

# CIFAL Tbilisi

# Annual Report 2023



**cifal**  
Tbilisi



## Our Performance

Starting from June 2023, over a period of six months, CIFAL Tbilisi has provided a series of capacity building trainings to Civil Society representatives and to public servants from different municipalities across Georgia.

CIFAL Tbilisi is the 32nd CIFAL center of UNITAR established in Georgia with the partnership of Europe Foundation and aims at providing a range of learning opportunities and facilitating knowledge sharing between CSO representatives, public servants, and leaders in the region to strengthen capacities for good governance and sustainable development.

*“Over the years, Europe Foundation has been strengthening the capacity of civil society actors so that they can contribute to more accountable, needs-based, and transparent public policy making. We are excited to join the CIFAL Network that will give us the opportunity to learn from its members across the globe which accumulated extensive expertise in building capacity for sustainable development. We believe Europe Foundation will contribute to the Network with its knowledge and tools in promoting civic participation.”*

-Ketevan Vashakidze, President of Europe Foundation

*“CIFAL Tbilisi is one of the first centers, we inaugurate in a post-pandemic era. We trust that it will be converted into a center for the region that will be able to use the multiple resources the UNITAR has and will have a very creative aspect of dealing with the problems the world is facing today.”*

-Luis Gallegos, Chair of the UNITAR's Board



## CIFAL Tbilisi activities from June to December 2023

**4**

Learning events

**5**

In-person meetings

**6**

Non-learning events

**2**

Web-based meetings

**302**

Participants

**3**

Hybrid meetings

**94**

Hours

**31**

Municipalities

---

# Coverage

- Akhalkalaki
- Akhaltsikhe
- Akhmeta
- Amborlauri
- Aspindza
- Baghdati
- Batumi
- Bolnisi
- Chokhatauri
- Dedoplistskaro
- Gardabani
- Gori
- Keda
- Kharagauli
- Khashuri
- Khobi
- Khoni
- Khulo
- Kutaisi
- Kvareli
- Marneuli
- Mestia
- Mtskheta
- Oni
- Ozurgeti
- Poti
- Shuakhevi
- Telavi
- Tkibuli
- Tsalka
- Tskaltubo



## CIFAL Tbilisi for Democracy

Europe Foundation, in partnership with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), has officially launched the Tbilisi office of the International Training Centers for Authorities and Leaders, CIFAL.

The partnership agreement on establishing the center in Tbilisi was signed a couple of weeks ago, in Geneva, Switzerland and Luis Gallegos, the chair of UNITAR, visited Georgia for the CIFAL-Tbilisi inauguration ceremony. Mr. Gallegos is the global leader in the development sector. He was the Foreign Affairs Minister of Ecuador and the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations. In 2002-2005 he also chaired the UN Working Group that drafted the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).

During the inauguration ceremony, Ketevan Vashakidze, the President of Europe Foundation, thanked Mr. Gallegos and underlined the importance of the partnership with UNITAR, noting that it would enable the Foundation to redouble its efforts on increasing civic participation, strengthening the capacities of civil society and, supporting development in general.

*“Over the years, Europe Foundation have been strengthening the capacity of civil society actors so that they can contribute to more accountable, needs-based, and transparent public policy making. We are excited to join the CIFAL Network that will give us the opportunity to learn from its members across the globe which have accumulated extensive expertise in building capacity for sustainable development. We believe Europe Foundation will also contribute to the Network with its knowledge and tools in promoting civic participation,”* stated Ketevan Vashakidze.

The CIFAL network unites 31 centers globally, in the Americas, Eurasia, Australia and Africa. The major goal of the centers’ training programs is to build and strengthen human

capacities to better respond to development challenges. Through CIFAL’s regional centers, about 400,000 people have already benefitted from different learning opportunities. This global network now includes the Center in Tbilisi, meaning that representatives of civil society, the public sector and the business community will have access to an additional platform and resources, and be able to receive more information on and to become engaged in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

By using the UNITAR’s resources and knowledge, the Tbilisi Center will elaborate training modules on different development issues and, together with Europe Foundation’s existing capacity-building programs, will offer trainings to individuals from the civil, public, and private sectors.

