

BlueDial Project

Activity 1.1 Mapping and Analysis of the Strategic Blue Economy Framework

D1.1 Report on State of the Art

Georgia Country Report

Prepared by:

Tourism Institute

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Introduction

Background and context

The blue economy (BE) has emerged as a strategic policy framework for linking the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources with economic development, environmental protection, and social well-being. In the European policy context, the blue economy is closely associated with integrated maritime governance, cross-sectoral coordination, ecosystem-based management, innovation, and long-term sustainability.¹

For the Black Sea region, this policy agenda is especially relevant because maritime and coastal activities are shared across countries and depend on common ecosystems, transport routes, research cooperation, and regional coordination. The Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea provides the main regional cooperation framework for promoting a sustainable blue economy, with priorities related to healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, innovation, investment, maritime connectivity, skills, and sustainable economic development.²

Georgia is part of this regional context as a Black Sea coastal country. Its coastal tourism activity, maritime transport and logistics functions, fisheries and aquaculture potential, and marine and coastal ecosystems make the blue economy relevant not only as an environmental concept, but also as a framework for economic development, regional cooperation, and institutional coordination.

At the national level, however, blue economy-related activities in Georgia are addressed mainly through separate sectoral policy areas, including tourism, transport and logistics, fisheries, environmental protection, infrastructure, research, and regional development. This makes it important to examine how these sectors are governed, financed, and coordinated, and how far existing national frameworks are aligned with CMA priorities and broader European blue economy approaches.

In this context, the report assesses Georgia's institutional, legal, strategic, financial, and sectoral landscape in order to identify the main strengths, gaps, and opportunities for future blue economy development.

Objectives of the report

The main objective of this report is to provide a state-of-the-art overview of the current blue economy framework in Georgia, with a focus on identifying strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improved policy coherence, institutional coordination, and implementation.

Specifically, the report aims to:

¹ European Commission, *Sustainable Blue Economy*, 2021.

² Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, official website; Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, *About CMA*.

- Map the institutional landscape, identifying key public authorities, research institutions, business support organizations, civil society actors, and transnational cooperation platforms involved in blue economy-related sectors;
- Analyze the legal and strategic framework governing maritime and coastal activities, including the degree of alignment with European and Black Sea regional policies, particularly the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA);
- Review available funding instruments and financial mechanisms supporting blue economy development, including national, EU, international, donor-supported, and private sources;
- Examine key blue economy sectors relevant to Georgia and map the main target groups associated with these sectors, with a focus on their development potential and policy support environment;
- Incorporate stakeholder perspectives through targeted interviews in order to capture practical challenges, coordination issues, implementation barriers, and perceived development priorities;
- Identify key gaps, development potentials, and strategic priorities in governance, policy, funding, and sectoral development, and formulate recommendations to support future blue economy development.

Scope and coverage

This report focuses on the national context of Georgia, while situating the analysis within the broader European Union and Black Sea regional policy frameworks. The assessment covers the institutional, legal, strategic, financial and sectoral dimensions of the blue economy, with particular attention to policy coherence, coordination mechanisms and alignment with Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) priorities.

Given the broad scope of the blue economy, the sectoral analysis is selectively focused on the areas with the highest relevance and development potential for Georgia's Black Sea context, including coastal and maritime tourism, maritime transport, ports and logistics, fisheries and aquaculture, and marine environmental protection and ecosystem management. Emerging and underdeveloped blue economy sectors, including marine renewable energy, marine biotechnology, blue carbon, circular economy initiatives and maritime technologies, are considered at a more general level.

The report is based on a combination of desk research and stakeholder interviews. Desk research includes the review of national legislation, policy documents, strategic frameworks, and relevant international, EU-level and Black Sea regional initiatives. Stakeholder input is collected through interviews with representatives of public institutions, private sector organizations, academia, and civil society.

The analysis aims to support future policy dialogue and more coordinated blue economy development in Georgia by identifying key institutional, legal, financial and sectoral gaps, as well as development potentials and strategic priorities.

1. Institutional Mapping by Country and Sector: Georgia

1.1 National and Regional Authorities (Georgia)

The governance of blue economy-related sectors in Georgia is distributed across several national-level ministries and public agencies, each responsible for specific policy domains relevant to maritime and coastal development.

