



**Evaluation Research of the Activity Mechanisms and Civic Engagement
Practices of the Regional Consultation Councils**

Baseline Study Report



April, 2018

DEPA Consulting



ევროკავშირი
საქართველოსთვის
The European Union for Georgia



The research was prepared in the framework of “Advancing Regions for Sustainable Development” (ARSD) project. ARSD is a two-year project financed by European Union and implemented since October 2, 2017. It is implemented by Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC) together with partner organizations: People in Need (PIN) and Democratic Institute (IOD).

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



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Content

1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Overview of the Documents	5
3.1. Regulating Documents.....	5
3.2. Analysis of the Minutes of the Regional Consultation Council Meetings.....	7
3.3. Monitoring of Strategies and Action Plans.....	16
4. Situation Analysis	17
4.1. Working Practice of the Regional Consultation Councils.....	17
4.2 Working Groups.....	20
4.3. Cooperation on Regional Level	20
4.4. Inter-Municipal Projects.....	21
5. Engagement of Local Interest-Groups in the Council	22
5.1. Cooperation Practice with NGOs.....	23
5.2. Cooperation with Local Business Groups.....	24
6. Best International Practice	26
7. Conclusion	29
8. Recommendations	32
Annex 1. Documents Studied	33
Annex 2. List of Respondents Participating in the Research	34
Annex 3. Guide for In-Depth Interview	35
Annex 4. Participants of the Focus Groups	37
Annex 5. Issues Discussed at the Council Sessions in Regard with Strategic Priorities	39

1. Introduction

“Advancing Regions for Sustainable Development” (ARSD) is a two-year project financed by European Union and implemented since October 2, 2017. It is implemented by Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC) together with partner organizations: People in Need (PIN) and Democratic Institute (IOD).

General objective of the project is to support sustainable development of the regions in Georgia according to the best European practices, by supporting effective mechanisms of building and implementing regional development policies.

The project serves to strengthen government capacities in strategic planning and implementation of the country's regional development. Within the framework of the project, with the aim of developing sustainable and inclusive development of regions, innovative methods of cooperation will be established between the interested parties of regional, municipal and rural development.

The subject of this research is to study the practices of the Regional Consultation Councils and the mechanisms of civic engagement. The Regional Consultation Council is a consultative body of municipalities with the state representative – the Governor. The purpose of the Regional Consultation Council is to provide the municipality's interests in the process of planning and implementation of the development of the territory. The Regional Consultation Council members are the governor - state representative in the region, mayors of all relevant municipalities, chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of the relevant municipal councils (Sakrebulo).

The research aims to identify relevant short-comings and problems and to analyze engagement level of different civil society organizations and other non-state actors in the work of Regional Consultation Councils and in the process of implementation of councils functions based on examples of Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti regions.

In the research process relevant documents were analyzed. In the framework of the field-work interviews were conducted with governors, mayors, chairpersons/deputy chairpersons of Sakrebulo. In addition, in each region one focus-group with locally active non-governmental organizations was held.

The report consists of a methodological part where detailed research methods, target groups and regions are presented. Also, it consists of the analysis of basic documents, where relevant strategies, legislation, provisions, commands, and protocols/minutes of the Consultative Councils are discussed. The third part of the research analyzes the material obtained from field work, which includes analysis of in-depth interviews and focus group results, in particular – main achievements, challenges and future potential of the Councils.

The report presents main findings of the research, conclusions and recommendations in order to improve work of the Regional Consultation Councils.

2. Methodology

Considering the purpose of the study, for the evaluation a complex of qualitative research methods were used, namely: desk research, focus groups and in-depth interview (Key Informant Interview).

Geographical area of the study includes Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kakheti and Imereti regions as defined in the Scope of Work presented by "People in Need".

Study of the following documents was carried out through the desk research (Appendix 1): Regional Development Strategies and Action Plans; Regulations of the Regional Consultation Councils in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kakheti and Imereti Regions; Legal Acts: Local Self-Governance Code, Government Decrees, etc.; Protocols/Minutes of the Regional Consultation Councils held in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kakheti and Imereti regions. Also other relevant documents identified during the research process. The desk research also covered the best international practice analysis.

Through in-depth interviews information was collected on the role of the Regional Consultation Councils in the process of planning and implementation of regional development strategies. The research also studied existing mechanisms for coordination and communication with the interested parties (including civil society organizations, business groups, farmers and others) in the working process of the Regional Consultation Councils.

For the in-depth interview the respondents were selected according to the following criteria: state representatives (governors) or their deputies of the targeted regions; 3 municipalities were selected in each region - 1) the largest municipality by population in the region; 2) the smallest municipality by population in the region; 3) the municipality characterized by specific socio-economic situation or by its main activities. According to these criteria the following municipalities were selected: Kakheti - Telavi, Signagi, Dedoplistskaro, Imereti – Kutaisi, Tkibuli, Kharagauli, and Mtskheta-Mtianeti – Mtskheta, Dusheti, Kazbegi. In total, 19 in-depth interviews were conducted. The list of participants of in-depth interviews is presented in Appendix 2. Based on the data of the desk research, the guide for conducting in-depth interviews was developed (Annex 3).

Focus groups were conducted with representatives of civil society organizations whose activities are related to the development of local municipalities or the region. One focus group was organized in each region. The number of focus group participants ranged from 9 to 16 participants. The list of focus group participants is presented in Appendix 4.

3. Overview of the Documents

3.1. Regulating Documents

Main regulatory documents for the functions and liabilities of the Regional Consultation Council (Council) are: Organic Law - Local Self-Governance Code of Georgia, Decree N308 of the Government of Georgia - Regulation of the State Governor (Rtsmunebuli), Decree of the Government of Georgia 1750 - Approval of the Guidelines for Development of Action Plans for Action Strategies of Regional development.

Local Self-Governance Code of Georgia determines composition of the Council. Members of the Council are: Governor, relevant municipality mayors, municipality council (Sakrebulo) chairpersons and deputy chairpersons. The Regional Consultation Council is obliged to gather at least once in every three months, according to the law it must elaborate and approve Council Regulation. The law does not determine particular functions and liabilities of the Council.

The governor's statute does not directly specify the rights and obligations of the Council. However article 5 of the Statute of the Governor defines the Governor's powers which are linked to the Council's aims and objectives. For example, paragraph b of the same article declares – by the order of the Government of Georgia the Governor shall develop and / or implement social-economic development programs and participate in regional development strategies. This paragraph is directly related to the functions of the Council discussed below.

The powers and functions of the Council are mainly listed in the Government Decree 1750 - *Manual of Development of Action Plan for Regional Development Strategies*. According to the document, the Council is obliged – to prepare a manual for developing the action plans and regional development strategies; to develop the action plan in accordance with regional development strategies, which must include municipal, regional and national project aspects that are in connection with the region.

The document also determines creation of working groups with the task to develop the action plans. Working groups must present an action plan to the Council. Working groups should be created in five directions:

- a) Infrastructure and tourism;
- b) Business development and agriculture;
- c) Healthcare and social protection;
- d) Education and culture;
- e) Environmental protection.

Members of the working groups are: civil society representatives, employees of regional administration and relevant departments of the municipalities. Working groups have three important functions: a) prepare projects and recommend the Council to include them in the Action Plan; b) prepare the minutes of the meeting, where the importance of the project is substantiated; c) working on The Action Plan. Functional analysis shows an important role of the working groups for efficient work of the Consultation Councils.

The Council is obliged to publish the minutes of the Councils and the working group meetings.

In addition to that, the Council is obliged to analyze selected projects in accordance with an action plan and regional strategies, as well as to coordinate with donor organizations and include their projects into action plans.

One of the main tasks of the Regional Consultation Council is to develop regional strategies and action plans, revise them and monitor their implementation. In all three targeted regions the regional development strategies which cover regional development priorities for 2012-2014 are available. The strategy documents determine prioritized strategic goals in different directions, such as infrastructural development, agriculture, employment, social issues, healthcare and other. Strategic goals are presented together with specific tasks and objectives.

Strategic documents of regional development are in conjunction with Regional Development Program (2015-2017) and Social-Economic Development Strategy of Georgia (2020).

Situation is differs in regard with the regional action plans. It was not possible to find such plans in regional administrations. Only the municipal action plans are available in majority of the targeted municipalities.

The second issue is access to the Council protocols. The minutes of the meetings and the provisions of the Council were not published on any regional administration website at the stage of document research. After requesting public information, the research team timely received the Council protocols and provisions from all three regions. However, the practice of developing reports does not exist in the targeted regions, which in turn complicates presentation of the Council work results and its future priorities, as well as planning process of future activities. Therefore, it is desirable to share practices of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Regional Administration – here minutes and reports of the meetings are uploaded on the administration web-site.

The analysis of the Council's provisions received from the targeted administrations shows that provisions were developed mainly based on the Decree 1750, and all three provisions are identical to each other. Possible regional specifications are not considered in the provisions. Perhaps, analyzing regional characteristics and modifying the provisions based on these specifications will make the provisions more relevant to given regional features.

Council protocols received from regional administrations are the most tangible and important material for assessing efficiency of the work of the Council. The following subsection examines the content and quantitative analysis of the protocols.