Over the years, Europe Foundation has been providing civil society organizations with grant support, as well as with different training opportunities and other capacity building activities on gender and minority mainstreaming, civic participation and engagement and etc. According to Ms. Vashakidze, these training modules will further expand to include such global challenges as equality and equity, inclusive governance, the fight against poverty, and etc.

*“One of the center’s most important directions will be the integration of modern technologies in the development process. We are interested in how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and modern technologies affect those processes and how we could use them in achieving democratic governance. To develop its training programs, CIFAL Tbilisi will sign memoranda with the UN agencies and the universities, and of course, will continue its strategic cooperation with Impact Hub Tbilisi, a co-working space founded with Europe Foundation’s support a few years ago, which has been running several successful capacity development projects,”* said Ms. Vashakidze.



Mr. Louis Gallegos underscored the problems societies have been facing recently across the globe, especially after the COVID pandemic.

*“It has been a very challenging moment for the world because the pandemic has been a paradigm changing in many aspects. There are complex social changes going on in the world, so we must be ready to act in accordance with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite having SDGs as a framework for development, we see that unfortunately many countries are failing to reach those goals. The international crisis of multipolar dimensions is becoming more severe.*

*We hope that as a result of the cooperation with Europe Foundation, CIFAL Tbilisi will be converted into a center for the region that will be able to use the multiple resources the UNITAR has and will have a very creative aspect of dealing with the problems the world is facing today,”* stated Mr. Gallegos.

UN Resident Representative, Ms. Sabine Machl also attended the inauguration event. In her welcoming speech, she stressed the importance of reducing inequality and ensuring

no one is left behind (SDG #10), as an integral part of achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

*“Inequalities are raising everywhere, between countries, in-countries, between rural and urban areas, between the poor and the rich, between men and women. We really need to work together to find new solutions to the challenges the world is facing today. Here in Georgia, as well as in other countries of the world, public policies need to be more in line with the SDGs; therefore, we need more trainings and more understanding to achieve the desired result. Hopefully, this cooperation between Europe Foundation and the UNITAR will contribute to improved policymaking in the country,”* said Ms. Machl.

UNITAR is celebrating its 60th anniversary in November 2023. “We are proud of what we have achieved so far, but we must do more,” noted Mr. Gallegos. By bringing expensive experience in supporting civic participation, Europe Foundation is ready to enhance its efforts to contribute to the achievement of SDGs and inclusive governance.

## Discussion on the challenges related to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in Georgia

On June 26, 2023, Europe Foundation held a discussion meeting on the challenges related to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in Georgia.

The representatives of disability persons' organizations (DPOs), civil society organizations (CSOs) working on disability-related issues, activists and human rights defenders attended the meeting. The major focus of the discussion was the engagement of people with disabilities (PWDs) in the public decision-making process.

The meeting was led by his Excellency, Mr. Louis Gallegos, who is internationally recognized for his work as the Chair of the Working Group that drafted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2002 - 2005. Ambassador Gallegos is the Chairman of the Global UN Partnership for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Institute of Public Policy, and Disability at American University and of the Universal Design Commission. In addition, Mr. Gallegos is a board member for the Special Olympics, the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

*“There are 1,3 billion disabled people in the world today. For the impact group, we calculate two persons for each individual with disability, which makes 2,6 billion people. Almost 4 billion comprise the community of PWDs. We have advanced very much within these 20 years, since we began the negotiation for CRPD for better, sustainable, capacity building on disability; but we still have a very long road ahead. People are born with disability or acquire disability during their life by accident, by sickness, or by war; but certainly, as they age,*

*they will definitely get some sort of a disability. Therefore, it is crucial for every government to have rules based into the national regime for the complexity of the society”,* noted Ambassador Gallegos.

Through its programming and grantmaking Europe Foundation strives to promote inclusive and democratic governance, so that different groups of the society and especially, the most vulnerable communities, are given the opportunity to identify the most salient problems themselves and engage in finding solutions to those problems. Although the discussions have become more active on improving situation of people with disabilities in Georgia since signing of the CRPD and the public awareness have somewhat improved during the last few years in this regard, important steps need to be taken to achieve fundamental changes. Public services and state programs running today, in frequent cases do not match the real needs of the PWDs; the situation is especially dire in the regions of Georgia.

