the whole territory of Georgia.

3. The State shall continually commit to preserving and exploring the Kartvelian languages and dialects, as it is one of the most significant preconditions for the vitality of the state language.

Organic law of Georgia No 966 of 2 November 2021 – website, 5.11.2021

Article 5 – Guarantees for protecting the state language

1. The State shall the primary guarantor of protection, functioning and development of the state language.

2. Guarantees of protection of the state language shall be established by the Constitution of Georgia, this Law and other legal acts.

3. The State bodies and municipalities shall, in all fields of the state and public life, ensure the establishment of organisational, material and technical resources necessary for the functioning and maintaining purity of the state language.

4. The State shall ensure implementation of the unified program of the state language.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

Article 6 – Guarantees for using state and non-state languages

1. The State shall ensure proper conditions for learning and using the state language.

2. Citizens of Georgia shall, under the General Administrative Code of Georgia, be provided with public information in the state language, except when the public information is kept in a non-state language.

3. Public servants shall, under the legislation of Georgia, be provided with official information in the state language.

4. Public servants shall be obligated to know the state language.

5. The State shall provide an opportunity for persons employed in public service to learn the state language.

6. A non-state language may be used freely, unless the constitutional status of the state language is restricted.

Article 7 – Language of instruction

1. The State shall ensure that early and preschool education, general, vocational and higher education is received in the state language. The issue of receiving education in a non-state language and languages of the national minorities shall be regulated by the legislation of Georgia.

2. In general education institutions, where the language of instruction is not Georgian, that are set up in the territory of Georgia under the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia, teaching of the Georgian language as a school subject (teaching of the Abkhazian language as well in non-Abkhazian general education institutions in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia) shall be mandatory.

3. The higher education institutions, where the language of instruction is not the state language, that are set up in the territory of Georgia under the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia, shall offer a special Georgian language course to persons concerned, while the higher education institutions, where the language of instruction is not Abkhazian, that are located in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, shall offer a special Abkhazian language course as well.

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 the foreign state linguistic policy

In consideration of the norms of International Law and the international agreements and treaties of Georgia, the State shall facilitate:

a) the teaching and popularisation of the state language outside Georgia;

b) the intensification of studies in the Georgian and Abkhazian languages;

c) the dissemination of appropriate scientific and popular scientific literature, organisation of scientific forums and public events.

Chapter II – Legal Principles for Using the State Language

Article 9 – Rights and duties of citizens of Georgia in the field of language use

1. All citizens of Georgia shall have the right to require that the State provide necessary conditions for the protection, exploration and development of the state language, and ensure the guarantees established by this Law and other legislative acts.

2. All citizens of Georgia shall, under the General Administrative Code of Georgia and this Law, communicate with public and municipality bodies in the state language, excluding the exceptional circumstances determined by the legislation of Georgia.

3. In the municipalities where representatives of the national minorities live in communities, the State shall ensure communication of a person belonging to a national minority with public and municipality bodies in the language of that national minority with the help of an interpreter.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

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

All citizens of Georgia shall have the right to request and receive, under the procedure established by law, information and official documents available at the public and municipality bodies about them in the state language, except for a copy of a document to be issued in the original language of the document.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

Chapter III – Working Language of Public and Municipality Bodies, Official Case Management and Legal Proceedings

Article 11 – The language of official case management of public and municipality bodies

1. Public and municipality bodies shall carry out official case management in the state language, except as provided for by paragraph 4 of this article.

2. Communication and correspondence between public and municipality bodies shall be conducted in the state language.

3. Public and municipality bodies shall receive, review and respond to applications, complaints and proposals from natural and legal persons in the state language, except as determined by the legislation of Georgia.

4. In a municipality representatives of a national minority live in communities, public and municipality bodies shall have the right to establish a procedure different from the one provided for by the General Administrative Code of Georgia, which, when necessary, allows for the translation of an application or a complaint submitted to the municipality body in the language of the national minority by a person belonging to that national minority, and of the response to it. In addition, only the original of the text concerned shall be legally valid.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

Article 12 – The language of law-drafting and legislative activity

1. A normative act must be prepared and published in the Georgian language, and in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, it shall be prepared and published in the Abkhazian language as well. A normative act may also be published in a non-state language but such text shall not be legally valid.