The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (MoESD) plays a central role in economic policy-making, including oversight of maritime transport, logistics, port development, and tourism. Within its institutional framework, the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) contributes to tourism development and promotion, while the Maritime Transport Agency is responsible for maritime transport regulation, maritime safety, shipping-related functions and port-related regulatory matters.³

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) is responsible for environmental governance, including marine ecosystem protection, fisheries management, biodiversity conservation, water resources management and environmental monitoring. Within its system, the National Environment Agency contributes to environmental monitoring and data collection, while the Agency of Protected Areas is responsible for the management and protection of protected areas relevant to coastal and marine ecosystems.⁴

The Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) is involved in infrastructure planning and development, including regional, coastal and transport infrastructure that supports connectivity and local economic development.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia is involved in blue economy-related research and innovation activities. It has served as the national focal point for the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), which represents the scientific pillar of the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea. Although the SRIA Implementation Plan has already been developed, it remains an important reference framework for continuing Black Sea research and innovation cooperation at the national level. The Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG), operating within this broader education and research system, acts as an important national funding and support body for scientific and analytical projects, including initiatives relevant to blue economy development and CMA-related priorities.⁵

At the subnational level, municipal authorities in coastal regions—particularly in Adjara, Guria, and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti—are responsible for spatial planning, local economic development, tourism management, municipal infrastructure and service provision. However, their role in maritime governance remains largely operational and sector-specific.

The sectoral allocation of responsibilities across key blue economy domains is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Sectoral allocation of responsibilities across key blue economy domains in Georgia

Blue economy domain	Lead institution(s)	Supporting actors	Main responsibilities
Coastal and maritime tourism	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development; Georgian National Tourism Administration	Local authorities; Department of Tourism and Resorts of Adjara A.R.; Tourism Product Development Agency of Adjara	Tourism policy support, destination promotion, tourism product development, destination management, local tourism infrastructure and service provision

³ Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, “Subordinated Agencies,” accessed 16 June 2026, <https://www.economy.ge/?lang=en&page=ssip>.

⁴ Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, “Structure,” accessed 16 June 2026, <https://mepa.gov.ge/En/Structure>.

⁵ Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, “The CMA participates in Launch of Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan,” 9 May 2023, accessed 16 June 2026, <https://black-sea-maritime-agenda.ec.europa.eu/cma-participates-launch-black-sea-sria-implementation-plan>.

Maritime transport, ports and logistics	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development; Maritime Transport Agency	Port operators; logistics companies; relevant infrastructure institutions	Maritime transport regulation, shipping-related functions, maritime safety, port-related regulatory matters, logistics development and international connectivity
Fisheries and aquaculture	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture	Relevant environmental and fisheries units; local actors	Fisheries regulation, licensing, resource management, environmental oversight and implementation of sustainability measures
Marine environmental protection and ecosystem management	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture	National Environment Agency; Agency of Protected Areas	Environmental monitoring, marine and coastal data collection, biodiversity conservation, protected areas management and environmental regulation
Coastal and transport infrastructure	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure	Municipal authorities; infrastructure agencies and project implementation bodies	Regional infrastructure development, coastal and transport infrastructure, connectivity improvement and investment coordination

Source: Author’s compilation based on official institutional mandates and agency descriptions.

This mapping illustrates that blue economy activities in Georgia are governed through distinct institutional channels aligned with sector-specific mandates, rather than through an integrated cross-sectoral framework.

1.2 Research and Academia

The research and academic landscape in Georgia relevant to the blue economy appears to be concentrated mainly within institutions working on environmental sciences, marine ecosystems, maritime education, natural resource management, and sector-specific economic studies.

Key academic and educational institutions include Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) and Ilia State University, which conduct research in environmental studies, biodiversity, and natural resource management. In addition, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University (BSU), Batumi State Maritime Academy (BSMA), Batumi Navigation University, and other maritime education institutions located in the Black Sea coastal area contribute to marine-related education, maritime training, and applied research activities.

As noted in Section 1.1, the research and innovation dimension is also linked to the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia and the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG), particularly through Georgia’s involvement in the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for the Black Sea. In the research and academic context, this provides an important reference framework for connecting national research capacity with CMA-related blue economy priorities.

The research and innovation ecosystem is also supported by the Horizon Europe Georgia Office and relevant National Contact Point functions, which contribute to information dissemination, international research cooperation, and participation in EU-funded research and innovation programmes.⁶

⁶ Horizon Europe Georgia Office, official website; European Commission, “Georgia — Research and Innovation,” official website.

Public research and technical functions are also carried out by state agencies such as the National Environment Agency, which is responsible for environmental monitoring, including hydrological and marine data collection, and contributes to scientific assessments relevant to coastal and marine management.⁷

Research and academic institutions contribute to the blue economy through environmental and marine research, data collection and analysis, education and human capital development, and applied research in sectoral areas such as tourism, maritime transport, environmental management, and regional economic development. However, these contributions remain largely fragmented across disciplines and institutions, with limited integration into a broader cross-sectoral blue economy framework.

1.3 Business Support Organizations

Business support organizations relevant to blue economy sectors in Georgia include chambers of commerce, sectoral associations, tourism organizations, and private sector representatives. Their activity is mainly concentrated in tourism, transport and logistics, and, to a lesser extent, fisheries and other coastal economic activities.