During the discussion, the participants of the meeting identified different challenges related to the implementation of the Convention, but the one thing that they all agree on, is the lack of possibilities for engagement and participation of people with disabilities in all stages of the public decision-making and the monitoring process.

With different mechanisms at hand, the Foundation will continue its efforts to empower PWD communities, so that they are better equipped to advocate for their needs on national, as well as local level”, stated Ketevan Vashakidze, the President of Europe Foundation.

## Civil Society for Inclusive Budgeting

On July 26-28, 2023 a training on participatory budgeting and advocacy was held for the representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) working with persons with disabilities (PWDs) and PWD-related issues and local self-governments. This training module was organized by Europe Foundation and it was offered to participants in cooperation with CIFAL Tbilisi and in compliance with international best practices. Participants received information about the budget process and effective mechanisms of civil society involvement in this process.

CIFAL Tbilisi, also known as the International Training Center for Managers and Leaders, was founded by Europe Foundation in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) a few months ago. Europe Foundation uses this center to train CSOs and local government representatives on participatory budgeting, a topic which Europe Foundation has been promoting for years. These trainings help civil society organizations to successfully reflect the interests of their beneficiaries in the process of compiling local or central budgets.

The project ***Advocacy for the Implementation of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*** is aimed at improving the legal status of persons with disabilities, and it has been jointly implemented by the Coalition for Independent Living and Europe Foundation, was launched in October last year. The project is focused on several municipalities according to need, and its goal is threefold: to implement the rights provided for by law in these municipalities, to eliminate discriminatory practices and, to create equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. The organizations supported within the framework of this project attended the training organized by the European Foundation.

*Our goal is to empower civil society organizations by providing the knowledge and resources they need to improve the legal status of their communities. Improving their knowledge of the budgeting process will help them to participate in this process at the right time and in an effective manner, so that both the local and the central authorities can take their interests into account as much as possible,"* says Victor Baramia.

According to Baramia, the 2020 legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities places PWD in an equal legal position with other members of society but, at the same time, the legislation imposes a number of obligations on various branches of government to ensure the provision of services and programs necessary for the integration of PWD and the realization of their rights. *"We see our role as promoting the effective involvement of civil society in the process of managing public finances which, among other things, is expressed in real participation both at the stage of budget planning and its implementation at the central and local levels,"* says Victor Baramia.

Trainer Nino Loladze believes that knowledge of budget processes is a necessary element of effective advocacy. *"During the training, we focused on what opportunities exist in the budget in terms of taking into account various initiatives and what techniques and methods should be used. We are talking, conditionally, about what the document of priorities is and how it is related to the budget, what is the budget cycle, when is the draft budget prepared, when is it forwarded to the Sakrebulo for discussion, and when should the civil sector be involved in the budgeting process. For example, when the local government turns to citizens for recommendations after submitting the draft budget to the city council, it is not really effective, because the budget has already been allocated and it is almost impossible to take new initiatives into account,"* Loladze says.





Lela Mindiashvili, a representative of the Community Path from Gori, says that the organization has been working on issues of disabled people in different municipalities for three years and has already accumulated some experience, although this type of training, which included the techniques and possibilities of inclusion in the budgeting process at the local level, was held for the first time. *"With the support of Europe Foundation, we started working on promoting the employment of disabled people in the municipalities of Gori, Khashuri and Akhaltsikhe. We have planned a number of activities in order to improve the local policy in terms of the integration of disabled people. This training, in which the public sector also participates, is very important for us, so that in the end, this or that service or initiative is taken into account in the budget,"* says Lela Mindiashvili.

Rusudan Gurgenidze, the founder of the organization Step Kharagauli, is working on a Sunday Center project in Kharagauli municipality with the support of Europe Foundation. Its goal is to prepare the prerequisites for the creation of a day care center in this municipality.