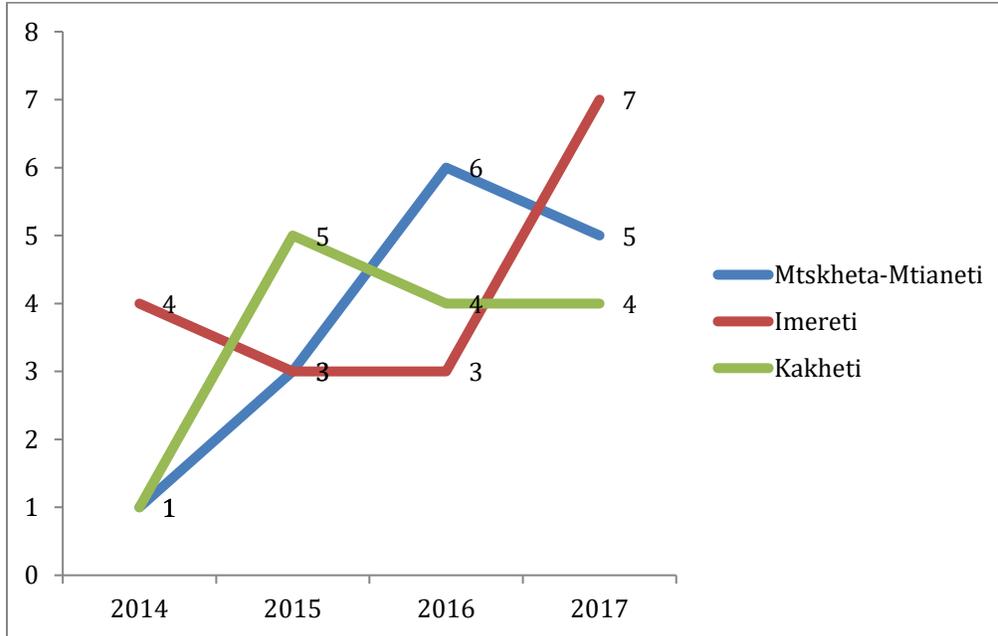
3.2. Analysis of the Minutes of the Regional Consultation Council Meetings

In order to study the working process of the Regional Consultation Councils in the targeted regions – Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti – the research team studied the minutes of the Council meetings of years 2014 till 2017 and the Council regulations documents obtained from the regional administrations. In addition, research team requested the Regional Consultation Council reports from the regional administrations. According to information received from the administrations, such reports had not been developed in the targeted administrations.

Analysis of the Council meeting minutes was carried out by the structural, content and quantitative approach. Structural analysis includes the description of the protocol subunits, description of the content in subunits, etc. The content analysis includes: institutional affiliation of the participants of the sessions, analysis of the issues discussed, and the issues discussed with accordance to the regional development strategies. In quantitative analysis the number of Council sessions, number of participants and other characteristics are discussed.

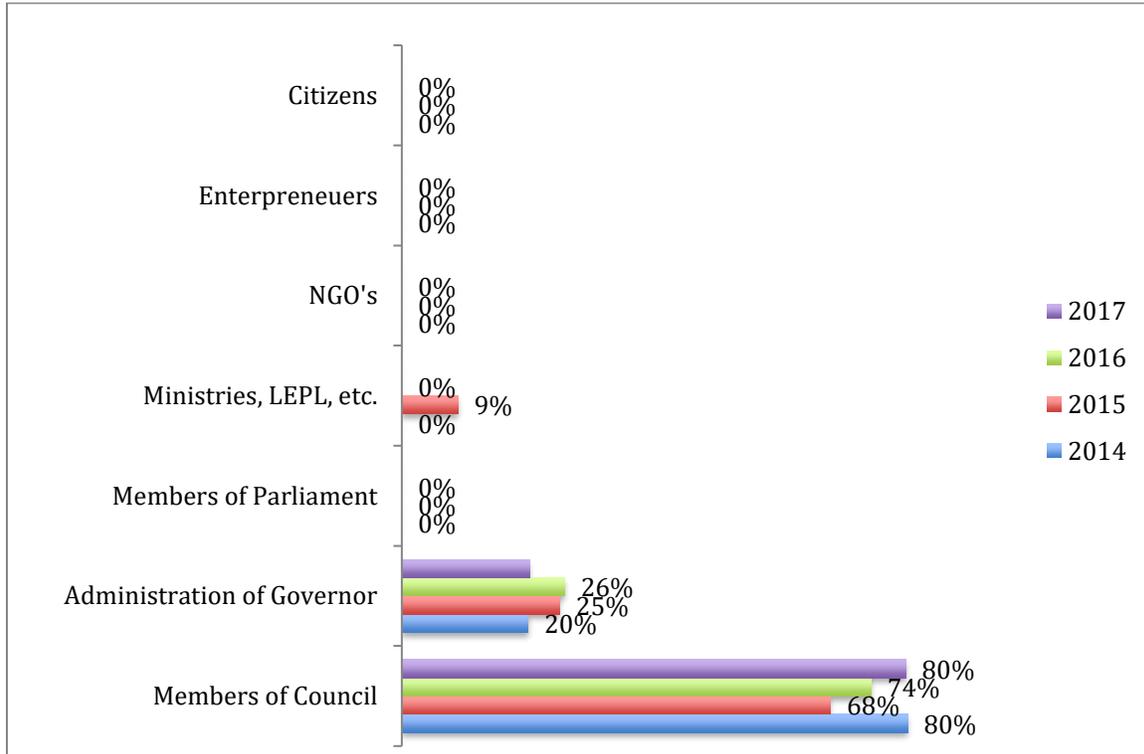
Quantitative Features: 15 meetings of the Consultation Council were held in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region from 2014 to 2017, in Imereti region – 17 meetings, and in Kakheti region -14. According to the amendments made in 2014 to the Local Self-Governance Code of Georgia, the Council must gather at least once in three months. This rule is mainly reserved; exceptional cases were in Imereti in year 2015 and in Kakheti region in 2017 one case in each region, when the Council has not gathered at least once in three months.

Box 1. Number of the Consultation Council Sessions in 2014-2015



Participation of the representatives of different sectors in the Consultative Council meetings is one of the indicators of interest groups and broader public engagement. Members of the Regional Consultation Council are the Governor, Municipality Mayor (Deputy Mayor) and Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of Municipality Council (Sakrebulo). In the 2nd, 3rd and 4th boxes, the total percentage of the representatives of different sectors in the sessions of the Consultation Councils are given by years and regions.

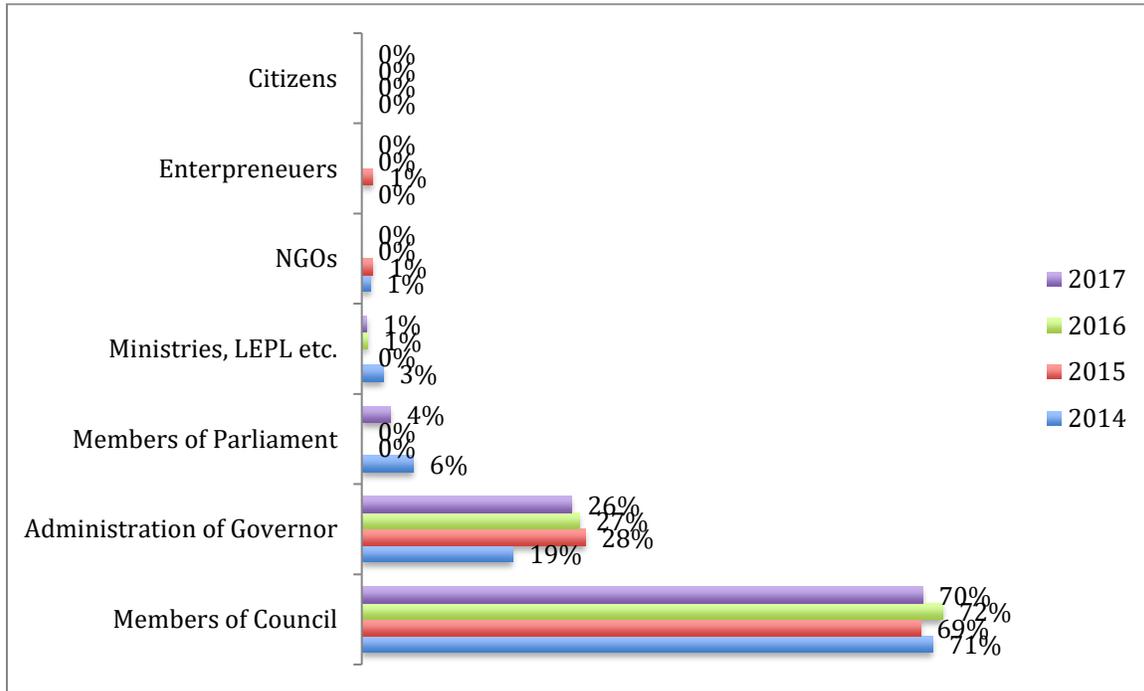
Box 2. Institutional Affiliation of Participants in the Consultation Council Meetings in Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region in 2014-2017



Data from the 2nd box indicate that the majority of participants in the Council meetings are the Council members - from 74% to 80% in consequent years, on the second place are governor's administration representatives from 20% to 26%, from the number of participants in 2015 - 9% were representatives of other government services (state legal entities, non-commercial legal entities, etc.). According to the protocols of the meetings there was no case when representatives of NGOs, business sector, cooperatives or other interest groups participated in the sessions. Based on the data, it can be assumed that the participation of civil society groups in the Consultation Council meetings is minimal in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region.

A slightly different picture is in Imereti region. Institutional representation of participants in the meetings of the Council is more diversified. According to the data available in Box 3, the number of the Council members varies from 69% to 72%, the number of governor's administration representatives is from 19% to 28%, the percentage of MPs and majoritarian MPs in 2014 was 6% and in 2017 – only 4%. The percentage distribution of other government agencies (state legal entities, non-commercial legal entities, etc.) varies from 1% to 4%, and in 2015 the participation of non-governmental and business sector was 1%.

