

Trade access and certification support programme for  
SMEs through co-financing of certification, accreditation,  
and/or licensing

## Background

Over the past decades, Georgia has made significant strides in positioning itself as a dynamic, open, and business-friendly economy. Strategic reforms in governance, trade liberalization, and regional integration have created a favorable environment for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow, innovate, and compete internationally. However, despite notable progress in trade diversification and private sector development, many Georgian SMEs still face substantial challenges in accessing foreign markets — particularly in the European Union (EU).

As a signatory of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), Georgia enjoys preferential access to the EU single market — one of the largest and most lucrative in the world. Yet, translating this access into tangible export success remains a complex task for many Georgian enterprises. Barriers such as limited knowledge of EU regulations and standards, insufficient connections with potential buyers or partners, and a lack of market-specific expertise continue to impede SME internationalization.

Funded by the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme Georgia, in partnership with the Estonian Centre for International Development, implements a project “Inclusive Access to Markets” (IA2M), aiming at improving inclusive access to EU (primarily) markets of Georgian SMEs with strengthened value chains. The project provides financial and technical assistance to Georgian SMEs, helping them become exporters to the EU and European countries’ markets. The IA2M project also intends to boost export trade deals with EU and European countries through improved lead generation and empower Georgian SMEs to become exporters to the EU and European countries’ markets.

The Project addresses the following objectives that are interlinked and delivered as an integrated package of services:

1. Increased export of Georgian SMEs to the EU (primarily) but also to the European countries’ markets.
2. Strengthened value chains with strong growth and export potential

One of the key challenges faced by Georgian small and medium-sized businesses is compliance with international standards and obtaining the necessary certifications, which are vital for expanding sales in EU and other European markets.

To address this challenge and facilitate the growth of export-oriented SMEs on the EU and other European markets, the proposal is to develop and implement the ‘Trade access and certification support programme’.

This initiative will provide co-finance assistance to enterprises to introduce international standards, obtain international quality certificates and accreditations, and secure product licenses that are required for exporting to the EU and European countries and are in line with their export plans. Through co-finance support, SMEs can potentially receive co-finance funding associated with services provided for the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing of the products or enterprise itself. The amount of UNDP co-finance is set as no more than 3,500 USD per SME. In total, it is expected that at least 40 SMEs will benefit from this programme.

## Program overview

The primary objective of this initiative is to support Georgian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in obtaining international certifications, accreditations, and product licenses that align with recognized global standards. The programme is designed to improve SMEs' global competitiveness, facilitate market diversification, and promote exports to the European Union (EU) and other European markets.

Participating SMEs will have the opportunity to apply for co-financing support to meet international compliance requirements necessary for exporting, including the implementation of quality standards, certification (incl. re-certification), accreditation, and product licensing. **Each approved application may receive up to 3,500 USD.** This financial assistance will help mitigate the costs and risks associated with international market entry. **To be eligible for support, each beneficiary must contribute at least 10% of the total project cost in monetary form.** In-kind contributions or non-monetary resources will not be accepted as part of the SME's co-financing.

The programme will announce open calls for applications inviting eligible SMEs to submit proposals. Multiple calls may be announced throughout the implementation period; in each call, approximately 5–15 SMEs will be selected, for an overall total of around 40 programme beneficiaries. Each SME may apply only once per funding cycle. Approved applicants are eligible for a maximum of one co-financing per calendar year, subject to budget availability and performance under the program.

To qualify, an applicant must meet the criteria for small or medium-sized enterprises as defined by the National Statistics Office of Georgia:

- Small enterprise: Fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover not exceeding 12 million GEL.
- Medium enterprise: Fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover not exceeding 60 million GEL.

Interested small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) shall identify a suitable certification, accreditation, and/or licensing service provider that fits their specific needs and target export market(s). Then, applicant shall obtain and submit a detailed service proposal/quotation/proforma invoice from the selected service provider, clearly outlining the scope of work, objectives, timeline, and total cost of the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing procedures. In addition, a separate quotation or proforma invoice must be submitted indicating the portion of the service cost (clearly outlining the scope of work, objectives, timeline) that the SME requests to be financed by UNDP.

SMEs may utilize additional funding or grants received from other donors or public agencies for the same purpose. However, at least 10% of the total project value must be self-financed by the SME. For example, if implementing an international quality standard costs \$5,000 and UNDP provides \$3,500, the SME may secure \$1,000 from other sources, but the remaining \$500 (10%) must be funded by the SME itself. No funds will be disbursed unless the 10% self-contribution is verified. Proof of the applicant's planned financial contribution may include a bank statement confirming sufficient funds, a certificate from a bank or microfinance institution confirming credit approval, and/or other documentation demonstrating an alternative source of co-financing.

Under this program, beneficiary SMEs will not receive direct financial transfers. Instead, UNDP will disburse the approved co-financed amount directly to the certification, accreditation, or licensing service provider. The disbursement may occur during the start of implementation period of the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing procedures, or after their completion, once the relevant certificate, accreditation, or license has been issued. **However, the disbursement will only be made once the SME has paid its share of the service fee, which must be at least 10% of the total cost.**

Within the scope of activities covered by this programme, an enterprise may obtain the following types of certifications, licenses and/or other relevant accreditations:

- ISO 9001
- ISO 14001
- ISO 22000
- Preparation of technical documentation for CE marking
- Implementation of the BSCI (Business Social Compliance Initiative) social compliance standard
- Other relevant certifications, licenses and/or accreditations

### **Stages of programme participation**

When participating in the programme, a potential beneficiary/SME will go through the following stages:

- **Application submission:** Submission of an electronic application for participation in the programme.
- **Administrative review:** Review of the application to determine whether the applicant meets the programme's eligibility requirements, and to confirm the accuracy of the information provided.
- **Technical assessment:** Evaluation of the application and decision-making on whether to provide co-financing support to the selected business entity.
- **Implementation:** Implementation of the co-financed project and planned activities.
- **Completion and reporting:** Submission of the required reporting and documentation confirming the successful completion of procedures and issuance of the relevant certificate/accreditation/license.

A final decision on applications will be made by a special committee established within the framework of the programme. The committee's mandate and composition are determined by UNDP.

The duration of all implementation activities related to certifications, licenses, and/or accreditations per SME must not exceed 18 months. After completing the engagement, the beneficiary SME must submit all documentation confirming the successful completion of procedures and the issuance of the relevant certificates and/or licenses within 18 months of the date of evaluation decision. These submissions must be reviewed and formally accepted by UNDP before the grant case can be officially closed.

To promote inclusivity and local participation, the program will work in close coordination with Georgian civil society organizations (CSOs), chambers of commerce, and business associations. These partners play a key role in mobilizing local SMEs, raising awareness about the program, and guiding potential applicants through the preparation process.

## Eligibility requirements for SMEs

A business entity willing to participate in the programme shall meet all of the following eligibility requirements:

1. An applicant (a business entity wishing to participate in the programme) is a natural person or legal entity registered in Georgia at least 1 year prior to submitting an application to the Programme (registered in accordance with Georgian legislation) and produces goods and/or provides services on the territory of Georgia.
2. At least 50% of the applicant's owner(s) shares is/are Georgian citizen-resident natural persons(s) and/or resident legal entity(ies) of Georgia.
3. The applicant's annual income for the last year must exceed 50,000 GEL but be under 60 million GEL. As proof of its annual income, the applying entity shall submit duly certified financial statements (income statement) and/or an audit report.
4. The applicant shall not represent a legal entity created through direct or indirect shareholding by the state and/or municipality, as well as JSC Partnership Fund.
5. The applicant shall not be registered in the Register of Debtors.
6. The applicant shall not be subject to any insolvency, liquidation, bankruptcy or similar proceedings (in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Rehabilitation and the Collective Satisfaction of Creditors' Claims).
7. The applicant shall submit a fully completed application (also upload the documentation to support the required information), and the information provided in the application must be accurate and truthful.

## Types of eligible economic activities for the programme

### Food and Beverage Processing Sector

The programme provides support to enterprises operating in the **food and beverage processing sector** and producing goods in Georgia, in accordance with section C of the "National Classification of Economic Activities of Georgia" Rev. 2<sup>1</sup>:

- Section 10: Manufacture of food products;
- Section 11: Manufacture of beverages;

**Note:** The Programme does not cover primary production in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries (Section A; National Classification of Economic Activities of Georgia, Rev.2), such as crop and animal production, hunting, forestry and logging, fishing, aquaculture, and related activities.

### Service Sector

The programme supports to business entities that operate in the following **service sectors** according to the "National Classification of Economic Activities of Georgia, Rev.2"<sup>2</sup>:

---

<sup>1</sup> National Classification of Economic Activities of Georgia, Rev. 2 [https://www.geostat.ge/media/70150/NACE-Rev\\_2\\_GE\\_2023.pdf](https://www.geostat.ge/media/70150/NACE-Rev_2_GE_2023.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> National Classification of Economic Activities of Georgia, Rev. 2 [https://www.geostat.ge/media/70150/NACE-Rev\\_2\\_GE\\_2023.pdf](https://www.geostat.ge/media/70150/NACE-Rev_2_GE_2023.pdf)

- Section J: Information and Communication;
- Section M: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Activities;
- Section N: Administrative and Support Service Activities: Division 78 Employment Activities, and Division 82 Office Administrative, Office Support, and Other Business Support Activities;
- Section P: Education;
- Section Q: Human Health and Social Work Activities: Division 86 Human Health Activities;
- Section R: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (excluding Division 92 Gambling Activities).

**Note:** The Programme does not apply to the activities in the tourism sector.

**Note:** Adjustments to the list of eligible economic activities may be introduced during the programme's implementation.

## Submission of applications

The Programme will issue open Calls for Applications inviting eligible SMEs to submit proposals. Multiple calls may be announced throughout the implementation period; in each call, approximately 5–15 SMEs will be selected, for an overall total of around 40 programme beneficiaries.

Applications for participation in the programme must be submitted within the timeframe specified in the Programme announcement. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed.

### Application form and supporting documents

To participate in the Programme, applicants must electronically submit the following documents, including all duly completed annexes:

- Completed application form (in English)
- Extract from the Registry of Entrepreneurs and Non-Entrepreneurial (Non-Commercial) Legal Entities
- Financial statement (income statement) for the last year, duly certified by an authorized person and/or an audit report (to confirm annual income).
- Detailed service proposal/quotation/proforma invoice (in English, in USD) from the selected service provider, outlining the scope of work, objectives, timeline, and total cost for the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing procedures.
- Quotation/proforma invoice for the portion of the service (in English, in USD) the SME requests to be financed by UNDP (outlining the scope of work, objectives, and timeline).
- Proof of applicant's financial contribution (in USD) (e.g., a bank statement confirming sufficient funds in the account, a certificate from a bank/microfinance organization confirming credit approval, and/or other documentation confirming an alternative source of co-financing).
- (Optional) Documentation confirming additional funding or grants received from other donors or public agencies for the same purpose (if any).
- Other documentation, if requested

The applicant must quote the cost of services in the USD. The co-financing amount will also be paid in USD.

**Note:** the amount of UNDP co-finance is set as no more than 3,500 USD per SME. Additionally, the SME must provide at least 10% co-financing for the requested service.

## Evaluation of applications

### **Administrative review: eligibility and application completeness check**

The first step involves an initial assessment to determine whether the applicants (potential beneficiaries) meet the programme's eligibility requirements, as well as to verify the completeness of their applications and the accuracy of the information provided. For verification purposes, UNDP reserves the right to request clarifications and/or additional information.

Applications that pass this administrative review, meet all eligibility criteria, and submit complete documentation will be shortlisted for further evaluation.

### **Technical assessment: evaluation of the application and decision-making on the co-financing support**

All applications evaluations and the final decision whether to approve or reject them will be made by a designated committee. The committee's mandate and composition are determined by UNDP.

Committee members have the right to request clarifications or additional information. The committee may make a decision with specific preconditions, which will be communicated to the beneficiaries in advance.

The evaluation committee will assess application according to the following criteria:

	Criteria	Criteria description	Maximum score
1.	<b>Applicant profile and understanding of target export market(s)</b>	The applicant clearly outlines its core business activities, including the main products or services, years of operation, and relevant export experience. It identifies up to three specific target markets the company aims to enter or expand into within the next 18 months.	15
2.	<b>Relevance and justification of the requested support</b>	The application clearly explains which certification, accreditation, and/or license is being pursued and why it is essential for the company's export development. The support is well-justified, showing how it will contribute to increasing competitiveness and facilitating access to new international markets. The proposal is technically sound, coherent, and aligned with the objectives of the support programme	30
3.	<b>Credibility of the selected certification, accreditation, or licensing provider</b>	The applicant provides accurate and complete information about the selected certification/accreditation/licensing service provider, including the provider's reputation, relevant experience, and contact information. The service	15

	Criteria	Criteria description	Maximum score
		provider is credible and appropriate for the planned activity.	
4.	<b>Organizational preparedness and management capacity</b>	The applicant demonstrates readiness to implement the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing procedures. The proposed timeline is realistic, and there is a clear assignment of responsibilities within the organization (e.g., designated staff or team managing the process). The organization shows adequate operational capacity and project management arrangements.	15
5.	<b>Budget justification and financial coherence</b>	The budget is realistic and aligned with the scope of the requested support. The applicant provides a clear breakdown of total costs, the portion requested for UNDP co-financing, the SME's own contribution, and any other sources of funding.	15
6.	<b>Overall assessment: completeness, structure, consistency of the application</b>	The application is well-structured, internally consistent, and complete. All required documentation is submitted, and the information provided is clear, truthful, and supports the overall proposal.	10
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>Max. 100</b>

All decisions on the selection of beneficiaries will be made approximately within 4 weeks following the application submission deadline. An evaluation report will be prepared for each application.

A positive decision will be made if the application meets the following conditions:

- ✓ The applicant receives at least 50% of the maximum score for each evaluation criterion and a total score of 70% or higher.
- ✓ The total cost of the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing service, the SME's financial contribution, and the portion requested to be co-financed by UNDP are in line with the programme's funding requirements.

Each call is expected to support approximately 5–15 SMEs, depending on budget availability and programme performance. In cases where multiple applications receive the same score, priority will be given to those submitted earlier, in line with a first-come, first-served approach.

SMEs whose applications receive a positive decision and are approved by the programme's evaluation committee will be formally notified of the decision in writing.



## Beneficiary responsibilities, participation terms and monitoring procedures

- The beneficiary has a duty to ensure necessary conditions for conducting the field/documentary monitoring by the UNDP or/and an external audit company.
- The beneficiary shall provide the UNDP with accurate, timely, and complete information about the implemented project for monitoring and control purposes.
- The beneficiary has a duty to allow the UNDP to draft and publish stories, photographs and video materials about the co-financed project and the beneficiary experience.
- The beneficiary shall not hinder the monitoring and evaluation activities conducted by the UNDP or third parties designated by them for a period of 2 years after project completion.
- The beneficiary is obliged to mention the EU and the UNDP as supporting organizations in communication channels used for project-related matters for 1 year from the start of the co-financing project contract.
- The beneficiary is obliged to submit all the necessary information (in a timely, accurate, and complete manner) within 14 calendar days of the request for information.

### **Conflict of Interests**

A potential beneficiary of the programme will not be eligible for co-financing under the programme if the beneficiary or its founder/shareholder/cooperative shareholder owns a share/stock/cooperative share in a company that supplies goods/services to them within the framework of the programme.

### **Procurement Procedures, Fraud, and Corruption**

According to the Programme requirements, beneficiaries must adhere to the highest ethical standards from the beginning of their involvement in the Programme until the fulfilment of their obligations. The terms below shall have the following meanings: (1) “Corruption” means offering, giving, receiving or soliciting, directly or indirectly, any item of value to influence the actions of another party; (2) “Fraud” means intentional or negligent omission or misrepresentation of facts by a party in order to obtain financial or other gains or to avoid an obligation; (3) “Collusion” means a secret deal between two or more parties, knowingly or unknowingly, aimed at achieving an unlawful purpose, which also includes exerting harmful influence on the actions of a third party; (4) “Coercion” means to harm, or a threat to harm the people or their assets, directly or indirectly, in order to influence their participation in the procurement or project implementation; (5) “Obstruction” means: (1) deliberately destroying, falsifying, altering, or concealing evidence for investigation, or giving false testimony to impede an investigation related to corruption, fraud, conspiracy, or violence; and/or intimidating or threatening any party that has helpful information for the investigation, to prevent the disclosure of this information, or (2) actions that significantly impede the exercise of the inspection and audit rights.

### **Consent to the Terms and Conditions of the Programme**

When submitting an application, a potential beneficiary expresses consent to the following:

- The information provided in the application is accurate and truthful.
- The applicant is familiar with the announced terms and conditions of the Programme, eligibility criteria, requirements, and stages for Programme participation.

- The applicant is not subject to any insolvency, liquidation, bankruptcy or similar proceedings (in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Rehabilitation and the Collective Satisfaction of Creditors' Claims.
- The beneficiary consents that the UNDP and its partner organization are authorized, at any time, without prior notice, to verify any information specified in the application through third parties and/or using other existing sources.
- The beneficiary agrees that the UNDP and the UNDP's partner organization may, in accordance with established legal procedures, without limitations and at any time, search for, receive, and/or process information about the beneficiary available in the JSC CreditInfo Georgia database, in order to establish the beneficiary is fulfilling its credit obligations in good faith within the framework of the Programme.
- If it is established that information specified in the application or some of its part is inaccurate, whether due to intentional/negligent provision of incorrect information by the applicant and/or due to reasons associated with the third party, the Programme reserves the right to make a negative decision unconditionally and to disqualify the applicant.
- If the UNDP incurs material and/or non-material, direct and/or indirect damages due to incorrect information provided in the application by the applicant, the applicant assumes full responsibility for such damages.
- The UNDP shall not be held responsible for any direct/indirect costs associated with filling out the application form, preparing accompanying documentation, and/or submitting the application for participation in the Programme.
- The application cannot be perceived by the applicant and/or any other interested party as any form of direct/indirect commitment taken by the UNDP.

### **Reporting and Monitoring**

The UNDP conducts document-based monitoring of the programme in accordance with its established procedures. The UNDP is authorized to monitor the purposefulness of co-financing expenditure and the programme progress at any time, without prior notice, either personally or through an independent specialist/expert/auditor. This includes, but is not limited to, collecting information through electronic communication means and face-to-face meetings, as well as conducting on-site inspection of the beneficiary's activities, and reviewing project-related documents.

### **Personal Data Protection**

By participating in the program announced within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme, you consent to the collection, processing, and storage of personal data. This data may include, but is not limited to, name, surname, age, gender, registration number, phone number, email address, audiovisual materials, and location data, among other. Your personal data will be used solely for the purpose of implementing the mission and mandate of the United Nations Development Programme. The protection of personal data will be ensured by the participating parties in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Law of Georgia on Personal Data Protection <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/document/view/5827307?publication=3>

## Annex 1 – Application form

### 1. Primary contact person

1.1. Name	
1.2. Surname	
1.3. Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male
1.4. Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 14-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 30+
1.5. Current position at the enterprise	
1.6. Telephone number	
1.7. E-mail	
1.8. Additional contact person, his/her telephone number and e-mail	

### 2. Background information of the SME

2.1. SME name in Georgian	
2.2. SME name in English	
2.3. Brand name in Georgian <sup>4</sup>	
2.4. Brand name in English	
2.5. Website and/or a social network URL (if any)	
2.6. Legal status	
2.7. Identification number	
2.8. Date of registration	
2.9. 4-digit code of business activity and category, based on “National Classification of Economic Activities of Georgia, Rev 2” <sup>5</sup>	
2.10. Please indicate the number of employees in your enterprise over the last year	<input type="checkbox"/> 250 or more employees <input type="checkbox"/> 50 to 250 employees <input type="checkbox"/> 10 to 50 employees <input type="checkbox"/> Fewer than 10 employees
2.11. Please indicate the average annual revenue of your enterprise for the last year	<input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds 60 million GEL <input type="checkbox"/> 12 million GEL - 60 million GEL <input type="checkbox"/> 2 million GEL - 12 million GEL <input type="checkbox"/> 300,000 GEL - 2 million GEL <input type="checkbox"/> 50,000 GEL - 300,000 GEL

---

<sup>4</sup> The name under which a company operates in the market and which is associated with products/services created by the company for its customers

<sup>5</sup> National Classification of Economic Activities of Georgia, Rev 2 [https://www.geostat.ge/media/70150/NACE-Rev\\_2\\_GE\\_2023.pdf](https://www.geostat.ge/media/70150/NACE-Rev_2_GE_2023.pdf)

2.12. Name and surname of the main authorized person / director	
2.13. Sex of the main authorized person / director	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male
2.14. Age of the main authorized person / director	<input type="checkbox"/> 14-29 <input type="checkbox"/> 30+
2.15. Phone number of the main authorized person / director	
2.16. E-mail of the main authorized person / director	
2.17. Legal address of the enterprise (region, municipality, city, street)	
2.18. Physical address of the enterprise (region, municipality, city, street)	
2.19. Please list shareholders (owners) and their respective ownership shares (%)	

### 3. Information about the SME activities and the requested support

3.1 Brief description of business activities: What is your main field of activity? What goods and/or services do you produce, and how long have you been engaged in this activity? (no more than 150 words)	
3.2 Have you exported goods and/or services during the last 3 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.3 If you have exported goods/services during the last 3 years, please indicate the export country/ies	
3.4 Approximately what percentage of your revenue comes from exports?	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 50% <input type="checkbox"/> 20% - 50% <input type="checkbox"/> 5% - 20% <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5% <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have any exports
3.5 Have you participated in international trade shows during the last 3 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.6 Does your enterprise currently hold any international quality standard(s), certification(s), accreditation(s), and/or license(s) for its goods and/or services? If yes, please specify the relevant certificate(s) or documentation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3.7 In which target export market(s) do you plan to start and/or continue exports during the next 18 months? Please name a maximum of 3 target countries	
3.8 Which certification, accreditation, and/or license do you plan to acquire, and why are they necessary or indispensable for your business? (no more than 150 words)	

3.9	Please provide information about the appropriate company/organization from which you intend to acquire certification, accreditation, and/or licensing services. Include the website, a brief description of the company and its activities, and contact details (name, position, email, telephone) (no more than 150 words)	
3.10	How will this certification, accreditation, and/or licensing improve your export potential and support entry into new international markets? (no more than 150 words)	
3.11	<p>Please provide information about the costs associated with the requested support, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) the total cost of the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing – invoice from supplier company on total costs (outlining the scope of work, objectives, timeline, and total cost for services).</li> <li>(2) the portion of the cost the SME requests to be co-financed by UNDP - invoice from supplier on portion of services and relevant costs (and outlining the scope of work, objectives, timeline).</li> <li>(3) the portion to be covered by the SME as its financial contribution – e.g., a bank statement confirming sufficient funds in the account, a certificate from a bank/microfinance organization confirming credit approval, and/or other documentation confirming an alternative source of co-financing.</li> <li>(4) the source of any additional funding (if applicable), including grants or support received from other donors or public agencies for the same purpose.</li> </ul>	
3.12	Please describe your company's capacity and readiness to effectively implement the certification, accreditation, and/or licensing procedures. What is the anticipated timeline for the process? Do you have a designated employee or team responsible for managing the process? (no more than 150 words)	
3.13	Additional information (optional): Use this section to provide any other information you consider relevant. (no more than 150 words)	