2. In a municipality where representatives of a national minority live in communities, a municipality body shall, when necessary, provide translation of a normative act it has adopted in the language of that national minority. In addition, only the original of the text concerned shall be legally valid.

3. A draft law and a legislative proposal shall be submitted to the Parliament of Georgia as a legislative initiative in the Georgian language.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

Article 13 – The language of legal proceedings

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

Article 14 – Use of the language in the defence forces of Georgia and special-purpose state institutions

1. The defence forces of Georgia and a special-purpose state institution shall perform their official activities in the Georgian language, unless otherwise provided for by Law and/or an international agreement of Georgia.

2. The language of serving in the defence forces of Georgia and at a special-purpose state institution, and of military commands shall be Georgian.

Organic law of Georgia No 3544 of 21 September 2023 – website, 12.10.2023

Organic law of Georgia No 819 of 26 June 2025 – website, 1.7.2025

Article 15 – The language of the text on seals, stamps, imprints and letterforms

A public body or a municipality body shall prepare a text on a seal, stamp, imprint and a letterform in the state language. If necessary, the text concerned may also be specified in one of the non-state languages.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

Chapter IV – Language of Foreign Relations

Article 16 – The language of foreign relations

When carrying out foreign relations, a representative of public authorities of Georgia shall exercise the rights that are provided for by the norms of international law in the field of state language.

Chapter V – Language of Elections, Referenda, Plebiscites, Competitions, Attestations and Official Events

Article 17 – The language of elections

In the process of elections, candidates shall be registered, appropriate documents shall be prepared and election procedures shall be performed in the state language, except as provided for by the Organic Law of Georgia Election Code of Georgia.

Article 18 – The language of referenda and plebiscites

1. Referenda and plebiscites shall be prepared and conducted in the state language, except as determined by the Organic Law of Georgia Election Code of Georgia.

2. Ballots for conducting referenda and plebiscites, and decisions adopted as a result of the referenda and plebiscites shall be finalised in the state language, except as determined by the Organic Law of Georgia Election Code of Georgia.

Article 19 – The language of competitions and attestations

Public and municipality bodies shall conduct competitions and attestations provided for by the Law of Georgia on Public Service and other legislative and subordinate normative acts, and prepare related documentation in the state language.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

Article 20 – The language of official events

1. Official events of public bodies, municipality bodies, institutions, organisations, and enterprises shall be conducted in the state language, unless otherwise determined by the legislation of Georgia. If a speaker at an official event uses a non-state language, his/her speech shall be translated into the state language.

2. In a municipality where representatives of a national minority live in communities, local official events (except for sessions of a municipality body) may be conducted in the language of that national minority.

3. Paragraph 1 of this article shal not apply to international official events to be conducted in the territory of Georgia.

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Chapter VI – Language of Proper Names and Other Denominations

Article 21 – Naming geographical features

Issues related to geographical naming shall be 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 citizens of Georgia, and of persons permanently residing in Georgia shall be officially registered in the state language under the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia.

2. First names, patronymics and surnames shall be transliterated from the state language into another language and from another language into the state language in accordance with the transliteration procedures established under the norms of the appropriate literary language.

Article 23 – The language of names of public bodies, municipality bodies, institutions, organisations and enterprises

1. Official names of public bodies and municipality bodies shall be created and used in the state language. These names may also be used in one of the non-state languages along with the state language, and in a municipality where representatives of a national minority live in communities, these names may also be used in the language of that national minority.

2. Names of institutions and organisations shall be registered in the State Registry in the state language.

3. Legal entities under private law shall be named under the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia.

4. Any inconsistency of the names provided for by paragraphs 1-3 of this article with the respective norms must be corrected in accordance with a recommendation of the State Language Department.

Organic law of Georgia No 6871 of 15 July 2020 – website, 28.7.2020

Chapter VII – Language of Public Information and Mass Media

Article 24 – The language of public information

Texts of statements, notifications, titles, posters, signboards, placards, advertisements, and another visual information intended to inform the public shall be prepared in the state language. When necessary, the required information may also be indicated in a non-state language, and in a municipality where representatives of a national minority live in communities, the required information may also be indicated in the language of that national minority.