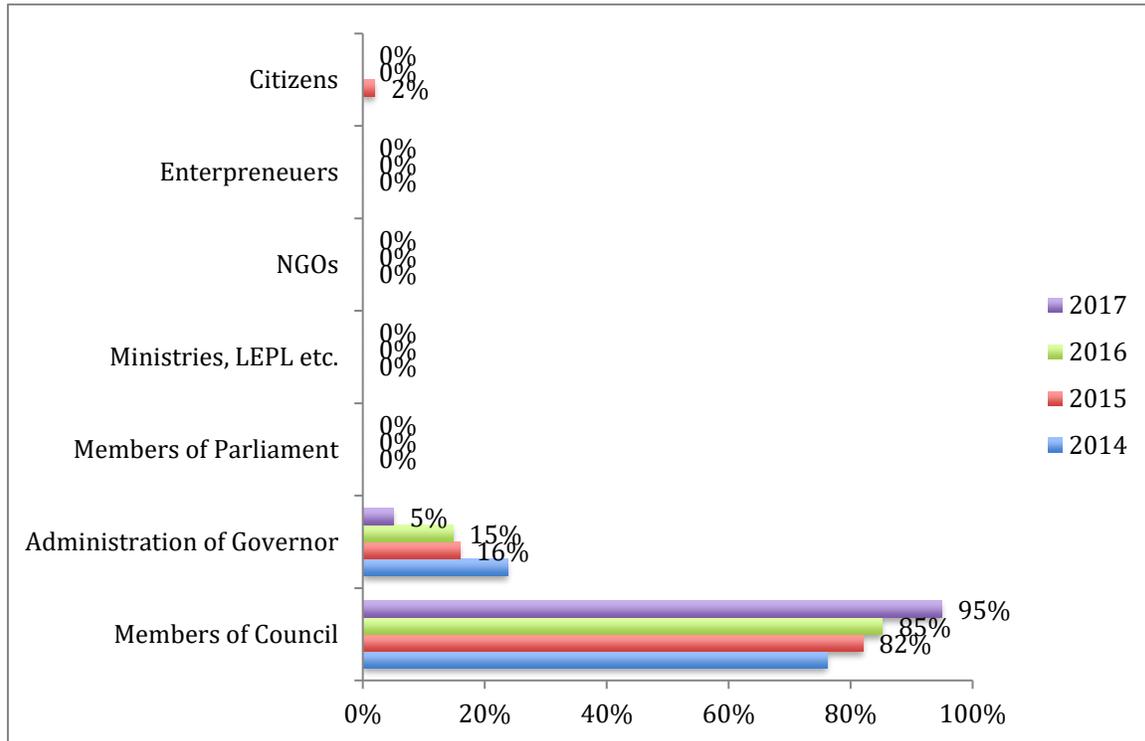
Box 3. Institutional Affiliation of the Participants of the Consultation Council Meetings in Imereti region in 2014-2017



Compared to Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, the participation of representatives of different sectors in the Imereti Regional Consultation Council is relatively high. However, several cases of involvement of NGOs were indicated in two specific projects and cooperation agreement between regional administration and NGO "Young Lawyers Association." Meeting with business sector representatives was mainly about issue of utility bills such is natural gas and electricity.

In Kakheti region the participation of different sector representatives in the Regional Consultation Council meetings is the lowest. The share of the Council member participants varies from 76% to 95% and is the highest in comparison with other two regions analyzed. The percentage of participants from regional administration varies within 19% -28%, and the involvement of other groups was only 2% in 2015. It is noteworthy that representatives of the Pankisi Elders Council have participated in the Council meetings, which is an indicator of a positive case of local population engagement. However, the practice of such engagement does not occur in further analyses. The analyzed quantitative data indicate that in the work of the Consultation Council in Kakheti, similar to Mtskheta-Mtianeti case, civil participation level is minimal.

Box 4. Institutional Affiliation of Participants in the Consultation Council meetings in Kakheti region in 2014-2017

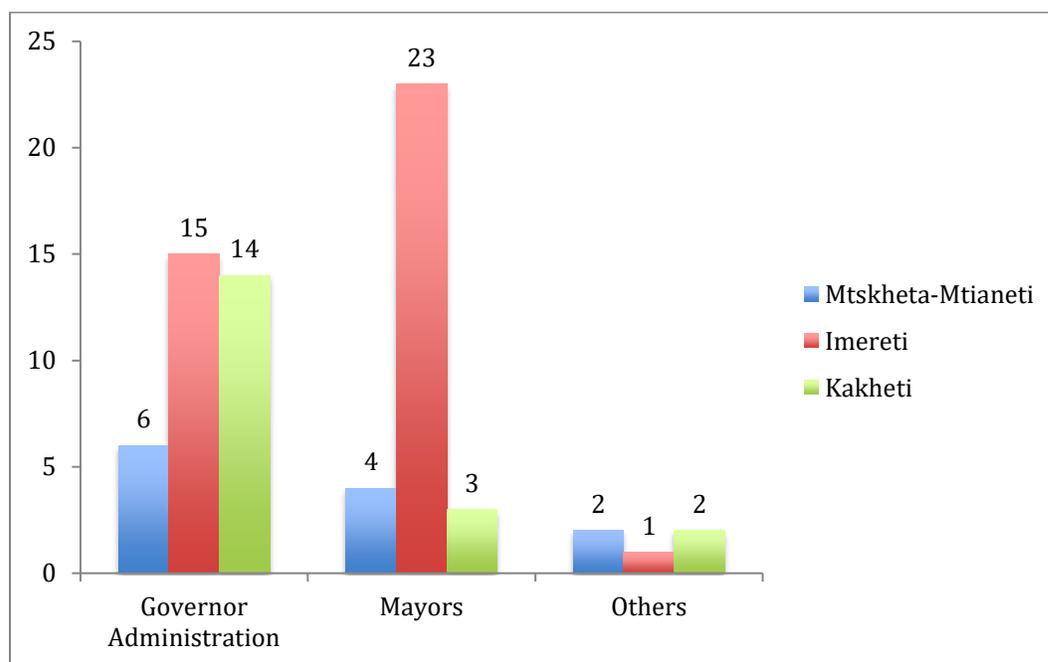


The data show that the involvement of different interest groups and wider public in the work of the Consultation Council is low. It is therefore important to develop certain mechanisms that ensure the involvement of broader public and high level of civic participation in the Council work so that the ideas and interests of different groups are represented.

One of the indicators of the effectiveness of the Regional Consultation Council work is the involvement of participants in the session discussions. Quantitative analysis of the views expressed during the meetings allows us to measure the intensity of discussions. In the minutes of the session, there is only a list of those who has expressed the opinion. In the protocol there is no indication of what the expressed opinion was about and the decision of the Council on this opinion. Therefore, it is possible only to identify the participant's status (affiliation). The data in the Box 4 indicate that the involvement in the discussions is low in all three regions. During the studied period, in total 46 Council meetings were held in all three regions. Only 70 people in total have expressed their opinion. To explain it differently, on average "1.5" persons expressed their opinion on a particular issue. In Imereti (23 cases) and Mtskheta-Mtianeti (15 cases) mostly the Gamgebelis (elected local executive branch representative/Mayor) express their opinion and in Kakheti (14 cases) own view is expressed by the Governor's administration representatives. Data also show in regional administration of Imereti - 4 cases of participation and in Mtskheta-Mtianeti – 6 cases, while in Kakheti there are 3 cases of Gamgebeli being active.

2 instances of involvement of other institutions in the Council meeting discussions were in Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti, and only 1 in Imereti. In any region there was no case when the Sakrebulo members were involved in the discussions. Based on the reviewed data, we can conclude that involvement of participants in the discussions is low. It is extremely important to determine special supporting mechanisms and other measures of better participation in order to increase effectiveness of the Council. It is very rare or no case at all of participation of different interest groups in the discussions.

Box 4. The Number of Opinions Expressed by Different Institutional Representatives at the Council Meetings in 2014-2017



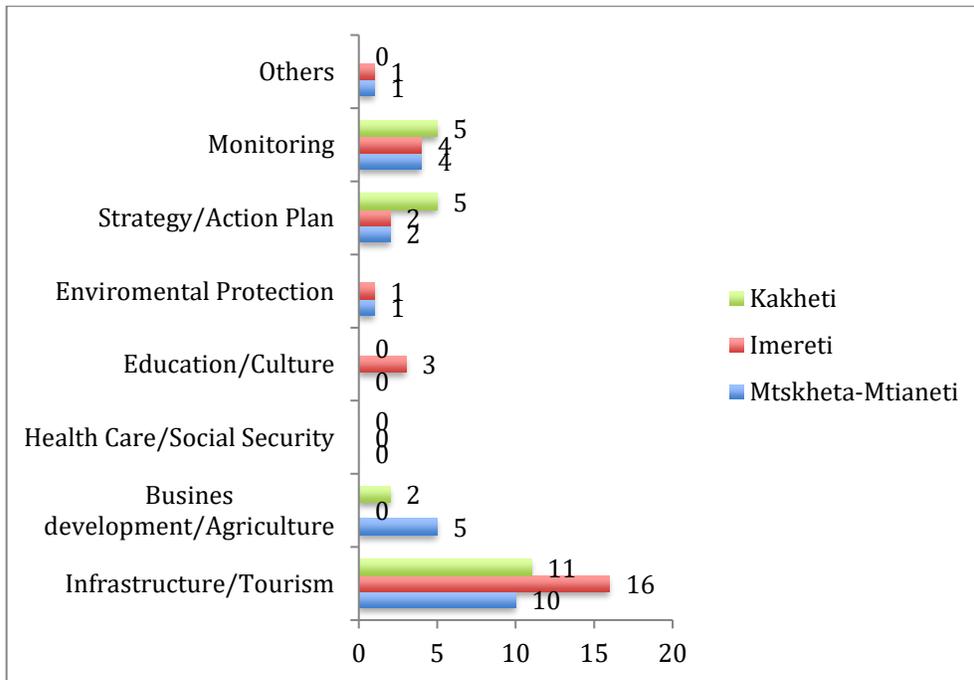
Structural Analysis: Minutes of the Regional Consultation Councils are uniform in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kakheti and Imereti regions. The analyzed minutes include the list of participants, the total number of participants and the number of persons not attending the session (name/surname and the position is not indicated) and reasons for absence (in case of Imereti). In Kakheti case there is no data on persons not attending the session. Document also includes the agenda, issues discussed, persons who expressed certain opinion on discussed issue, but content of the opinion or whether it was shared or not by the Council is not described. The protocol shows the decisions made, which is signed by the Council Head and the Secretary. Basically, the minutes do not explain the factors that determined the inclusion of the issues into agenda. One exception to this practice is case in Imereti – the problem of obtaining nitrates in Zestaponi municipality in Imereti region was described in one of the obtained protocols.

