**Annex 4 – Context**

**Role/position title: Consultancy service**

THE BRITISH COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Geopolitical context

Georgia has a population of 3.9 million and occupies a strategically important geographical and political location at the crossroads between Asian and European cultures.  To the north is the presence and influence of Russia, to the west that of Turkey. Georgia has an aspiration for greater European integration and more strategic relationships with Europe. Georgia is a priority country within the [European Neighbourhood Policy](http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/index_en.htm) and the [Eastern Partnership](http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm). Moreover, in June 2014 the EU and Georgia signed an Association Agreement, which includes a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA/DCFTA). The Agreement significantly deepened political and economic ties with the EU in the framework of the Eastern Partnership. Georgia is a security partner for the UK and other NATO countries for cooperation on Afghanistan and Central Africa. Long-standing unresolved territorial conflicts in Georgia, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, mean that the country is always subject to instability; developing resilience is a key concern, and the risk is not lessening.

Education in Georgia

Ensuring quality and affordable education and science system is one of the main priorities of the Government of Georgia and is declared to be the cornerstone of the development of the country.

Georgia has made significant progress in reforming the education and science system in recent years. The country has undertaken a number of reforms aimed at transforming the post-Soviet education system and creating a new system that would be in line with rapidly changing world demands and be competitive on the international platform.

In spite of thorough reforms, there are still many challenges to the quality of education and training services and equal access. The strategic priorities of education include such issues, as ensuring compliance of the education programmes with the current and future requirements of the labour market, availability of pre-school education, improvement of the quality and access of education at all levels, professional training linked to the employment, the relation of the higher education, science, technologies and innovations with the sustainable development of the economy of the country.

To achieve the above objectives, the Ministry of Education, Science Culture and Sport of Georgia has developed a New Education Strategy which was presented to the wider audiences in January- February 2019. The strategy includes all areas of education and science: early/preschool education of children, secondary, vocational and higher education, adult education, science and research. The New Education Strategy fully envisages the obligations under the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU and the relevant Annexes in the field of education, advanced training and youth, as well as science, research and technological development.

General overview of the current condition and challenges

General education in Georgia includes 12 years of study and is carried out in three levels (primary, basic, secondary). Primary education spans 6 years of study, across grades I-VI; basic education spans 3 years, across grades VII-IX; and secondary education spans 3 years, across grades X-XII. Primary and basic education is mandatory. General education is fully funded by the state with 2085 public schools operating in the country.

Initially, students study for a general education certificate which provides them with access to either a higher level of general education or professional/vocational education programmes. In order to continue studying in a higher education institute, students must obtain the full general education certificate, with exams conducted at the end of basic and secondary education by the National Assessment and Examination Centre. The number of pupils/students across all phases of education:

The number of children who do not attend school (2016):

During the 2019/20 teaching year there were approximately 6,500 teachers of English language in Georgian schools (primary and secondary)

The quality of general education, particularly in remote regions is low. A gap between city and rural students has been suggested by national examinations and international assessments such as TIMMS and PISA. Contributing factors include the qualifications of the teachers, including their subject knowledge and pedagogical background, implementation of effective CPD system for teachers.

Over the recent four years, the Government of Georgia, through the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport has conducted a very important intervention series aimed at increasing accessibility, efficiency and quality at all levels of education. Since 2011 there have been 8 ministers of education, each with differing priorities, vision, and education reform objectives. There have been various attempts to address all challenges across areas such as curriculum reform, quality of school textbooks, and making higher education independent. These frequent changes have invariably exacerbated some of the challenges with regard incomplete initiatives, overall consistency, and sustainability.

The Government of Georgia ascribes great importance to internationalization of education and believes that it will have a great impact on improving the quality of education in Georgia. One of the factors, stated by the Minister of Education, contributing to the internationalization of education, linking the Education with the labour market and responding to the technological changes is the higher level of English proficiency of Georgian students at all levels of education.

‘Technologies will be embedded in teaching at all levels of education’ – said the new Education Minister, Mikheil Batiashvili at the official launch of the New Education Strategy” in January 2019. Ever since that period, supporting technology-based teaching has been a major priority of the Ministry of Education in Georgia

English in Georgia

English language is highly regarded in Georgia. Young people seem particularly highly motivated to speak English and take every opportunity to develop their skills. All teachers, school principals, academics, parents, and consider English as very important for future employment, globalization, and access to information. In an attempt to improve opportunities for their children, parents who can afford the fees send their children to private English language schools, English language centres, or tutors. English language level of the students entering university varies between A1 to B2. there is a significant gap between students’ levels in cities (particularly Tbilisi) and the regions. Analysis of the students achieving level B1 indicates that 95% of them are from central Tbilisi.

The ability to communicate effectively through the medium of English and high-level IT skills are key criteria for employers in the commerce, business, and banking sectors of Georgia. Tourism and tourism related businesses account for 30% of the economy, where English language is essential. Unemployment, particularly graduate unemployment, is high in Georgia and therefore competition for graduate posts is extremely high, making English language capability very important. English language courses are included in years 1 and 2 of many university degree and VET courses and continued as special sector specific modules in Years 3 and 4.

English is seen as a fundamental skill for young Georgians by the Ministry of Education, which introduced compulsory second language learning from the first grade in 2011, and actively seeks to improve English teaching and learning in state schools and the higher education system. There is a country-wide need and hunger for English language skills, and the UK is seen as the best source of quality support to teaching and learning.  Fluency levels are low, with some 60% of the populations claiming little or no knowledge of English (Caucasus Barometer 2015). The EU and NATO integration process intensifies in importance and the demand for higher standards and closer international cooperation in English is on the agenda of every state institution. However, English language provision in the state education system is only partly responding to the actual need for English language skills.

**In response to the challenges and needs outlined above, the Government of Georgia has decided to develop English Language Strategy that will ensure country meets the current and future requirements for English skills and informs relevant reforms of the education systems. The Minister of Education approached the British Council with the request to support the Ministry in designing an English Strategy Document for General Education for successful implementation of this initiative.**

**Impact and outcomes to be achieved**

**Impact -** Improved conditions for increased English competence of school graduates and better career and employability prospects by supporting Education reforms focused on improving quality assurance in GE in Georgia

**Outcome** - Policy, systems and structures strengthened to enhance and improve quality provision of English Language Teaching in GE

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