Article 25 – Presentation and placement of inscriptions intended for public information

1. Inscriptions intended for public information must be presented in the state language.

2. The procedure for presenting inscriptions, intended for public information, in a non-state language (including in a language of a national minority) shall be elaborated and approved by the State Language Department.

3. In the cases determined by this Law, when writing official names in both the state language and any non-state language, the text written in the state language shall be placed first (at the left or on the top), and the text written in a non-state language shall be placed afterwards (at the right or on the bottom).

4. When writing official names in the Georgian, Abkhazian and non-state languages, the Georgian text shall be placed first (at the left or on the top), the Abkhazian text shall be placed in the middle, and the texts written in a non-state language shall be placed afterwards (at the right or on the bottom).

5. In a case different from that provided for by paragraphs 3 and 4 of this article, the text written in the state language shall be placed before the text written in a non-state language (at the left or on the top).

6. When a text written in a non-state language is used along with a text written in the state language, the font of the text written in the non-state language must not be larger than the font of the text written in the state language.

Article 26 – The language of reference materials

1. Reference materials to be disseminated in Georgia by public bodies, natural and/or legal persons shall usually be issued (published) in the state language.

2. Reference materials in a non-state language must be accompanied by the translation in the state language, except when these materials are intended exclusively for the non-state language speaking users.

Article 27 – The language of broadcasting

Issues related to the language of broadcasting shall be regulated by the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting.

Article 28 – The language of advertisements

Issues related to the language of advertisements shall be regulated by the Law of Georgia on Advertising.

Chapter VIII – Use of the State Language in Other Fields

Article 29 – Rights of consumers to receive information in the state language

1. Consumers shall have the right to request and receive information in the state language under the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia.

2. Ignorance of the state language may not be a ground for refusing to render services.

Article 30 – Use of language in the field of science

1. Submission and public defence of scientific works for gaining academic (scientific) degrees at higher education (scientific) institutions with the Georgian language of instruction shall be carried out in the state language, excluding the exceptional circumstances determined by the legislation of Georgia.

2. Results of the scientific research conducted at the state scientific institutions shall usually be registered and disseminated in the state language.

3. If the results of the scientific research are to be published in the territory of Georgia in a non-state language, they shall be accompanied by summary reports prepared in the state language.

4. Common terminology shall be used in the technical documentation and in the case management. Standards for determining and using terminology shall be defined by the State Language Experts Committee.

Article 31 – Use of language in the field of informatics

1. The State shall facilitate the efficient use of the Georgian language in the information technologies.

2. Computer (electronic) equipment used by public and municipality bodies, and by legal entities under public and private laws must allow for preparing texts in the state language.

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Article 32 – Use of language in the field of culture

For the development and efficient functioning of the state language, the State shall facilitate:

a) the translation of fiction, scientific, political and other literature available in another language into the state language and their publication;

b) the translation of audio visual works into the state language and their public broadcasting.

Chapter IX – Requirement Related to the Knowledge of the State Language

Article 33 – Compliance of a person with the requirement related to the knowledge of the state language

Compliance of a person with the requirement under Article 6(4) of this Law shall be verified by:

a) a document certifying the completion of a general or a higher education institution with the state language of instruction;

b) a document certifying the completion of a general education institution with a non-state language of instruction, which is set up in the territory of Georgia under the procedure established by the legislation of Georgia;

c) a certificate evidencing the passing of the state language examination.

Article 34 – The state language examination

1. The procedure for conducting the state language examination shall be elaborated by the Legal Entity under Public Law – the National Assessment and Examinations Centre, with the concurrence of the State Language Department, and shall be approved by the Government of Georgia.

2. The state language examination shall be conducted with the support of the Legal Entity under Public Law – the National Assessment and Examinations Centre.

3. A document (certificate) verifying the compliance of a person with the requirement related to the knowledge of the state language set by the legislation of Georgia shall be issued by the State Language Department, based on the state language examination results.

Chapter X – State Control of the Protection of the State Language and Powers of Appropriate State Institutions in this Field

Article 35 – The state control of the protection of the state language

The state control of the protection of the state language shall be carried out by the following bodies within the scope of their powers:

a) the Parliament of Georgia;

b) the Government of Georgia;

c) the municipality bodies;

d) the State Language Department.