Content Analysis: content analysis studies what theoretical issues were discussed and by what frequency during the meetings. As well as to what extend are these issues connected to the strategic development plans of the region. Also other issues that are important for effective functioning of the Council.

The issues considered in the analysis of the minutes of the sessions were divided into 5 main thematic categories: 1) Infrastructure and tourism; 2) Business development and agriculture; 3) Health and social protection; 4) Education and culture; 5) Environment. Decree 1750 of year 2015 - *Manual of Regional Development Strategies* - determines creation of these thematic working groups by the Councils. Researchers added additionally 2 analysis units to these categories: monitoring and other issues. The monitoring issue is defined in the same guideline and the Councils are obliged to monitor the strategy and action plans.

Thematic issues are summarized according to the 2014-2017 data. Compared to other thematic issues, the infrastructure and tourism issues were discussed mostly in all three regions: 16 times in Imereti, 11 times in Kakheti and 10 times in Mtskheta-Mtianeti. It should also be noted that tourism was discussed only once in all three regions (see Box 5). Next is the business and agriculture/rural development which was most frequently discussed in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region. Monitoring process of projects was conducted by the Council in Imereti in 4 cases, and in Kakheti 5 projects were monitored as well as the Strategy and the Action Plan was discussed. Culture and education issues were discussed in Imereti 3 times and never in Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti. According to the data analyzed, discussion of infrastructural issues is dominant during the Council meetings; the content analysis of the protocols show that the main issue of the majority of the Council meetings is infrastructural projects, as for other thematic directions - they are either not considered at all or given less attention. However, it should be noted that some infrastructural projects are linked to other priorities of the Development Strategy of the Region. For example, building the emergency service office is directly related to the healthcare component, construction of kindergartens improve access to education, building stadiums is connected to better sports life and health. Despite of these connections, these projects are mainly considered within the framework of infrastructural goals. Decisions made at the Council sessions are not analyzed within the framework of the challenges of existing regional strategies and action plans. The exception is the sequences of the Council meetings in Kakheti region in 2015, where the Strategy and Action Plan were included in the agenda four times. The analyzed data indicate that the main decisions of the Consultation Councils are to approve infrastructural projects, which are afterwards forwarded to the Regional Development Commission of Georgia for further approval.

Box 5. The Total Number of Thematic Issues Discussed at the Council Meetings in 2014-2017



Discussed Issues in Regard with Regional Development Strategies. Mtskheta-Mtianeti Regional Development Strategy (2015-2021) determines 11 strategic goals (Appendix 5, Table 1). From the goals listed, no issue/task in regard with totally 5 strategic goals was considered; the relevant issue was discussed only once for each of the 4 strategic goals. Most of the times the issues related to the infrastructural goals (15 cases) and the strategic goal of agricultural development were discussed (4 cases).

In Imereti case as well, most of the times the issues related to infrastructure were discussed; by its frequency the next is consideration of agricultural issues; as for the other strategic issues, at the Council meetings of 2014-2017, those were discussed only once or twice in total. Issues related to six strategic goals have not been discussed at all (Annex 5, Table 2).

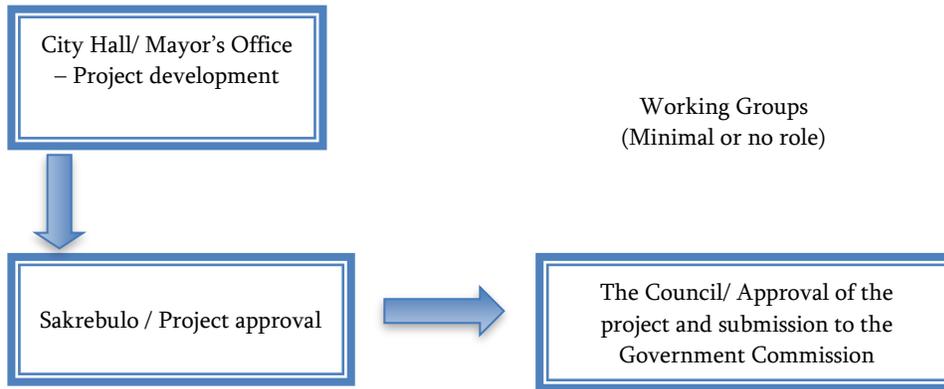
Issues discussed within the Kakheti Consultation Council are similar to Imereti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti topics. In Kakheti most frequently the Council discussed those projects (11 cases) that were to be funded by the Regional Fund. Other directions, for example, agricultural development issues were discussed only twice (Appendix 5, Table 3).

The issues discussed in the Imereti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Kakheti Council meetings in regard with the strategic goals of the regions clearly show that most of the times the Council considers the infrastructural issues that are mainly related to the projects of the Regional Development Fund. Other strategic directions are rarely discussed or not at all. To achieve the goals set out in the strategies, it is important to have a balanced focus on each one of the goals. Studied data show the opposite.

The dominance of projects of the Regional Development Fund is due to the structure of projects approval procedures. This structure consists of the following main stages:

1. The City Hall / Mayor's Office carries out the project and submits it to the Sakrebulo for approval.
2. Selected projects are submitted to the Consultation Councils for further approval.
3. The approved projects are submitted to the Government Commission of Regional Projects for approval.

Box 6. Current Working Practice of the Council



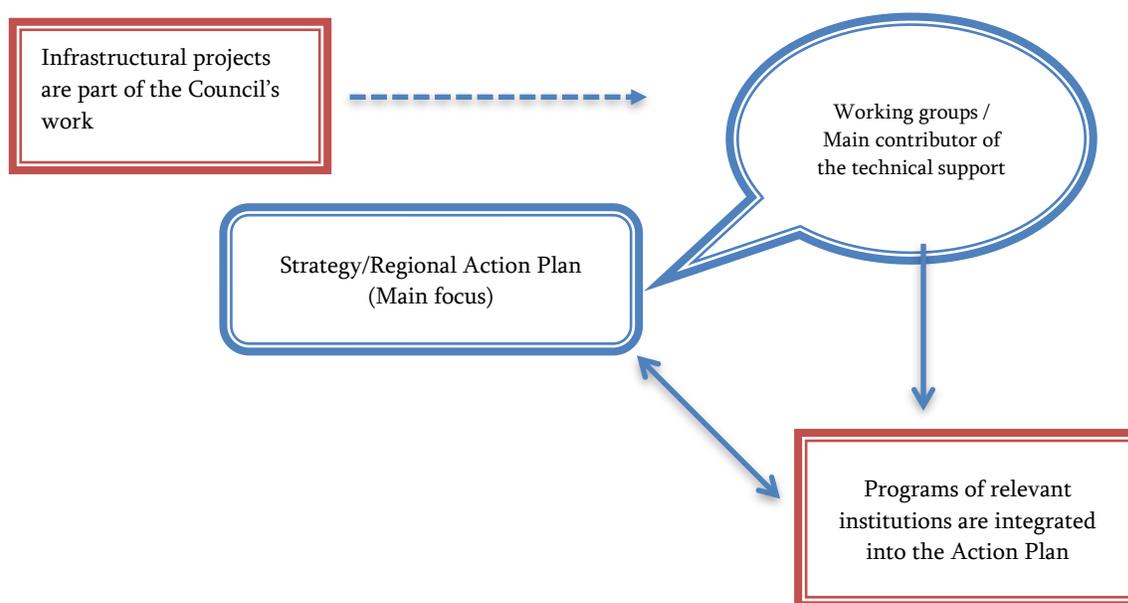
Illustrated structure gives us possibility to conclude the following:

1. Consideration of the issues is largely due to the Council's commitment to consider projects to be submitted to the Government Commission for approval, otherwise the projects approval and implementation is not possible.
2. Another tendency of this system is the role of the central government and especially the role and the budget of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure. The Council discusses infrastructural projects for which the budget exists. Other strategic directions are rarely considered. In addition, discussion of other issues at the Council sessions is significantly determined by projects/programs of different ministries that are directly related to the population of the region. For example, the Agricultural Development Ministry's housing-sowing program was also discussed in the Council. However after termination of mentioned program, consideration of agricultural issues is rare or not at all.
3. The role and significance of the working groups in the current structure of the Council is excluded. According to the Decree 1750, the working groups have important functions that were discussed earlier (see p.5). However, in most of the administrations the working groups are formality or they are not created at all – this statement is confirmed by information received at the conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups. Analyses indicate two major trends: 1. Working groups are not actually functioning; 2. Working groups are the only institutionalized channel through which public interest groups can engage in the work of the Council.

According to the Council protocol analysis, when forming the working groups in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, the representatives of two NGO organizations in each working group were invited (2015. Protocols of other meetings do not contain any information on working groups). However, the names of organizations and representatives are not stated in the document, while other members of the working groups are indicated by their positions and names.

