

## **Report of Georgia on the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace**

Georgia is multilingual country, therefore the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia with different governmental bodies aims at creation of a single civic society where ethnic and language minorities will be indivisible part of it. In this regard, knowledge and access to internet applications becomes more and more important, as it is a tool to create and use multilingual educational, cultural and scientific context in digital format being one of the utmost important factors of realization of fundamental rights. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is well aware of the importance of creation of multilingual cyberspace as the means to assist civic integration process of our citizens.

Georgia has significant achievements concerning development of Electronic Democracy in the sphere of education. We witness considerable increase in users of IT Technologies, data keeping, transferring speed, volume, capacity and quality. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia applies IT Technologies to the different programs implemented by the Ministry.

To improve universal access to cyberspace for language minorities the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia carries out special programs. In this regard, School Computerization Program "Deer Leap" could be considered as one of successful programs carried out by the Ministry.

The first stage of the program "Deer Leap" planned to be implemented during 2005-2009 implies:

- Access to modern computers and internet in all schools of Georgia;
- Educational computer programs service support;
- Technical support / service provision;
- Developing ICT skills in pupils as well as in teachers;
- integration of ICT with curriculum;
- Introduction of Educational Management Information System (EMIS) in regional and national level.

During 4 years the program "Deer Leap" will provide all schools of Georgia, including non-Georgian schools, with the computer techniques and will integrate ICT Technologies into teaching process. Nowadays more than 600 schools are provided with 7500 computers. During 4 years 100% of students and 70% of teachers will acquire computer skills; new computer learning software will be elaborated. "Deer Leap" will create a major infrastructure providing permanent IT data base updating of all schools, Georgian as well as non-Georgian ones.

In 2006 230 public schools of Georgia were connected to the internet, financial support was provided by the program, by the end of 2007 single educational internet network will be created in the frames of the program covering all public schools of Georgia, in total 2300 schools. Due to implementation of the program "Deer Leap" every city or village of Georgia will be connected to ICT networking, schools will have the most important role in community centers. Teachers' portal will be created and all teachers throughout the country will have opportunity to

share professional experience with the others. ICT technologies will provide opportunity to establish new contacts, bring together citizens of Georgia speaking in different languages and thus the program "Deer Leap" will play its role in civic integration of the citizens of Georgia.

The program adopted by the Government of Georgia was elaborated within the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia with the participation of Estonian as well as local experts. The program "Deer Leap" was launched in May 2005. Georgian Government undertakes long term financial support from central budget. Program budget for 2007 amounts to 13 million GEL.

In order to improve access to cyberspace for language minorities the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia carries out special programs.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia takes measures to give language minorities of Georgia opportunity to study in their native languages. Relevantly in more than 450 public schools of Georgia out of 2300 language of instruction is not Georgian but Russian, Azerbaijani and Armenian languages. Being a state language, Georgian is an obligatory subject in the abovementioned schools, though state language teaching was not carried out with modern methods. Nowadays the main objective of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is to overcome language isolation of Armenian and Azerbaijani densely populated regions of Georgia and provide relevant state language teaching in the frames of school curriculum in order to give opportunity to youth to be fully integrated in civic life. In this regard, in the frames of special programs of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, trainings are carried out for teachers of Georgian and native languages (Azerbaijani and Armenian), native language standards as well as new standard for Georgian as a second language had been prepared for pupils of Armenian and Azerbaijani origin. Based on this standard, Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, in the frames of special purpose program, elaborated new Georgian language learning textbook "Tavtavi", implying the methods of second language teaching. The textbook was based on the criteria of language knowledge levels defined by European Council Programs "European Language Portfolio" and "Unified European Recommendation Frame for Foreign Language Teaching, Learning and Evaluation". "Tavtavi" will be issued in five books, implying five levels. Nowadays pupils have already learnt first book (first level) and begun learning the second book. The books are given free to all up to 35 000 pupils of VII-VIX forms and their teachers. Such activities are very important as non-Georgian schools should be prepared for 2009-2010 years, when they will be shifted to bilingual teaching model implying studying Georgian language and literature as well as history of Georgia and geography in Georgian language.

New method of language learning and development of modern ICT technologies created opportunities of their integration and usage for multilingual education goals. In result, according to "Tavtavi" elaboration of State Language distant learning course began on the basis of "Deer Leap". In March, this year, interested persons will have opportunity to be registered for distant learning courses. The course will assist all persons who reveal interest in Georgian language learning. This course will be additional resource for school pupils and effective way to learn the language - for adults. The course will be guided by the tutor, providing qualified recommendations to language learners.

Naturally, ICT resources of "Deer Leap" were first of all addressed to the ethno-linguistic minorities of Georgia. But the nearest goal of the program is to satisfy increasing interest of all pupils of Georgia in western European languages. "Deer Leap" will purchase and paste the newest educational programs to provide youth with the English, French, German, Russian language educational materials as pupils have opportunity to choose two of abovementioned languages in the frames of national curriculum. One language is an obligatory to be chosen for applicants willing to be enrolled in higher educational institutions via Unified National Examinations. This increases the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia to provide pupils with opportunities to learn languages.

"Deer Leap" provides opportunity for pupils to participate in different competitions envisaging organization, design and pasting digital materials in internet. This year "Deer Leap" encouraged pupils' multilingual interest with one rhyme translation competition. One rhyme for one language: English, French, German, Azerbaijani and Armenian was chosen for undergraduate students to be translated. More than 500 participated in the competition. The best translations were pasted on "Deer Leap" web-page.

In 2006 Georgia became strategic and international partner of Global Gateway, initiated by the Government of Great Britain. Global Gateway network covers 59 countries from 5 continents. The program promotes school partnership development via Internet and ICT Technologies. Public schools of Georgia have opportunities to search partner schools in Great Britain as well as in different countries, get to know the best examples of introducing ICT Technologies in learning process and electronic educational recourses, elaborate educational programs and lesson planning, hold virtual conferences and etc. Evidently such partnership projects will make language learning process more active.

Though creation of Educational Cyberspace and its usage in educational purposes has just begun in Georgia, but increasing interest of youth and mobilized state resources make good conditions for successful implementation of such goals.