*"In Kharagauli, the only active program is the early development program for children up to 6 years of age, which is not sufficient for the promotion and integration of disabled people and their families. With the support of Europe Foundation, we will create a Sunday Center based on the social enterprise model, where parents will have the opportunity to learn crafts and earn income and, at the same time, their children will have the opportunity to receive services in the same space,"* says Rusudan Gurgenidze.

According to Gurgenidze, the organization already has some experience working with the local government. For example, as a result of Step Kharagauli's advocacy, the local government has financed two projects, including a project which diagnoses children with autism spectrum, but according to Rusudan, clarity in the budget process will open up more opportunities for the organization to cooperate with local authorities more flexibly and efficiently in order to improve the situation of PWD. *"It is very important that we were together with the municipality at this training, since that's when the areas of future cooperation become visible."*

The two-day training organized by Europe Foundation was attended by representatives of ten municipalities and PWD organizations, who were given the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and progress at the end of the training. At the end of the training, the participants were awarded the certificates from CIFAL Tbilisi and Europe Foundation for the first time.

*"At the beginning of the training, the existing knowledge on the subject that the training is about is checked. After the training, within a certain logic, the acquired knowledge is evaluated and verified, which allows the participants to themselves assess the quality and progress of their acquired knowledge. I think this method helps all participating parties to better see the results of this or that training and to set the right ways to achieve this or that goal,"* says trainer Nino Loladze.

*"The information received at the training was very important and timely regarding the deadlines of the budget process at the local level.*

*Taking this into account, we hastened and provided the Marneuli Municipality Mayor's Office with a list of specific issues and directions so that it could be reflected in the document of priorities,"* Maya Bibileishvili said during a remote meeting organized by Europe Foundation at the end of September, during which the beneficiaries were given the opportunity to receive additional consultations and recommendations on the topic of local budgeting.

Maya's organization – Child, Family, Society – cooperates with the Marneuli local organization for Equal Opportunities for Equality, funded by Europe Foundation, which implements the project in five municipalities of Kvemo Kartli in order to identify the needs of local PWD and advocate for them.

Europe Foundation and CIFAL Tbilisi continue active cooperation in various ways to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations and civil activists.



## Europe Foundation and CIFAL Tbilisi held a training on public participation in fiscal policy on local level

On October 6, 2023, Europe Foundation, in partnership with CIFAL Tbilisi, held a training on public participation in fiscal policy at the local level. The training was attended by representatives of the project's beneficiary CSO, – Advocacy for the Implementation of Disability Law, and their local government counterparts. The training was led by Europe Foundation's partner organization the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT).

Public participation is part of the foundation of democratic governance, as it implies the active engagement of citizens in public decision-making processes, allowing them to contribute to decisions that may have an impact on their lives. Engagement is an inclusive process, during which different groups can communicate and advocate for their interests and needs. This, in turn, contributes to the improvement of the legitimacy of public decisions, greater trust between citizens and decision-makers and increased accountability of authorities. The participants reviewed GIFT's 10 Principles of Public Participation, discussed the importance of these principles, and reviewed examples of the best practices from different countries.

The participants worked in groups to define how these principles could be applied in practice in order to ensure citizen participation in public policymaking.

*“The training sessions were totally engaging. Having the participation of local government representatives in such meetings is always beneficial, and these joint discussions become more productive when decision-makers from the concrete areas being discussed attend these gatherings. It's also a good practice when CSO representatives and local authorities from different municipalities share their experiences and success stories, especially when these cases have the potential to be replicated and put into action in other areas as well,”* noted Ms. Rusudan Gurgenzidze, a representative of the CSO Step Kharagauli.

Mr. Nugzar Kapanadze, the Head of the Public Health and Social Service division of Akhaltsikhe Municipality stated that such meetings can be especially effective for all stakeholders when they are held before the start of budget discussions and after completion of working on budget.





*"Together with the Europe Foundation, it was an honor to share the GIFT network experience and facilitate discussions with civil society and local authorities on integrating the GIFT Public Participation Principles and strategies in their advocacy work as a means to ensure that needs and aspirations of the PWD sector are taken into account by local development plans and budgets in Georgia. It has been inspiring to witness the participants' commitment to the development of transparent, inclusive, and accountable decision-making at the local level. It is nothing short of remarkable and serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of inclusive participation and that change begins with passionate individuals taking action,"* stated GIFT representative Marianne Fabian.