We can conclude that most of the projects are infrastructural projects that are discussed in the Council. The role of the Ministry of Infrastructure is dominant. As a result, less attention is paid to other directions of strategies and action plans; for example, it is not discussed which projects are in the implementing phase and /or are planned by international donor organizations and local NGOs in order to achieve strategic goals. The existence of working groups is formal and the involvement of civil actors is minimal. Therefore, it is important to increase focus on the Strategic and Regional Action Plans at the Council meetings and activate the working groups that will provide technical support to the Council's effective work. Box 7 presents the recommended structure of the Consultation Council work.

Box 7. Recommended Structure for the Council Work



3.3. Monitoring of Strategies and Action Plans

The Strategy Action Plan Development Guide determines the monitoring of the Action Plan implementation process as well. In Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Imereti the monitoring issue was included in the session agenda four times in each region respectively, and five times in Kakheti. Monitoring of Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Imereti regions was related to consideration of the reports on monitoring process of implementation of specific infrastructural projects and documentation, where the implemented part of the project and the amount spent is indicated. There is no practice of discussing the monitoring of implementation of activities planned, specific indicators, tasks, goals and number of beneficiaries, etc.

The update of the action plans in given municipalities is mainly limited to the introduction of a new infrastructural project into a municipal or regional action plan.

A comparatively different situation was in Kakheti region in 2015, despite of the fact that infrastructural projects were mainly under focus here as well. Review and monitoring of the Action Plan and Strategies were included several times in the Council session agenda. Similar activities have not been observed after 2015 - alike the Imereti and Kakheti regions, the action plan is only reviewed when new infrastructural projects arrive.

As a conclusion, it is possible to say that there is only an initial base of objective-oriented monitoring practice. Consequently, for the efficient and effective functioning of the Consultation Council it is important to establish the monitoring and evaluation system, as well as the system of periodic review of the action plan monitoring at the Council sessions.

4. Situation Analysis

4.1. Working Practice of the Regional Consultation Councils

Besides revision of the Council session protocols described above, the working practice of the Consultation Councils was studied by analyzing the in-depth interviews with Governors, Mayors, and Chairpersons/Deputy Chairpersons of relevant local councils as well as on basis of obtained material from conducted focus-group meetings with participation of regionally active local non-governmental and international organizations.

The majority of Governor's administration and self-government representatives evaluate the Consultation Council as an important and productive institution. Some of the main factors are distinguished to strengthen such an evaluation. These factors include:

- **Exchange of information between the heads of the municipalities.** Council members get information about the situation in other municipalities; different approaches of solving existing problems is discussed; what is the municipality's strategy for salaries, etc. Most of the respondents think that such meetings are definitely positive for all involved participants and the municipalities in general.
- **Introduction of successful practices / projects in other municipalities.** This practice is relatively rare. However, there are cases when the municipality is planning to implement a project having success in another municipality. For example, methodology of constructing drinking water wells in Dedoplistskaro was shared by other municipalities. The researcher's observation is that the resources for sharing successful practices are available. If the municipality representatives work more actively in this direction, efficiency will be increased.
- **Discussion and approval of projects financed from the Regional Development Fund.** According to the respondents, at the Council meeting they have opportunity to know about projects and priorities of other municipalities. It is especially important to get information on current projects. In many cases the project implementing companies fail to meet their obligations and

violate the deadlines. According to the Council members, it is important to have information on how to deal and solve existing problems with the contractor company.

- **Field sessions.** In Kakheti and Imereti region there are practices of the Council meetings held in different municipalities. On a day of a meeting the members of the Council study ongoing projects in the municipality and then the Council meeting is held. The existing practice is important; it gives opportunity to get familiar with ongoing works at the place. Besides, it is possible to meet local population. According to the researcher's opinion, the field sessions are positive. However, the effectiveness of the field sessions can be increased. The existing practice does not allow any issue/problem of the municipality where the session is held, to be included into the agenda. It is possible to identify specific problems of the municipality at the session, include these issues into agenda, and invite local interest groups (community, non-governmental and other) to participate in the discussion.

The possibility of implementing strategies and action plans is not considered as a positive side of the Consultation Council. On the one hand, the main role and function of the Council is to prepare a strategy and implement an action plan. On the other hand, the current practice shows that the role of the Consultation Council in relation to the implementation of the action plan and the strategy is small. In most cases, the respondents cannot recall the case of discussing the particular directions of the regional strategy at the Council session; but the regional projects of the Regional Fund are regularly discussed with regard to the action plan. However, one particular detail is important – discussed projects are part of the Action Plan of the Municipality. As a result, exactly the municipal action plans are being renewed at the sessions. Regional dimension and synergy that municipal projects can bring to the regional level, are not analyzed. The regional action plans are not discussed in most of the cases. There were no regional action plans available for the researcher team, with high probability such plans do not exist.

Generally, most of the self-governance and regional administration representatives think that the infrastructural projects are crucial, which will on its side facilitate the implementation of other goals of the regional strategies. This vision in all three targeted regions is identical and presumably is a result of the central government's main approach to focus on infrastructural projects. Theoretically, if we assume this vision is correct, the lack of strategic vision can still be observed. If any infrastructural project is directly related to the regional strategic objective (for example, kindergarten construction which is directly related to the regional strategic objective of access to education), the discussion still does not take place in this direction. The same applies to other directions of regional strategies.

At this stage, the Regional Councils fail to provide equal implementation of strategic directions of regional strategic documents. The impression is – "most important is infrastructure, and other directions will be improved by itself." Analysis of the received information and the functioning of the Council demonstrates the necessity of activating the role of the regional strategy and action plan documents. Otherwise, the Council session and regional strategies will continue to exist in parallel non-cross-cutting regimes.

Implementation of the regional strategy action plans is not considered as a positive part of the Council's work by most of the respondents. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the majority of the respondents are open and ready to increase focus on the priorities of the regional strategies at the Council sessions.

The hindering factors of the effective work of the Council maybe differentiated into two main – external and internal categories. One of the external factors is – unavailability of national funds for the municipal projects with different directions of regional strategies as are education, environment, economics and tourism, and agriculture. The second external factor is related to the regional political system, which does not determine clearly obligations and rights of the regional level entities. The same factor is related to the relatively low degree of decentralization of the country, which naturally reduces the role of the Council.

To the internal factors belong: low attention to the implementation of the regional strategies, absence of regional action plans, lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, lack of analysis on implemented projects with strategic priorities.

In spite of the current reality, there is a potential to increase the Council work effectiveness if appropriate strategic, structural, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are developed. Consequently, the Council will not only work on infrastructural projects, but also will focus on implementation of regional action plans for achieving effective implementation of the strategy.

Table 4. Factors Hindering the Councils' Effectiveness and the Potential

External Factors	Internal Factors	Potential
Absence of regional funds in the following directions of regional strategies: 1) Business development and agriculture; 2) Healthcare and social protection; 3) Education and culture. 4) Environmental protection.	Absence or/and non-use of the Regional Action Plans Focus on projects rather than on the Action Plan	Developing Action Plans. Update of the Plan. Focus on the Action Plan and its specific projects (the practice is the opposite)
Regional administrative arrangement of the country. Issue of regional level governance	Integrating projects implemented by the central government into the action plan of the region. Analyzing these projects in the context of regional strategic priorities.	Integrating the priorities implemented by the relevant ministries in the region into the Action Plan. Integrating projects of non-governmental and international organizations.
Low level of decentralization	Absence of monitoring and evaluation system of the regional strategy and action plan	Developing a result-based monitoring and evaluation system

4.2 Working Groups

According to the Decree 1750 of the Government of Georgia, working groups with five directions are to be created: a) infrastructure and tourism; b) business development and agriculture; c) healthcare and social protection; d) education and culture; e) environmental protection. According to the Decree, the working groups should prepare action plans, develop projects, and monitor the processes. The working groups provide technical assistance to the Consultation Council.

Results of the research process and the findings show that creation of the working groups is a "formality". It is unclear when a working group gathers or what projects are developed; it is meaningful to mention one of the circumstances – in all three regions the NGO representatives were involved in working groups in developing strategies. However, afterwards when strategies were developed, the regional administrations have never communicated with them.

In all three targeted regions the minutes of the Council meetings of year 2015 give information about formation of working groups. Representatives of non-governmental organizations are included in the groups. Information on next stages of the activities of working groups is no longer available.

In order to increase efficiency of the Consultation Council, it is important to increase activeness of the working groups in meeting their obligations. Working groups can play an effective role in elaborating and updating action plans, in creating and functioning the prioritized monitoring and evaluation system, and in developing inter-municipal and regional level projects. In this case the Consultation Council will be provided with qualified technical assistance. Functional activation of formally existing working groups will have a positive impact on the efficient work of the Consultation Council.

4.3. Cooperation on Regional Level

The Consultation Council can be an important tool for implementing regional level projects. This, in turn, will ease the implementation of «expensive» projects for the municipality, and increase efficiency and effectiveness. Practice of implementing regional level projects is rare, but there are some good examples. Role of the Consultation Council in developing such projects is particularly important. The Council as a tool gives its members the opportunity to discuss the regional projects in this format.

Analysis of the projects of successful cooperation on regional level described in Table 5 shows that at the present, implementing regional projects is only for resolving certain problems. In the future, it is important to focus on regional level projects with future potential, which will contribute to socio-economic development of the region; for instance, tourism development, improving regional transportation system, etc. For implementation of the regional projects it is necessary to review the terms and conditions of projects financing. At this stage, the Regional Projects Fund provides

financing only for the municipal projects, which seriously hinders implementation of regional projects.

Table 5. Successful Examples of Regional Level Projects

<p>Kakheti Construction of the animal shelter in Gurjaani. Animals from all municipalities will be taken to this shelter. This will significantly improve the situation in this regard, which is important for all municipalities involved. The construction and further operation of the regional shelter will significantly reduce the costs for every municipality.</p> <p>Imereti Improvement of municipal waste management. Regional landfill will be developed within the project, which will be used by regions of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti regions as well. The project is cost-effective and ecologically beneficial for both regions.</p>
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4.4. Inter-Municipal Projects

Cooperation between municipalities is an important resource in the development and implementation of joint projects in terms of solving existing problems and to use common potential. Changing focus from the political-administrative planning to the spatial planning will facilitate efficient and effective management of resources for the entire region. Role of the Consultation Council can be increased in this direction and significantly contribute to the improvement of cooperation between the municipalities.

Municipality representatives mention that they have good business and personal relations with other municipality heads. However, practice of implementing the joint projects is rare though developing cooperation in this direction is necessary. Despite mentioned attitudes, the impression is that most of the respondents have not made efforts so far for developing inter-municipal projects. In general, the idea of spatial planning is relatively new for the heads/representatives of the municipalities and thus they are mainly focused directly on their own municipalities.

Despite the above described practice, there are examples of implementation of several inter-municipal projects in all three regions. For example: cooperation of municipalities of Dedoplistskaro and Signagi for road rehabilitation, Vani-Baghdadi road rehabilitation in Imereti region, Dusheti-Kazbegi highway cleaning project to be implemented in 2019.

Most of the respondents named certain projects that could be jointly carried out, such as the Oak forest park near Kutaisi, which is owned by Kutaisi, Baghdadi, and Terjola municipalities. It may be possible to develop a joint project on maintenance of the park; also, development of a joint project for Kutaisi -Tskaltubo to develop territory for "cemetery of old cars", and other similar projects.

Table 5. Inter-Municipal Cooperation

<p>Kakheti Road rehabilitation in Machakani. The majority of agricultural lands (vineyards) of the village of Machkhani (Signagi municipality) belong to the residents of the village Mirzaani (Dedoplistskaro municipality). The access road to the lands was rehabilitated and the residents of Mirzaani found it difficult to visit the vineyard. Rehabilitation of the road resulted in cooperation between the municipalities.</p>
<p>Imereti Rehabilitation of Vani-Baghdadi road – part of this route belongs to the Baghdadi municipality and the other part to Vani municipality. The road is internal municipal area. Two projects were developed jointly and road rehabilitation will be implemented in 2019.</p>

Examples of inter-municipal projects that have already been implemented and a number of joint projects to be implemented in the future indicate the necessity of activating cooperation in this direction. The Consultation Council and its working groups should focus on developing such projects.

There are significant barriers to the implementation of inter-municipal projects, which are very important to overcome, in particular, preparation of tender application. Municipalities have no right to prepare a joint application. For example, in case of Vani-Baghdadi road rehabilitation project, both municipalities must prepare the application separately. If any project is not financed, there is a risk that half of the road is done in one year and the other half will be financed next year, or none will be funded. Therefore, it is necessary to revise existing application rules and adapt them to existing needs.

To improve inter-municipal cooperation, technical assistance of international organizations and other types of projects such as rural development programs, spatial planning projects, etc. may be used. This approach is an important resource for developing the inter-municipal cooperation.

5. Engagement of Local Interest-Groups in the Council

Analysis of the minutes of the Consultation Council meetings and in-depth interviews shows that mainly the participants of the meetings are the Council members themselves. There are rare exceptions when local interest group representatives are invited. However, these exceptions are more spontaneous and oriented on specific cases rather than institutionalized and systematic. This section discusses the involvement of local NGOs and business groups in the work of the Council and analyzes possible potential for improved cooperation.

5.1. Cooperation Practice with NGOs

In the targeted regions the focus groups were conducted with local NGOs and international organizations. Focus group participants were representatives of the organizations functioning in different sectors, namely, socio-economic development, legal assistance, integration of persons with disabilities, agriculture development and community development, etc. Sectoral diversity enabled to identify opportunities for cooperation in certain sectors.

In general, in all three regions majority of the NGO representatives noted that there is no any communication problem with the governor's administrations and municipalities; it is easy to obtain public information and organize the meetings. However, there is poor practice of implementing joint projects. Communications are primarily initiated by non-governmental organizations and not vice versa. Representatives of non-governmental organizations think that institutionalized mechanisms should be improved so that regional administration could see the whole picture of the projects with certain directions implemented by non-governmental sector. A comparatively different situation is regarding the international organizations. Due to the fact that most of the international organizations projects are investing certain amounts in specific areas of the regions, local governments are more interested in cooperation. It is worth to mention that part of the focus-group participants state that their recommendations are mostly not considered by regional administration or local municipality.

It is important to note that in all three regions there is a network of non-governmental organizations with significant human and organizational resources; through effective cooperation it can have an important role and be value added to the regional development.

Involvement of non-governmental organizations in the Consultation Council is minimal in all three regions. Most of the participants in the focus groups did not have information on the existence of the Consultation Council and its duties. Those participants who had information about the Council were involved in the development of Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Imereti Development Strategies and Action Plans in 2013-2014. This type of engagement is positively evaluated by NGO representatives. After finishing work on the documents mentioned, the communication has not continued. The NGOs do not have information on implementation of the Action Plans. Engagement level in working groups of the Consultation Councils is also very low.

The involvement of NGOs in the development of regional strategies and action plans is a positive experience. Based on existing examples, it is possible to increase level of participation of the NGO representatives in the Councils in future

Institutionalization of the increase of engagement of NGO sector is possible through several mechanisms. In case of the functional improvement of the working groups, it is possible to involve the representatives of non-governmental organizations working on sectoral directions. This mechanism creates the possibility of effective use of expertise existing in non-governmental organizations.

Another mechanism is the integration of the projects of NGOs and international organizations in action plans. This in turn gives the possibility to create a complete picture of the regional development priorities. In addition, this will improve the cooperation between these organizations and the regional administration or municipality.

Majority of the non-governmental organizations do not have information on the activities of the Consultation Council. Consequently, it is very important to improve the communication strategy. In particular, special database can be created and so, at least one week prior to the Council meeting, the NGOs can be provided with information on the session and its agenda.

In order to increase level of populations' participation, the obligation can be introduced for the Council to gather in case there is a petition or citizen's statement to consider.

It is important to increase the involvement of community organizations in the work of the Council. In 2014 the Elders of Pankisi Gorge in Kakheti took part in the meetings of the Council several times. It is important to encourage similar practices, which in turn will improve communication between the population and the regional administration.

In general, the institutional mechanisms of cooperation between non-governmental sector and regional administration are on its very initial stage and need to be developed in the future.

5.2. Cooperation with Local Business Groups

In targeted regions, majority of the government officials indicate that they have a minimal communication with business groups, since their initiatives can be perceived as pressure on business. As an argument they state negative experience of previous government with the business sector. Given approach is certainly a hindering factor for the development of public-private partnership. However, there are cases when on the one hand the business organization in the region takes the responsibility, and on the other hand the government implements a project that promotes business development. For example, in "Industrial Zone" of Mtskheta the road was rehabilitated by the government and cleaning work was financed by the business companies. There are cases of joint charity actions as well - a special program in Kutaisi for supporting children with autism where private sector participated too. In small municipalities such as Kharagauli, business companies have very little possibilities and consequently it is difficult to develop similar practices. In Kakheti region,

the company producing wood barkets offered the Consultation Council the possibility to purchase their products for schools and kindergartens in mountainous parts of the region. Representatives of the respective municipalities started to review the proposed project. In case of implementation of such project, sales of local enterprise will be increased, schools and kindergartens will be provided with ecologically savvy fuels.

In spite of several cases, the involvement of business groups, farmers and cooperatives in the Consultation Council work is minimal. In some cases, business organizations presented their projects at the Consultation Council sessions. For example, offering healthcare insurance packages to the Council and other similar activities. In the framework of the Consultation Council of Mtskheta-Mtianeti, the Programs of Agricultural Project Agency were presented to the local farmers and representatives of cooperatives. For the future it is very important to institutionalize the engagement of local interest groups in the work of the Consultation Councils.

6. Best International Practice

The OECD approach regarding citizens' engagement defines three types of engagement (OECD, 2001):

- Providing with information - one-way relationship in which government provides information among its citizens using “passive” (providing access to information) and “active” (dissemination of information) measures;
- Consultation - two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to government regarding the issues defined by the governments in advance. Examples include public opinion surveys and comments on draft legislation;
- Active participation - relationship based on a partnership between government and citizens, where the citizens can actively engage in defining the process and content of policy making. In this case the citizens have equal rights in setting the agenda, although the responsibility for the final decision rests with the government.

In order to ensure constructive interactions between Local Authorities (LA) and civil society, three premises need to be considered:

1 - Decentralization processes creates more space for a mutually beneficial interaction between LAs and civil society actors. First, more attractive are LAs to citizens and organized interest groups, higher is civic engagement. For example, if LAs are bypassed by donor agencies or lack autonomy to formulate and implement local public policies, there will be limited incentives for CSOs to engage with them. LAs represent a political community and provide the institutional space for citizen participation. Second, citizens and CSOs have a critical role in influencing the local political process for better development. That is where strategic EU support to CSOs as governance actors is vital.

2 - Civil society actors need incentives to engage in local public policymaking. Often in developing countries there is an experience of mistrust and distance between LAs and CSOs. In such case, it is important to involve relatively small associations or grassroots organizations that have more interest to engage in the process of formulation local public policies (e.g. setting priorities, identifying funding sources, etc.). Besides, intermediary organizations can play a useful role in facilitating dialogue between the LA and CSOs and invest in their capacity building.

3 - Supporting CSOs as governance actors implies adhering to a number of guiding principles. For instance, in the past, donor agencies have often disregarded the lines of responsibility between LAs and CSOs. This has particularly been the case in projects which funded non-governmental organization interventions while discarding the legitimate role of LAs in providing similar services or fostering local economic development. There is now growing recognition that the creation of a legitimate, capable and viable local public sector is a key institutional challenge that have to be supported by the local civil society. Thus, a set of EU guiding principles has been elaborated that aims to support civil society for enhanced local governance.

While discussing the mechanisms of cooperation between LAs and civil society, it is interesting to review experiences of particular countries. Below is a brief review of several country examples.

In **Bosnia & Herzegovina** the relationship between the public sector and civil society has been effectively guided since adoption of the 2007 Agreement of the Council of Ministers on Cooperation with NGOs. This Agreement helped to promote the negotiation at the local level of a range of similar Compact¹-like agreements between CSOs and municipalities. These cooperation agreements clearly define joint and separate obligations of the individual municipalities and CSOs with respect to commonly agreed principles and approaches.

In **Croatia** the most important milestone related with the mechanism of collaboration between public and civil sectors was the adoption of the National Strategy for Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2012-2016. The strategy focused on critical issues identified in collaboration of LAs and CSOs, participatory democracy and participation of CSOs in decision-making processes on local levels. It is important that these issues indicated all the key elements for the implementation (activities, responsible bodies, deadlines, resources and indicators).

Besides, there is a gradual increase of a number of strategic documents elaborated with participation of CSOs. This indicates that participation of CSOs in processes of defining local strategies is increasing (especially in regards to counties² and, to lesser extent, municipalities). One of the reasons for the progress is the adoption of the act prescribing partnership principle in creation of development strategies of Croatian counties, which clearly states necessity for representation of all sectors (including the CSOs providing services or advocating for specific groups) in the process of defining strategies.

Example of **Turkey** is also remarkable, where provincial level³ consultative councils were established in 2011. These councils are facilitated by the Province Governor and their membership includes the local governments and all types of CSOs. This has proved to be a useful additional mechanism for local administrations and CSOs to cooperate.

Besides, there are Citizens' Assemblies functioning in Turkey. These assemblies are forums of CSOs, professional associations and public bodies that monitor the decisions of local governments. The members of the Citizens' Assemblies are the following: the mayor or his representative, representatives of public entities, representatives of political parties, representatives from universities, representatives of public professional organizations, trade unions, CSOs and other local unions/groups of citizens.

Experience of **Latin American countries** is particularly interesting in this regard. In the last two decades, countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru have developed new mechanisms (local councils) to foster citizen participation at the local level. In some countries, creation of local councils is even mandated by the constitution or a national law. Peru's Constitution goes even further, mandating local councils at the regional level – called Regional Coordination Councils - composed of regional public officials and civil society representatives. Peru's Organic Law

¹ Compact is the term used in the UK on a non-binding agreement signed between government and civil society.

² The counties of Croatia are the primary administrative subdivisions. Croatia has been divided into 20 counties and the capital city. The counties are subdivided into 128 cities and 428 municipalities.

³ Turkey is divided into 81 provinces. Each province is subdivided into number of different districts.

of Municipal Government includes a quite detailed description of the local councils and their powers. The local coordination councils play important role in elaboration of local development plans. The national law considers creation of Provincial and District Local Coordination Councils in all local governments nationwide.

In other countries of Latin America, the legal requirement to implement local councils comes from federal laws and regulations. These laws make it compulsory for local governments to promote citizen participation and create enabling environment for the creation of local councils. In general, local councils in Latin America are formed by elected representatives of various social, political, and sometimes private sectors. It is worth mentioning that local councils in Latin America only have the legal mandate to design development plans and policies. However, in the majority of cases, execution and implementation of the plans and policies depends on the initiative and political will of municipal authorities.

Local councils in Latin America follow two basic models in terms of the variety of thematic areas they tackle: local councils that work on wide range of development issues (Peru, Bolivia), and local councils that work in a specific thematic areas. More details are given in the table below:

Thematic Focus of Key Local Councils in Latin America

Country	Local Council	Thematic Focus
Bolivia	Local Economic Development Commission	Wide range of development issues
Brazil	Local Health Management Councils	Social – Health
Colombia	Youth Municipal Councils	Social – Youth
Mexico	Basin Councils	Environment – Water Administration
Paraguay	Local Health Management Councils	Social – Health
Peru	Local Coordination Councils	Wide range of development issues

Despite clear successes in establishing local councils, most Latin American countries still face real challenges in making them work effectively.

Finally, experience of different countries has proved that:

- Local councils have a greater chance of improving public policies' responsiveness to the population's needs if two factors are considered: 1) active involvement of various organizations representing different groups of the community; and 2) equally shared decision making between political authorities and citizens.

- Success of the local councils is more likely in case both sides (local government and civil society) are fully committed to strengthening citizen participation and ready to allocate time and efforts to these mechanisms.
- A comprehensive law can provide a strong framework to facilitate the work of active and influential local councils.

7. Conclusion

The Consultation Council is the only institution on the regional level where the Mayor and Sakrebulo Chairperson / Deputy Chairperson of all municipalities are given the possibility to exchange information, take decisions, and analyze and monitor action plans.

The practice of the Council's work is mainly consideration and approval of projects developed within the framework of the Regional Projects Fund. The Council mainly focuses on these infrastructural projects.

Focus on and discussion of the Regional Development Strategy and the Action Plan by the Council is minimal. Strategic priorities such as ecology, education, healthcare, and agriculture, are rarely considered at the Council meetings. Consequently, it is important to move the focus of the Council meetings onto the Action Plan's discussion from its current practice of considering mainly infrastructural projects. Infrastructural projects should be an important part of the Action Plan, but the balance should be maintained with other priority directions.

Working groups created for the Consultation Councils are an important resource for the effective work of the Council as well as the involvement of civic organizations. The existing practice shows that working groups are "formality". Documentation about the work done by the working groups is not available for consideration. There are no rules and procedures defined for the working groups. It is important to activate working groups and accordingly develop appropriate institutional and legislative basis.

Implementation of regional level projects decreases the costs and increases the efficiency of projects. There are successful practices of implementing regional projects - regional landfill, homeless animal shelter, and others. It is important to improve mechanisms of development and implementation of such projects.

Rare examples of implementation of inter-municipal projects indicate the need for development in this regard and orientation on initiating and developing the spatial planning principles. It is important to amend the rules and procedures of tender application preparation so that the municipalities will be able to prepare a joint applications.

Engagement level of local interest-groups in the work of the Consultation Council is minimal. However, both the Council members and non-governmental organizations are open for improvement of the future cooperation.

In order to increase engagement of the local non-governmental organizations in the Council work, it is important to activate their work with relevant directions in the working groups, as well as regularly inform them about the Council meeting date and meeting agenda.

8. Recommendations

Object of Intervention	Intervention	Responsible Agency	Result of Intervention	Recommendation Period
Documents				
Regional Action Plan	Regional Action Plans Update and / or Development	Regional Consultation Council	Effective regional action plan	Short-term
Local Self-Governance Code	Amendment initiation on working groups	Parliament	Increase efficiency of working groups	Medium term
Report of the Consultation Council	Prepare and publish working group reports (twice a year)	Regional Consultation Council	Improved reporting system	Short-term
Tender Application Rules	The possibility of developing and financing joint projects of inter-municipal and regional projects	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure / Government of Georgia	Inter municipal and regional projects increase	Short-term
Monitoring and Evaluation System	Selection of the pilot region and creation of monitoring and evaluation system of action plans	Pilot Region / International Organization / Implementing Organization	Monitoring and Evaluation System	Medium term
Improvement of Institutional Mechanisms				
Focus on Action Plan	Develop agenda on the sessions of the Consultation Council based on the Strategy and Action Plan	Regional Consultation Council/ working groups	Improved effectiveness of the Action Plan	Medium term
Strategic Priorities	Balance for the implementation of strategic priorities	Regional Consultation Council/ working groups	Increased role of the working groups and improved strategic priorities	Medium term
Prepared projects and directions	Improvement of project development	Working groups	Prepared projects are relevant and equally distributed according to strategic priorities	Medium term
Fund-raising from relevant ministries and / or donor organizations	Implementing projects according to strategic priorities	Regional Development Fund Relevant ministries; Consultation Council	Regional Development Fund Commission and integrated	

			programs and projects of relevant ministries into the Action Plan	
Capacity building of working groups	Trainings for working group members according to the sectoral directions (economics, ecology, tourism etc.)	International Organization / Implementing Organization	Increased qualification of working group members	Medium term
Civil Engagement				
Working groups	Involvement of relevant NGOs in working groups; define criteria for selecting organizations to work in working groups	Consultation Council / NGOs	Increased participation of NGOs	Medium term
Information sharing about council meetings	At least one week earlier organizations will be informed about the meeting and its agenda	Consultation Council	Increased participation	Short-term
Cooperation of public and private sectors	Developing joint projects	Consultation Council / Business sector	Improved cooperation. Increased number of joint projects	Medium term

Annex 1. Documents Studied

- Organic Law "Local Self-Governance Code of Georgia"
- Decree N308 of the Government of Georgia on Statute of State Representative - Governor
- Decree of the Government of Georgia 1750 – on the Approval of the Guidance for Developing Action Plan for Regional Development Strategies
- Regional Development Strategy (2014-2021) for Kakheti Region
- Regional Development Strategy (2014-2021) for Imereti Region
- Regional Development strategy (2014-2021) for Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region
- Regional Development Programme of Georgia for 2018-2021 (working version_
- Social-Economic Development Strategi – Georgia 2020
- Minutes of the KaKheti Regional Consultation Council Sessions for years 2014-2017 (14 minutes of the sessions)
- Minutes of the Imereti Regional Consultation Council Sessions for years 2014-2017 (17 minutes of the sessions)
- Minutes of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti Regional Consultation Council Sessions for years 2014-2017 (15 minutes of the sessions)

Annex 2. List of Respondents Participating in the Research

Mtskheta-Mtianeti

1. Levan Zautashvili – Governor
2. Tamaz Grdzlishvili – Deputy Chairman of the Sakrebulo of Mtskheta Municipality
3. Givi Giutashvili – First Deputy Mayor of Mtskheta Municipality
4. Giorgi Inashvili – Chairman of the Sakrebulo of Dusheti Municipality
5. Zurab Sekhniashvili – Mayor of Dusheti Municipality
6. Grigol Seturidze – Chairman of the Sakrebulo of Kazbegi Municipality

Imereti

7. Soso Khakhaleishvili – Deputy Governor
8. Temur Chubinidze – Mayor of Tkibuli Municipality
9. Natalia Kobakhidze – Chairwoman of the Sakrebulo of Tkibuli Municipality
10. Archil Maghradze – First Deputy Mayor of Kharagauli Municipality
11. Nikoloz Lataria – Chairman of the Sakrebulo of Kutaisi
12. Giorgi Iobashvili – Deputy Mayor of Kutaisi

KaKheti

13. Irakli Kadagishvili – Governor of Kakheti
14. Shota Nareklishvili – Mayor of Telavi
15. Archil Tlashadze – Chairman of the Sakrebulo of Telavi
16. Nika Janiashvili – Mayor of Dedoplistskaro
17. Nugzar Papiashvili – Chairman of the Sakrebulo of Dedoplistskaro
18. Giorgi Gogilashvili – Mayor of Signagi
19. Ilia Khatiashvili – Chairman of the Sakrebulo of Signagi

Annex 3. Guide for In-Depth Interview

Research Guide of Regional Consultation Council Work Mechanisms and
Civic Engagement Practice for
Governor, Mayor and Sakrebulo Chairman

Introduction

1. In general, how would you evaluate the work of the Consultation Council? Why?
2. What are the strengths of the Council? Why?
3. What are the main achievements of the Council? Why?
4. What are the main challenges for the efficient work of the Council? How is it possible to deal with these challenges?

Main Goals

5. What are the main objectives of the Council? (Deepening: monitoring, strategy, action plan)
6. Which documents are used by the Council to regulate its work?

Mechanisms

7. How does the Council work?
8. How would you evaluate these working mechanisms?
9. What should be changed to increase the efficiency of work? (Deepening: legislation, communication, etc.)
10. How are decisions made by the Council? What is to improve in this direction?

Issues Discussed and Decisions made

11. What main issues are discussed by the Council?
12. How are these issues selected? (Deepening: how do regional strategies and action plans impact on process of developing meeting agendas)
13. How do the Council session preparation work proceeds and what is about the issues defined by agenda before the Council meeting?
14. How are the decisions made on each issue?
15. Could you recall the case when negative decision was made? Please, describe this case.

Civic Engagement

16. In general, apart from the Council members, who participates in the Council meeting? Why?
17. Was there any case when NGO representatives participated in the session? Please, describe this case.

18. Was there any case when business sector representatives participated in the session? Please, describe this case.
19. Was there any case when farmers or representatives of cooperatives participated in the session? Please, describe this case.
20. How do you think, how important is it to increase participation of the above mentioned sector representatives in the Council work? Why do you think so?
21. Please, share what mechanisms do you think could make it possible to increase participation of above mentioned representatives.
22. What would be your recommendations to increase efficiency of the Council work?

Thank you!

Annex 4. Participants of the Focus Groups

Kakheti

N	Organization	Representative
1	Young Lawyers Association of Georgia	Marekh Mgaloblishvili
2	Institute of Multiparty Democracy of Netherlands	Nikoloz Sharvashidze
3	World Vision Georgia Programme of Regional Development of Kakheti	Nana Atuashvili
4	Association for Social Protection	Nino Paataashvili
5	Kakheti Regional Development Fund	Iza Bekauri
6	International Organization of Migration	Maka Leonidi
7	Center for Strategic Research and Development (CSRDG)	Levan Rostomashvili
8	Center of Trainings Development and Employment of Telavi	Diana Rinkiashvili
9	Public Defender's Office	Eto Shiukashvili
10	Center of International Education	Sofio Arsenishvili

Mtskheta-Mtianeti

N	Organization	Representative
1	Movement for Sustainable Development of Georgia, Chairman, Mtskheta-Mtianeti Center for Regional Development	Shalva Givishvili
2	Anti-Violence Network of Georgia, Head of the Mtskheta-Mtianeti Committee	Tamar Maisuradze
3	Rural Communities Development Agency, Director	Rostom Gamisonia
4	Dusheti Development Fund, Chairwoman	Ekaterine Rostiashvili
5	Energy-Efficiency Fund, Chairman	Vakhtang Zarkua
6	"Amagdari" Associate Supporting Women's Employment in Georgia, Chairwoman	Nino Shioshvili
7	Center for Civil Society and Democracy Development, President	Irma Aslanishvili
8	Social Solidarity, Executive Director	Mariami Givishvili
9	Social Solidarity, Projects Manager	Guri Salukvadze
10	Women for Women, Head	Ekaterine Orjonikidze
11	Network of Environmental Organizations "CENN", Regional coordinator	Giorgi Ioramashvili
12	Center of Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development, Head of Tourism Division	Lali Revia

Imereti

N	Organization	Representative
1	EDEC	Maka Chinijishvili
2	Women Entrepreneur Fund	Inga Maghlaferidze
3	World Vision	Devi Chonadze
4	GYLA	Zaal Gorgidze
5	GYLA	Nodar Jikia
6	RICDOG	Ekaterine Machukhashvili
7	Coalition for Access to Healthcare	Rusudan Khachapuridze
8	Apkhazkonti	Zinaida Dikhaminjia

Annex 5. Issues Discussed at the Council Sessions in Regard with Strategic Priorities

Table 1. Number of Issues Considered at the Council Meetings in Regard with the Strategic Goals of Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region

Strategic Goals	Frequency of Considered Issues on the Council Meetings
Environmental protection, sustainable environmental balance	1
Building regional innovative (cluster) sustainable development system	0
Establish investment policy and support for expert oriented small and medium businesses	1
Agricultural development	4
Sustainable development of tourism	1
Supporting innovative fields of economy and attracting investments	1
Improving excess to education, culture and sports	0
Improving services of healthcare and social protection	0
Improving transportation services	0
Developing social and utility infrastructure	15
Development of regional and municipal governance and self-governance	0

Table 2. Number of issues discussed at the Council Meetings in Regard with Strategic Goals of the Imereti Development Strategy

Strategic Goals	Frequency of Considered Issues on the Council Meetings
Establishing management system oriented on the needs of population of the region	0
Development of basic infrastructure and improvement of public services	15
Healthy, secure and socially developed society	0
Development of education, culture and sports	0
Integration of different interest groups of the regional population with regional development	0
Ecologically clean, secure and sustainable environmental development	1
Support business development and attract innovations	2
Support entrepreneurship	0
Improvement of agricultural infrastructure	2
Increase of agricultural production and productivity	2
Rural development	0
Development of tourism infrastructure of Imereti and improvement of services for tourists	1
Creation of tourism products and popularization of region's touristic possibilities	1
Strengthening cooperation of Imereti with other regions of Georgia, improving international connections	1

Table 3. Number of Issues Discussed at the Council Meetings in Regard with Strategic Goals of Kakheti Development Strategy

Strategic Goals	Frequency of Considered Issues on the Council Meetings
1. Improve quality of all types of agricultural lands	0
2. Increase of export potential of winery	0
3. Development of winery by stimulating small and medium entrepreneurs	0
4. Growing capacity and quality of cereals 5. Development of vegetable-cultivated crops	0
7. Further development of fruit industry 8. Increase honey production 9. Livestock: improvement of quality and development of production 10. Poultry	0
11. Geographical availability of agricultural machinery 12. Melioration	2
13. Development of non-agricultural production potential	0
14. Tourism development	0
15. Regional development by attracting investments	0
16. Supply of high quality drinking water to the population and building the sewage system for residential houses	11
17. Increase effectiveness of water supply and waste management	
18. Supply of natural gas for population	
19. Rehabilitation of internal roads and drainage channels	
20. Improve street lightening system in the region	
21. Provide internet for the population	0
22. Dismissal of natural landfills and organization of management of waste	0
23. Creating spatial-territorial plans for future development of the region	0
24. Maintaining forest and biodiversity in keeping with inventory and biodiversity	0
25. Improve the effectiveness of the management of protected areas and increase their tourism potential	0
26. Improvement of atmospheric air management effectiveness by control and preventing pollution	0
27. Improve the effectiveness of natural disaster management and prevention	0
28. Improvement of environmental management by raising the level of environmental education; 29. Introduction of renewable and alternative Energy 30. Improve the quality of life of the population by improving municipal healthcare programs; 31. Rehabilitation of outpatients; 32. Improvement of contractual mechanisms and provision of specialized doctors for improvement of hospitals	0
33. Increase the effectiveness of higher and professional education by harmonizing it with labor market; 34. Improvement of pre-school and secondary education by rehabilitation of kindergartens and schools.	0
35. Improve the effectiveness of education through the introduction of inclusive and informal teaching	0
36. Improvement of demographic conditions by suspending migration, promotion of birth and family assistance	0
37. Increasing employment by raising qualifications, creation of new jobs in agriculture and tourism by establishing professional associations	0