

## **Information Documents**

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**Consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia  
(October 2020 – March 2021)**

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## Introduction

1. At their 1080th meeting on 24 and 26 March 2010, the Ministers' Deputies took the following decision: "The Deputies, restating the previous decisions of the Committee of Ministers, invited the Secretary General to prepare his consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia based on his outline and taking into account the comments made during the present meeting".

2. It is recalled that the objective of the report is to take stock of the situation in Georgia following the August 2008 conflict, to report on the related activities of the Council of Europe and to propose further Council of Europe action. The report is composed of four parts:

- update on major developments in the period under review;
- assessment of statutory obligations and commitments related to the conflict and its consequences;
- the human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict; and
- current Council of Europe activities aimed at addressing the consequences of the conflict, their follow-up and proposals for future action.

3. This 23rd consolidated report covers the period between October 2020 and March 2021. It notably builds on the previous consolidated reports and on the related decisions by the Deputies.

4. A delegation of the Secretariat carried out a fact-finding visit to Tbilisi on 8-11 February 2021 and had the opportunity to discuss the situation with the Georgian authorities as well as representatives of international organisations and the expert community. The Secretariat wishes to express its gratitude to the Georgian authorities for their support in organising the visit and to all interlocutors for their assistance and valuable contributions.

5. The Secretary General intends to pursue her efforts in view of fact-finding visits to Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the preparation of future consolidated reports. In the period under review, the Secretariat and experts continued to have contacts for the purpose of the implementation of Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) (cf. Section IV.1).

6. This report does not replace the monitoring procedures established in the Council of Europe. Nor should it be seen as prejudging any possible decisions in the cases related to the conflict and its consequences at the European Court of Human Rights.

7. Nothing in this report should be interpreted as being contrary to the full respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders.<sup>1</sup>

8. This report does not prejudice or infringe upon a possible future political settlement of the conflict within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions (GID), nor the implementation of the six-point Ceasefire Agreement of 12 August 2008 and the implementing measures of 8 September 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> It is a fundamental objective of the member states of the Council of Europe to uphold the territorial integrity of Georgia. However, the Russian Federation recognised South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states on 26 August 2008.

## **I Update on major developments in the period under review**

9. Despite the exceptional situation due to COVID-19, the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) have remained fully engaged and kept close contact with all participants while continuing to address pertinent security and humanitarian related issues of the GID agenda.

10. The 51st round of the GID took place on 10-11 December 2020, following postponements due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 52nd round of the GID was held on 25-26 March 2021.

11. The Co-Chairs noted that the holding of an in-person round re-confirmed the commitment of all participants to the GID process. Support was noted for continued dialogue and joint efforts aimed at addressing conflict-related issues, as well as defusing tensions and potential misunderstandings. Particular focus was given to the core agenda item of non-use of force, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on the humanitarian situation on the ground. The security situation on the ground was assessed by the Co-Chairs as relatively calm and stable. As in previous rounds, it was not possible to address issues relating to internally displaced persons and refugees due to a walkout of some participants, as indicated by the Co-Chairs.<sup>2</sup>

12. The Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) meetings were postponed during the period under review, with the 98th meeting taking place on 5 March 2021. The Gali IPRM meetings have still not resumed. The Georgian central government underlined that it was committed to sparing no efforts for the resumption of the Gali IPRM and the unimpeded functioning of both mechanisms on the basis of the founding principles and ground rules. The GID Co-Chairs have emphasised the need to resume the regular meetings of this IPRM.

13. The Georgian central government reiterated that the closure of the “crossing points” had a severe impact on the affected population and noted the help offered to Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the fight against the coronavirus. It expressed profound concern that the human rights situation had been exacerbated by the pandemic, including concerns with regard to the right to life, the right to freedom of movement, the right to property, the right to education in the native language and the right to liberty and security. These concerns were shared by several other interlocutors, in particular with regard to the situation of ethnic Georgian populations living in the conflict-affected areas.

## **II Assessment of statutory obligations and commitments related to the conflict and its consequences**

14. Below is an update on statutory obligations and specific commitments – as listed in PACE Opinions 193 (1996) and 209 (1999) – which have been selected for the purpose of reporting on the conflict in Georgia and its consequences. This part builds on Part 1 of the first and second consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia ([SG/Inf\(2010\)8](#) and [SG/Inf\(2010\)19-final](#)).

- i. *To accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to collaborate sincerely and effectively in the realisation of the aim of the Council of Europe.*
- ii. *To settle international as well as internal disputes by peaceful means (an obligation incumbent upon all member states of the Council of Europe), rejecting resolutely any forms of threats of force against its neighbours.*

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<sup>2</sup> Press communiqué of the Co-Chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, 11 December 2020.

15. The European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgment on the merits on 21 January 2021 in the Inter-State application (II) No. 38263/08 Georgia v. Russia relating to the 2008 conflict and its consequences. The question of the application of Article 41 of the Convention has been reserved.<sup>3</sup> As for the pending Inter-State application (IV) 39611/18 lodged in August 2018, the case was communicated to the respondent government and then adjourned pending the delivery of the judgment in Georgia v. Russia (II).

16. The investigation authorised by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in January 2016 into war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in and around South Ossetia is ongoing.

*iii. To respect strictly the provisions of international humanitarian law, including in cases of armed conflict on its territory.*

17. The activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) aimed at ascertaining the fate and whereabouts of persons unaccounted for as a result of the armed conflicts have been maintained despite the challenges presented by the sanitary context. ICRC specialists continued to analyse and reconcile available data and were able to identify the remains of 14 individuals considered missing as a result of the 1992-93 armed conflict, and to make progress on other cases. As of 31 January 2021, 192 of the 2,353 persons still missing in relation to the 1990s and 2008 armed conflicts and after have been identified and returned to their families.

18. ICRC representatives conveyed to the delegation that the ICRC continued to undertake a range of further activities to support the humanitarian response to challenges caused by the pandemic, including the provision of basic psychological support and information related to COVID-19 to families of missing persons, as well as pandemic-related support to healthcare structures in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

19. Following an earlier suspension of visits in 2020 due to the risks associated with COVID-19, the ICRC has conducted 13 visits to eight penitentiary establishments to assess and strengthen access to basic needs, family contact, and detention conditions.

*iv. To co-operate in good faith with international humanitarian organisations and to enable them to carry out their activities on its territory in conformity with their mandates.*

*v. To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable groups of the population affected by the consequences of the conflict.*

20. The efforts of international humanitarian organisations in close co-ordination with the Georgian central government continued to be mobilised on the response to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the populations.

21. The delegation was informed by its international interlocutors that, in the Tbilisi-controlled territory, international organisations have continued to cater to the basic needs of people along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL), with the provision of food parcels to households with strained financial resources due to the crisis. Equally, medical supplies, protective equipment and training to local health care facilities have been provided along the ABL. The ICRC, together with the Georgia Red Cross Society, adapted its activities to respond to the crisis through the reporting period by distributing food and hygienic items to vulnerable elderly people living along the ABLs. Throughout Abkhazia and South Ossetia, ICRC humanitarian assistance was continued and intensified through the reporting period with a similar focus on vulnerable, older and isolated people with no other support.

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<sup>3</sup> European Court of Human Rights, Press Release, Grand Chamber judgment in the case Georgia v. Russia (II), 21 January 2021. <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=003-6913071-9285190>.

22. In Abkhazia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and/or the ICRC provided financial and food assistance to the most vulnerable segments of the population, including isolated, older persons; worked to improve sanitation and hygiene in schools and penitentiary establishments; and delivered guidance and material assistance to health care, laboratory and/or forensic facilities. The Liaison Mechanism (established under the Georgian Government's Engagement Action Plan and which operates under the aegis of the UNDP) continued to facilitate *inter alia* the delivery of various types of humanitarian and medical aid.<sup>4</sup>

23. The delegation was informed that, despite the limitations in access, the Georgian central government has mobilised and provided support to the people living in Abkhazia in its response to the COVID-19 related challenges, including the sanitary crisis, by way of delivering material assistance, raising awareness and sharing medical experience and expertise (doctor-to-doctor co-operation), and facilitating the intervention of relevant international agencies. Medical evacuations and treatment of COVID-19 patients have also been enabled (cf. section on the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia).

24. Throughout the reporting period, access for international engagement to South Ossetia has reportedly remained limited to the ICRC. They provided assistance targeting health care and forensic facilities, the penitentiary system and older vulnerable people. It has also provided personal protective equipment and medical equipment for health structures in the region. The delegation was informed that the Georgian central government had also offered humanitarian assistance to South Ossetia, but no proposal was accepted.

25. Representatives of the Georgian central government have reiterated that their priority was to assist the population as much as possible. In that regard, the access of humanitarian organisations to these territories has been described as critical.

26. Besides the challenges of COVID-19, the Georgian central government continues to make available free access to health care, education and other social benefits for all residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Post-secondary education preparation programmes envisaged by the peace initiative "A Step to a Better Future" provided support to facilitate the enrolment of students in the higher education institutions of Georgia. In the field of health care, the state referral programme continued to be implemented, vaccines and pharmaceuticals products have been put at the disposal of the conflict-affected populations throughout the reporting period (with the facilitation of international partners), and bacteriological tests have also been made available.

### **III Human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict**

27. In general, representatives of the Georgian authorities met by the delegation in Tbilisi pointed to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation along the ABL due to the continued "borderisation" processes along the ABL and pertinent detention and unresolved cases, which on the whole contributes to escalating the situation on the ground.

28. Measures taken in early 2020 in Abkhazia and South Ossetia reportedly to limit the spread of the coronavirus continued, with all "crossing points" along the ABL remaining essentially closed during the period under review (cf. below).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> With the exception of the assistance coming from the ICRC, which operates independently.

<sup>5</sup> With the exception of the limited humanitarian corridors in between October and December 2020, aimed at facilitating the return of local residents to Abkhazia via the Inguri bridge. To be noted, some "crossing points", notably the Mosabruni/Odzisi one, had long been closed prior to the pandemic, as reported in previous reports.

29. The delegation was in particular informed that no progress had been achieved on the cases of Giga Okhtozoria, David Basharuli and Archil Tatumashvili or on the cases of death of Irakli Kvaratskhelia and Inal Jabiev.

### **III.1 Reports on Abkhazia**

#### **III.1.i Security**

30. No IPRM meetings were held during the period under review. The importance of resuming them has been stressed by representatives of the GID Co-Chairs, the Georgian central government and other international actors. The EUMM-facilitated hotline continues to operate.

31. So-called “borderisation” activities have reportedly continued at a steady pace during the period under review, including in terms of refurbishing existing structures, the extension of fences, and the installation of surveillance equipment. The Representatives of the Georgian central government reported several incidents related to so-called “borderisation” activities during that period.

#### **III.1.ii Freedom of movement**

32. The “crossing points” on the ABL, including the main one at the Inguri bridge, were closed as of 14 March 2020 due to the pandemic, and COVID-19 challenges have continued to dominate the freedom of movement issue. During the period under review, there have been a limited number of temporary openings of the “crossing points”. The delegation was informed that the *de facto* authorities had opened the “crossing points” for a number of days most months to allow the return of people to the Tbilisi-controlled territory. Since late December the “crossing point” had been almost permanently closed except for medical emergencies. The delegation was also informed of efforts by international actors to secure humanitarian corridors.

33. It was reported that, on 11 February 2021, the Inguri bridge “crossing point” was reopened for normal operation for all groups in the direction of Abkhazia, while travel from Abkhazia to the Tbilisi-controlled territory was available for limited groups.

34. In general, through the course of the past year, it was reported that the closure of the “crossing points” had increased the number of attempted crossings of the ABL outside the “crossing points” in insecure conditions creating occurrences of risk for life and health and bringing about instances of illegal detentions and fines.

35. Against this background, cases of arbitrary detention for passage outside the “crossing points” continue to be reported. According to the Georgian central government, there have been five reported cases in January 2021 in addition to 13 in 2020. Those who managed to cross the line and were caught were illegally detained and/or fined.

36. The delegation was informed, in particular by the State Security Service of Georgia, that they had to activate the EUMM hotline during the reporting period after three individuals were illegally detained on Tbilisi-controlled territory which was said to risk damaging the security environment on the ground. The illegal detention and illegal sentencing of Irakli Bebuia was also communicated to the delegation by the Georgian authorities.

### III.1.iii Humanitarian situation

37. All interlocutors met by the delegation underlined that restrictions on freedom of movement had continued to impede people's access to basic rights and services in the territory controlled by the Georgian central government, as well as access to livelihoods and medical treatment. The humanitarian situation was not seen to have improved from the previous reporting period, while the COVID-19 pandemic was said to have exacerbated existing challenges.

#### *Means of subsistence*

38. The delegation received reports that serious issues affecting access to cash had continued for upwards of 10 months in some cases, and that in some instances people had run out of resources. The reduced movement of goods related to the closure of "crossing points" has reportedly increased food scarcity, with resultant rises in food prices being exacerbated by reductions in income for agricultural producers. Issues related to "crossing point" closures, while affecting the whole population of Abkhazia, was said by interlocutors as having an even greater impact on the living conditions of the ethnic Georgians in the Gali district.

39. Considering the long-term socio-economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, interlocutors stressed that it was critical that the ABL be opened in order to facilitate access to pensions, benefits, affordable medicines, and trade activities.

#### *Access to medical care*

40. Challenges related to the provision of medical care were reported to have been deepened by COVID-19, with the focus of limited health resources on the pandemic reducing the capacity to treat chronic diseases and/or serious health issues. These conditions have been worsened by a reported lack of qualified medical staff able to work during the pandemic. The closure of the ABL has placed a particular burden on those who would cross regularly for medical treatment and the purchase of medicines, with the lack of access to cheaper medicines from the other side of the ABL further compounded by rising medical prices.

41. As mentioned above, at the same time, urgent medical evacuations and treatment of COVID-19 patients have been enabled during this period, though concerns remain about accessing prompt and adequate medical care. The Georgian central government ensured that the patients concerned were immediately transported to hospitals in the Tbilisi-controlled territory. According to the information provided by the Georgian central government, 264 COVID-19 patients received medical treatment services at the multi-profile hospital in Rukhi as part of the State Referral Programme. Within the State Referral Programme component "Ambulance, Emergency and Medical Transportation" 83 patients from Abkhazia with various health complications were transported into the Tbilisi-controlled territory to receive the relevant medical treatment between 1 October 2020 and 26 March 2021. Equally, immunisation programmes for routine vaccinations were continued during the reporting period.

### III.1.iv Identity documents

42. During the period under review no major developments were reported. The documentation gap (cf. previous reports) continued to have an adverse impact on the status and effective enjoyment of rights of the ethnic Georgian population living in Gali but also in Ochamchire and Tkvarcheli. It was reported that the so-called “foreign temporary residence permits” continue to be issued and remain the only option for many ethnic Georgians, although it implies registering as so-called “foreign citizens”. The delegation was informed that it remained the case that newly issued so-called “foreign temporary residence permits” were uncollected in many cases as people were unable to pay the required fees.

### III.1.v Access to education

43. As regards the situation of education in the Georgian language in schools in Abkhazia, no progress has been noted since the last report. Previously expressed concerns about restrictions on access to education in the native language persist. To recall, education in the Georgian language has been banned not only at schools but also at kindergartens in the Gali district. The existing measures are widely seen as a form of ethnic discrimination by the Government of Georgia, as well as a number of international interlocutors.

44. As per information provided to the delegation, the trend of the decreasing numbers of hours taught in the native Georgian language has continued. To recall, it has been reported that currently, in 11 schools of the Tkvarcheli and Ochamchire districts, the Georgian language and literature are not taught at all. Regarding the situation in the whole of Gali, in one part of the district, in one school (Public school N1), the native Georgian language is taught at 5th grade as a facultative subject for only two hours per week. In the other eight schools in this part of the district, one hour per week is devoted to the Georgian language and one hour to Georgian literature. The rest of the subjects are taught in the Russian language. Since 2014-2015, teaching has been conducted in the Russian language in the Nabakevi Public School, as well as in other schools in the other part of Gali. Currently, teaching is conducted in the Georgian language only at 9th, 10th and 11th grades. As of September of the current academic year, the teaching time of Georgian literature has been reduced by one hour. It remains forbidden to teach Georgian history and geography. Carrying out one’s work in the Georgian language is strictly forbidden in kindergartens and art schools.

#### *COVID-19 repercussions*

45. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the teaching-learning process in the Gali district and brought forward the issue of access to modern technologies: very few students have access to computers and internet and not all teachers do. School closures during the reporting period to restrict the spread of COVID-19 have further underlined the lack of equipment and internet access. To address the situation, the Georgian central government launched, in co-operation with the Georgian Public Broadcaster’s First Channel, the educational project Teleschool (*Teleskola*), providing TV lessons. However, in some of the villages there has been no access to the Georgian Public Broadcaster’s First Channel.

46. Due to the closure of the “crossing points” of Khurcha-Nabakevi, pupils registered to schools in the Tbilisi-controlled territory could not attend class physically and were obliged to attend remotely. The Georgian central government reiterated that, over the last months and reportedly under the pretext of the COVID-19 crisis, students from the Gali district who were considering studying in the Tbilisi-controlled territory faced pressure aimed at convincing them to continue education in Abkhazia only.

## **III.2 Reports on South Ossetia**

### **III.2.i Security**

47. Security observers informed the delegation that no further incursions had been reported in the Chorchana-Tsnelisi region during the period under review, but that the situation remained conducive to tensions with the presence of armed units and construction of new positions on site. It was underlined again, as on the previous occasions, that the risk of close encounters and escalation remains high. The presence of military equipment on site represents a serious danger for stability, it was stressed. The representatives of the Georgian central government also emphasised that the situation was continuing to have a severe impact on the local population, including in terms of effectively ridding people of their livelihoods and/or instigating a fear of accessing their properties.

48. Readiness for dialogue in order to decrease the tensions was reiterated by the Georgian authorities.

49. During the reporting period, the planned 98th Ergneti IPRM meeting was postponed through the end of 2020, with agreement reached to resume the format in March. The 98th IPRM meeting took place on 5 March, with concerns expressed by the co-facilitators about the deepening socio-economic hardships of the conflict-affect population due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of “crossing points”. Discussions were also held on pertinent illegal detention cases.

50. During the period under review, the so-called “borderisation” process was continuing at several locations, with interlocutors noting a significant, constant increase in the area. The Georgian central government reported 60 incidents through 2020 and 15 since the beginning of 2021.

### **III.2.ii Freedom of movement**

51. The “crossing points” on the ABL, including the main one at Mosabruni/Odzisi, have remained closed since September 2019. As mentioned in the last report, the whole ABL was closed by the end of February 2020. This policy remained unchanged during the period under review. Representatives of the Georgian central government expressed concern that the policy of closure reflects an instrumentalisation of the pandemic which has exacerbated the situation for local populations.

52. A rise in high-profile cases and illegal detentions was reported. According to the representatives of the Georgian central government, there have been a further 38 reported cases between September 2020-February 2021.

53. The previous report noted the case related to an incident involving the use of firearms: on 11 July 2020, where a Georgian citizen, Zaza Gakheladze, was injured by a shot fired along the ABL and subsequently illegally detained by the *de facto* authorities. The individual in question was subsequently “sentenced” in February 2021 to 12 and a half years of “imprisonment”. The case had prompted national and international concerns, including from the Council of Europe. The Georgian central government categorically condemned the shooting, wounding and illegal detention of the individual in question as a dangerous provocation and regretted the illegal sentence. The EUMM confirmed the extensive use of the hotline in respect of the incident.