## Presentation of Europe Foundation's 2023 Survey Report : Knowledge and Attitudes towards the European Union in Georgia

On November 21, 2023, Europe Foundation presented its recent survey report Knowledge and Attitudes towards the European Union (EU) in Georgia.

Europe Foundation has been conducting the EU Knowledge and Attitudes survey biannually since 2009. The survey results are representative of the whole population of Georgia (excluding occupied territories) and allow for the assessment of changes in the population's knowledge and expectations of the EU, Georgia-EU relations, and European integration. The interviews for the current eighth wave of the survey were conducted during March 14 – May 3, 2023 in Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani languages. All waves of the Europe Foundation's EU Knowledge and Attitudes survey were conducted by CRRG Georgia.

Mr. Anders Trelborg, Deputy Head of Mission of the Royal Danish Embassy in Tbilisi, made the opening remarks and Ms. Ketevan Vashakidze, President of Europe Foundation presented the major findings of the survey.

The following are some of the main findings of the 2023 Survey:

- About 77% agree that the EU aims to bring stability to its neighboring regions.
- The EU remains Georgia's partner of choice for both political and economic cooperation. An overwhelming majority—64% for politics and 62% for economics—favor the EU over any other potential partners. The percentage of those who view the EU as the best supporter for Georgia has increased by seven points since 2021.
- A majority of the population of Georgia (54%) hold a favorable view of the EU. Enthusiasm for the EU is particularly pronounced among the younger generation. Nearly two-thirds of those under 35 hold a very positive or rather positive view of the Union. However, opinions differ across political lines. While 66% of opposition supporters view the EU positively, the figure drops to 41% among supporters of the ruling Georgian Dream party, underscoring the potential effects of increased anti-EU stances among Georgia's political elite.
- The European Union is among the most trusted institutions in Georgia. By net trust (53%), the EU consistently ranks just below the army (70%) and religious institutions (69%). Since 2015, when the lowest share of the population trusted the EU, the net trust towards the organization grew from 34%, reaching 53% in 2023.
- In a hypothetical referendum on EU membership, a resounding 77% of the population of Georgia would cast a "Yes" vote. This sentiment has remained stable, and even gained momentum since 2015. Opposition supporters are particularly fervent about EU membership, with 85% indicating a "Yes" vote; fewer, but still about three-quarters of those who support the government, or unaffiliated respondents would vote for Georgia's EU membership.
- Compared to the previous three waves of this study, people of Georgia have grown increasingly optimistic about when the country might become a part of the European Union. Twenty-seven percent of the population of Georgia in the 2023 survey believe that the country would become a part of the EU within the next five years, a 12-percentage point increase compared to 2019, when the population of Georgia felt least optimistic in this regard.



- Over the years, popular perceptions of Georgia's relationship with the EU have been generally positive. However, there's been a notable downturn. Compared to 2021, seven fewer percentage points view Georgia's relations with the EU as "very good" or "rather good," the lowest since the Europe Foundation started tracking public opinion on the EU in Georgia.
- More than half of the population dismisses the idea that the EU threatens Georgian traditions. Yet, 36% of the population of Georgia do perceive a cultural threat, a sentiment that has been slowly diminishing since 2015.
- The majority in Georgia believes that the EU's assistance is crucial to the country. More than four in five, 84% considered the EU's assistance as important or very important.
- Awareness of the Association Agreement among the population of Georgia stands at its lowest since 2014, when the country officially signed the document, with only 41% saying that they are aware of the agreement.
- The majority of the population of Georgia (72%) expect that if Georgia further deepens its relations with the EU, it will have a very negative or more negative than positive effect on bilateral relations with Russia. Notably, such attitudes remain similar to opinions measured in 2021.
- The survey has been generously supported by the Danish International Development Cooperation (Danida). The views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Danida.

Full report is available here: [Knowledge of and Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia 2023](#)

## Partners:

