



Georgia: “Public Service Halls”, placing innovation at the service of citizens

After the 2003 Rose Revolution, in order to shore up its authority, the new Georgian government launched major reforms. These reforms notably involved public administration, which suffered from numerous difficulties that had fuelled the political crisis: corruption, a bloated public sector, unmotivated and poorly paid civil servants, a lack of transparency, etc.¹ The measures implemented led to a considerable improvement in this small country of 3.7 million inhabitants, which now ranks No. 1 in the region for governance.² They also transformed the business climate, with Georgia ranking a very good 16th in the World Bank's 2017 *Ease of Doing Business* report (vs. a rank of 112th in 2005).³ In addition to a fierce anti-corruption drive, these reforms included the creation of “Public Service Halls” (PSHs). In 2012, the United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) was given to the Public Service Halls of Georgia.⁴

Eradicating corruption and red tape to provide better services for the public

In 2004, the new Georgian government tackled many challenges. Firstly, a large number of measures were implemented to eradicate endemic corruption and bureaucratic red tape. In 1999, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Georgia was one of the most corrupt countries in the world, ranking 84th worldwide (it currently ranks 44th out of 176 countries).⁵ According to a World Bank report, “To obtain a passport, citizens went to one office, only to be sent to another to get proof of residency before returning to the first office to stand in line for hours to bribe some official just to do his or her job.”⁶

Other major projects were launched: improvements in tax collection, land registry management, customs and traffic police, as well as the creation of entrance exams to attend university or be hired in local government.⁷ Also during Mikheil Saakashvili's term as president,⁸ biometric passports were introduced, police officers were given iPads so that they could identify criminals immediately while on patrol, and the payment system was entirely overhauled, with payment boxes set up so that people could pay their taxes and telephone bills, buy train tickets or settle gambling debts. However, the most emblematic reform was the creation of the Public Service Halls, based on the one-stop shop principle.⁹

¹ http://sympa-by.eu/sites/default/files/library/evaluation_of_the_process_of_public_administration_reform.pdf

² <http://www.coface.com/fr/Etudes-economiques-et-risque-pays/Georgie>

³ <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Ressources/Pays/georgie>

⁴ <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/georgia-public-service-halls/>

⁵ <https://www.transparency.org/country/GEO>

⁶ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/518301468256183463/Fighting-corruption-in-public-services-chronicling-Georgias-reforms>

⁷ https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/ALB/UNDP_Best%20Practices%20Report_PwC%20-%20final.pdf

⁸ The President of Georgia from 20 January 2008 to 17 November 2013.

⁹ Several countries have created one-stop shops, including: New Zealand (Service Centres), Germany (Bürgerbüros or citizens' offices) and the Czech Republic (Integrated Service Points). Georgia implemented a modified version of the one-stop shop.

The Ministry of Justice, a pioneer in administrative reform, spearheaded the one-stop shop projects

The Georgian Ministry of Justice spearheaded this reform. The first step was the creation of the National Agency of Public Registry in charge of recording property ownership and updating the land registry. The second step was the Civil Registry Agency in 2006. This agency is in charge of issuing passports, registering citizens and other services related to civil status. These new agencies replaced various government departments that were notoriously inefficient. Several measures coincided with the creation of these new agencies: legislation was streamlined, human resources management improved and new services launched, integrating new information technologies and developing infrastructures.¹⁰

The Public Service Hall: a high-performance “supermarket of public services”¹¹

In 2011, The Ministry of Justice decided to create PSHs¹² to bring the various one-stop shops together in a single location, making it easier for citizens to carry out their administrative tasks.¹³ The National Agency of Public Registry and the Civil Registry Agency served as models for the entire country. Other agencies joined them: the National Archives, the National Bureau of Enforcement and the Notary Chamber of Georgia. At Public Service Halls, up to 400 different administrative tasks can be carried out, including getting a driving licence, obtaining civil status documents, signing powers of attorney, registering companies, managing alimony payments, etc.¹⁴

The PSHs (which numbered 19 as of January 2018) provide “front office” services, helping meet citizens' needs as closely as possible, while government agencies fulfil the “back office” tasks. Applying a “customer service” approach, they provide services in very modern, comfortable and welcoming buildings.¹⁵ In a single day, around 10,000 “transactions” are conducted for 23,000 users. The average waiting time is 3-4 minutes, and each “transaction” or service operation takes 7 minutes on average.¹⁶

There are three different service areas: “quick”, “long” and self-service. In the quick service area, citizens can access services provided within two minutes: obtaining ID card or passport receipts, birth or marriage certificates, property or company registration certificates. In the long service area, administrative procedures are provided within five minutes.

The goal was then to broaden the range of services available to citizens. In 2012, two major innovations were launched: Just Drive and Just Café. A Georgian citizen can now renew his or her passport at a drive-through window, or while having a coffee.¹⁷ In 2014, a special area for foreigners was opened after a new immigration law was voted in.¹⁸ Since the end of 2016, a new baby kit has been given to all low-income parents of newborn babies.¹⁹

Beginning in 2012, this principle was implemented locally with the creation of Community Centres (currently 51). Created under a partnership between the Public Service Development Agency (which took over from the Civil Registry Agency), these centres offer services similar to PSHs, along with social and farming services.²⁰

Thanks to the success of the PSHs, Georgia has become a benchmark for many countries:²¹ since 2011, over 700 delegations from 50 countries have come to study the Georgian experience. India, in particular, has shown great interest in Georgia's PSH model.²²

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¹⁰ http://www.academia.edu/30898391/One-Stop-Shop_Public_Service_Delivery_Model_the_Case_of_Georgia.pdf

¹¹ <https://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/13/georgias-new-public-center-is-its-crown-jewel/>

¹² <http://psh.gov.ge/main/news/0/0/17>

¹³ <http://www.justice.gov.ge/Multimedia%2FFiles%2Fanalitikuri%20dep%2FOGP%20Draft%20Self-Assessment%20Report%20ENG.pdf>

¹⁴ https://www.carecprogram.org/uploads/009_103_309_Tbilisi-Public-Service-Hall.pdf

¹⁵ <http://publicservicehall-blog.tumblr.com/>

¹⁶ <http://www.mpc.gov.my/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Fact-Finding-Mission-on-Challenges-and-Best-Practices-of-Georgia-Doing-Business-Improvement-Initiatives-and-Istanbul-Municipality-Courtesy-Visit.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/mandonthierry/status/606116537024577536>

¹⁸ <https://www.georgianjournal.ge/society/28159-new-special-service-for-foreigners-by-georgian-public-service-hall.html>

¹⁹ <http://agenda.ge/news/67938/eng>

²⁰ http://www.academia.edu/30898391/One-Stop-Shop_Public_Service_Delivery_Model_the_Case_of_Georgia.pdf

²¹ <http://www.ebrd.com/news/2015/georgias-public-service-hall-leads-the-way-in-innovation-.html>

²² <http://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/ease-of-doing-business-why-india-should-adopt-a-georgia-like-public-service-hall-model-to-boost-its-smart-city-initiative/693761/>