54. The delegation was also informed of the illegal detention of a Georgian citizen, Genadi Bestaev, who was subsequently “sentenced” during the reporting period to three years of “imprisonment”. Representatives of the State Security Service have stated that they would raise the issue in the Ergneti IPRM meeting, as well as at the 52nd GID. The illegal detentions of Georgian citizens Lasha Khetereli and Ramaz Begheluri were also communicated to the delegation by the Georgian authorities.

55. In reference to these cases, the representatives of the Georgian central government underlined their strong conviction that all such kinds of cases should be treated with a humanitarian perspective and that all efforts should be made to ensure that the illegal detainees are returned to their families. They denounced the practice of illegal detention as being aimed at threatening the local population.

### **III.2.iii Humanitarian situation**

#### *Means of subsistence*

56. Reports continued that the humanitarian situation seems to be dire in South Ossetia, especially in the Akhagori district. The double impact of the closure of the ABL and of the (then) temporary closure by the Russian Federation of its border was mentioned as having seriously limited the entry of goods and food products, in addition to having hampered people’s access to pensions and other social benefits they are entitled to in the Tbilisi-controlled territory and/or in the Russian Federation. As a result, prices are reported to be increasing and there is a shortage of food.

#### *Access to medical care*

57. The closure of the ABL continues to impact the access of residents from South Ossetia to medical facilities in the Tbilisi-controlled territory. Apart from exceptional crossings for medical purposes through the Akhagori “crossing point”, the situation has remained the same during the period under review. Medical evacuations from South Ossetia are possible through the remote Ergneti “crossing point”, with the facilitation of the ICRC. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the ICRC has continued to play its role of neutral humanitarian intermediary, and in 2020 facilitated some 100 medical evacuations from Tskhinvali to Tbilisi.

58. It was also reported that impediments to the freedom of movement were having an effect on the supply and levels of medicine provisions and equipment.

### **III.2.iv Identity documents**

59. Despite the ABL being essentially closed for more than a year, the continued lack of clarity and information on so-called crossing “permission documents” for the ethnic Georgian population in Akhagori remains of concern as it creates additional obstacles to the freedom of movement.

### **III.2.v Access to education, including teaching of/in the native language**

60. No progress has been noted during the reporting period regarding the situation of education in the Georgian language in schools in South Ossetia. Previously expressed concerns about restrictions on access to education in the native language persist. Representatives of the Georgian central government denounced the existing measures as discrimination based on ethnicity.

### **III.3 The situation of internally displaced persons**

61. During the period under review, no progress could be reported as regards the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees on the basis of internationally recognised principles.

62. In the absence of conditions conducive to their return, the Georgian central government continues to provide IDPs with alternative durable solutions in terms of housing and improvement of socio-economic conditions. Representatives of the Agency for Internally Displaced Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihood informed the delegation that, as of today, 288,451 persons, who constitute more than 91,037 IDP families, have been granted IDP status.

63. The delegation was informed about various activities of the IDPs, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency (Agency) since October 2020, which focused primarily on providing durable housing solutions and livelihood opportunities to the IDPs.

64. Overall, 42,364 IDP families are provided with Durable Housing Solutions (DHS) to date. Providing durable housing solutions involved purchasing 326 individual houses and transferring them into private ownership of IDPs; privatising 667 state-owned living properties to IDPs under the privatisation programme as well as providing 579 IDP families with accommodation in newly constructed buildings. For improving IDPs living conditions, the Agency provided co-funding to condominium cooperatives in 2020 and a number of common spaces were transferred to condominium cooperatives. The Municipal Development Fund (MDF), within the framework of Municipal Infrastructure and IDP Housing Programme, financed the construction of buildings in Kutaisi, Tskaltubo and Zugdidi.

65. In terms of improving the socio-economic conditions of IDPs, the Agency continued to allocate to IDPs monthly allowances and provided 4,026 IDPs with one-time monetary assistance. In cases of urgent need, IDPs were provided with temporary accommodation.

66. In order to support access to livelihood opportunities and address economic integration needs of IDPs and ecomigrants, the Agency provided financial support in the framework of the "IDP Vocational Education Support Programme". This included the award of grants to socially vulnerable IDPs to support their self-employment, with grants issued to cover both agricultural and non-agricultural initiatives. A number of entrepreneurs (IDPs and Ecomigrants) were selected for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) grant support.

## **IV Activities of Council of Europe organs and institutions and their follow-up**

### **IV.1 Operational activities**

#### **IV.1.i DG II/Youth**

67. Preparations for the Youth Peace Camp to be held in July 2021 were continued through the reporting period with the participation of facilitators from Sukhumi, Tbilisi and Tskhinvali.

#### **IV.1.ii Operational activities on confidence-building measures and their follow-up**

##### *Activities organised during the reporting period*

68. All through the period under review, the implementation of the operational activities on Council of Europe Confidence-Building Measures and their follow-up has been ensured in areas where the pragmatic approach has enabled long-established dialogue and trust built between all actors concerned. Fully fledged activities will be carried out as soon as the epidemiological situation permits to recover the previous regularity of people-to-people contacts.

69. The CBM priorities, previously identified jointly with relevant actors and closely co-ordinated with the Office of the State Minister Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality and the Liaison Mechanism established under the UNDP, have been maintained.

##### *a) CBMs with Abkhazia*

70. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, some CBM activities had to be postponed; others have continued online.

71. Regarding the archive project, the group of specialists between Tbilisi and Sukhumi continued to work in an online format. This dialogue allowed the participants to finalise the research for the publication on the criminal cases against Monks in Abkhazia in the 20th century. Moreover, the film on the same topic was produced, based on the jointly agreed screenplay. Finally, the preparations for the new publication and a film on the topic of “*Muhadjirstvo/Mahadjirstvo in the XIX century*” were finalised.

72. Regarding the dialogue on the prevention and fight against domestic violence, psychologists and psychiatrists continued their contacts in virtual format. A virtual platform for the preparation of future meetings as well as an exchange with Council of Europe experts was launched in October 2020, with a preparatory meeting held on 23 November 2020.

73. As regards the prevention of drug additions especially among the young, a common digital workspace between drugs prevention and treatment professionals from Tbilisi and Sukhumi was maintained by participants in 2020. Furthermore, the Council of Europe continued to enable the participation of professionals from Tbilisi and Sukhumi in the Pompidou Group Executive Training on Drug Policy on the “Role of different actors in drug prevention”, with participants from Tbilisi and Sukhumi taking part in an online interactive module in December 2020.

##### *b) CBMs with South Ossetia*

74. Efforts continued to be deployed to launch CBM activities in South Ossetia. The Secretariat prepared the first meeting of teachers of the English language on modern techniques of foreign language teaching, in co-operation with the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe in Graz, to be held in 2021.

##### *c) Plans for further action*

75. Despite the difficult situation related to COVID-19, the Secretariat continues to build on the results of the CBMs to maintain the level of trust and contacts between actors on both sides of the ABL.

76. Options of virtual communication will be explored further, where it is possible and relevant, in order to maintain the existing level of communication between well-acquainted participants. To the extent possible, priority will be given to direct contacts between actors on both sides of the ABL, in order to increase the impact and extend dialogue to new domains with a pragmatic approach relying on the technical support of experts from other member states.

77. In addition to the planned follow-up on the previous and current initiatives mentioned above, efforts will focus on facilitating dialogue between mental health specialists, specialists on the situation of minors in prisons, and journalists. Other proposals are currently under discussion with the Georgian central government and stakeholders in Sukhumi. New initiatives in the cultural field will be explored at a later stage, while a dialogue between Abkhaz language specialists will be relaunched in a virtual format in the first half of 2021.