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Article 36 – The State Language Department

1. The State Language Department shall ensure protection and popularisation of the constitutional status of the state 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 State Language Department is a legal entity under public law set up on the basis of this Law.

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

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

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

5. The State Language Department shall be funded from the state budget of Georgia.

6. The State Language Department shall:

a) ensure implementation of the unified policy in the field of protection, development and use of the state language;

b) elaborate and issue normative acts necessary for the protection and development of the state language;

c) supervise the execution of this Law;

d) set up the of the State Language Experts Committee and submit the norms of the Georgian literary language and terminology standards developed by the Committee to the Government of Georgia for approval;

e) ensure preparation of the unified program of the state language and coordinate its implementation;

f) give recommendations to public and municipality bodies, legal entities under public and private laws for eliminating the violations existing in the field of language use;

g) in the case of violation of this Law and the norms of the Georgian literary language, have the right to apply to a public body for imposition of a penalty established by the legislation of Georgia on the offender;

h) carry out informational and methodological supportive measures in the state language field;

i) exercise other powers defined by the regulations of the State Language Department.

7. The Chairperson of the State Language Department shall appoint the chairperson and members of the State Language Experts Committee.

8. Norms of the Georgian literary language and terminology standards approved by the Government of Georgia upon recommendation of the State Language Department must be complied with.

9. The State Language Department shall have the right to request any public information from public bodies, legal entities under private and public laws and from individual enterprises for performance of the tasks and functions provided for by this Law.

10. Submission of inaccurate or incomplete information by the public bodies and persons provided for by paragraph 9 of this article to the State Language Department shall be considered as a failure to provide such information. Information shall be submitted to the State Language Department within 10 working days after the request is made.

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Article 37 – The unified program of the state language

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

2. Public bodies designated by the Government of Georgia shall ensure implementation of the unified programme of the state language.

3. The unified programme of the state language shall be intended to:

a) meet, to the extent possible, the interests of persons willing to learn the state language; prepare methodological

and study resources for teaching the state language and raising the linguistic culture; teach the state language in compliance with the currently existing requirements; and introduce a bilingual teaching programme for the groups of linguistic minorities;

b) consistently study the structure, history and functional features of the state language; 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 state language; create contemporary and comprehensive digital database of linguistic data (texts); and develop searching, analytical and operative and translation computer applications.

4. The unified programme of the state language shall be funded by the state budget of Georgia.

5. The State shall facilitate attraction of investments for the implementation of the unified programme of the state language.

Chapter XI – Liability for Violation of the Legislation of Georgia on the State Language

Article 38 – The liability for violation of this Law

A person shall be liable for violation of this Law under the procedure determined by the legislation of Georgia.

Article 39 – Persons liable for violation of the legislation of Georgia on the State Language

1. Heads of public and municipality bodies, institutions and organisations shall be personally liable for violations of the legislation of Georgia on the State Language in the area within their scope.

2. Institutions and organisations acting in the service sector shall be obligated, under the legislation of Georgia, to compensate for damages inflicted on the State or natural persons by respective officials or employees working in the sector by violating this Law.

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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 State Language Department, and shall determine the procedure for generating its assets;

b) the Prime Minister of Georgia shall appoint the Chairperson of the State Language Department.

2. Before 14 April 2016, the Government of Georgia shall approve:

a) the unified programme of the state language;

b) the norms and terminology standards of the Georgian literary language;

c) the procedure for conducting the state language examination.

3. The Ministry of Finance of Georgia shall, when drafting the Law of Georgia on the State Budget for 2016, ensure that the budgetary funds on the basis of this Law are included in that law.

Article 41 – Entry of this Law into force

1. This Law shall enter into force on 1 January 2016, except for Articles 33, 34, 36 and 37 of this Law.

2. Article 36(1-5), (6)(a-f), (h) and (i), and (7-10) of this Law shall enter into force on 1 February 2016.

3. Articles 33 and 34, Article 36(6)(g) and Article 37 of this Law shall enter into force on 14 February 2016.

President of Georgia **Giorgi Margvelashvili**

Kutaisi,

22 July 2015

No4084–რს