Key actors include the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) and, at the regional level, the Adjara Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which provide general business support services, networking opportunities, and advocacy across different sectors. Tourism industry associations, regional tourism organizations, and private sector representatives in coastal areas such as Adjara also play an important role in supporting tourism development, destination promotion, and business cooperation.⁸

In the maritime transport, ports and logistics sector, port operators, logistics companies, and transport-related businesses represent important industry stakeholders. However, formalized sectoral associations and dedicated maritime business platforms appear to be relatively limited. In the current desk-mapped institutional landscape, dedicated maritime or blue economy clusters are not yet clearly visible in Georgia, and existing business support structures appear to be organized mainly along traditional sectoral lines rather than around integrated maritime value chains.

Business support organizations contribute to blue economy-related sectors through private sector advocacy, business networking, partnership facilitation, investment promotion, SME support, training, advisory services, and participation in donor-funded initiatives. In the current institutional landscape, these functions appear to be organized mainly through sector-specific business support structures, particularly in tourism, logistics, and general private sector development.

1.4 Civil Society

Civil society organizations in Georgia relevant to the blue economy are mainly active in environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, climate change, coastal ecosystem management, public awareness, and community-based development. Their role is especially relevant for the sustainability dimension of the blue economy, particularly in relation to marine and coastal ecosystem protection.

⁷ National Environment Agency of Georgia, “Hydrometeorology Department,” accessed 16 June 2026, <https://nea.gov.ge/En/Departments/Hydrometeorology>.

⁸ Law of Georgia on the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, accessed 16 June 2026, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/1695961>; Adjara Chamber of Commerce and Industry, official website, accessed 16 June 2026, <https://accgi.ge/en/>.

Relevant actors include environmental NGOs, conservation organizations, community-based groups in coastal areas, and civil society organizations involved in environmental advocacy, participatory governance, and donor-supported project implementation. Examples include CENN, which works on environmental protection, sustainable development and community engagement; SABUKO, which focuses on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources; the Greens Movement of Georgia / Friends of the Earth Georgia, which is active in environmental protection and sustainable development advocacy; and WWF-Caucasus, which contributes to biodiversity conservation and protected area-related initiatives in Georgia.⁹

Civil society organizations contribute to blue economy-related sectors through advocacy for environmental sustainability, public awareness and education, community engagement, and participation in environmental, climate-related, and regional cooperation projects. These functions are particularly relevant in coastal areas affected by tourism development, infrastructure expansion, pollution pressures, and ecosystem degradation.

In the current institutional landscape, civil society engagement appears to be most strongly connected to the environmental and community dimensions of the blue economy. Its role in broader blue economy coordination, including links with economic development, maritime governance, innovation, and private sector cooperation, appears less clearly institutionalized.

1.5 Transnational Dimension: Black Sea Level

Cross-border Institutions and Networks

Georgia participates in several regional and international cooperation frameworks relevant to blue economy development in the Black Sea region. These include intergovernmental and multilateral platforms such as the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea (CMA), the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB), the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, also known as the Black Sea Commission (BSC), and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), as well as cooperation mechanisms supported by the European Union and other international organizations.¹⁰

Georgia is also involved in EU-funded regional cooperation programmes and projects, including Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin initiatives and thematic projects such as BlueDial, which aim to strengthen policy dialogue, knowledge exchange, stakeholder networking, and institutional cooperation in the blue economy domain.¹¹

International organizations and regional networks linked to maritime policy, environmental protection, regional development, research, and innovation also contribute to cooperation, capacity building, and exchange of experience among Black Sea countries.

Existing Cooperation Platforms

Participation in transnational cooperation is mainly operationalized through EU-funded programmes and projects, regional policy dialogue initiatives, workshops, conferences, capacity-building activities, and emerging

⁹ CENN, official website; SABUKO, official website; Friends of the Earth International, “The Greens Movement of Georgia”; WWF-Caucasus, official website.

¹⁰ Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, BSTDB, Black Sea Commission and BSEC, official websites, accessed 16 June 2026.

¹¹ Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme and BlueDial Project, official websites, accessed 16 June 2026.

cooperation tools and platforms. These mechanisms provide structured opportunities for dialogue, knowledge exchange, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with wider Black Sea and EU-level priorities.

In this context, relevant Black Sea research and cooperation initiatives include Black Sea Connect, DOORS, BRIDGE-BS, Horizon Europe-related cooperation, and projects financed under Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin, which support regional networking, research collaboration, environmental monitoring, and policy dialogue.¹²

Within the BlueDial project, the BlackBlueNET platform is intended to support stakeholder interaction, knowledge exchange, and policy input across the Black Sea region. Such platforms can help increase awareness of blue economy concepts and strengthen regional cooperation, particularly in relation to CMA priorities.

1.6 Desk Research Summary: Institutional Mapping

The institutional mapping shows that Georgia has a range of public institutions, academic bodies, business support organizations, civil society organizations and transnational cooperation platforms relevant to blue economy development. These actors cover the main blue economy-related domains, including maritime transport, coastal and maritime tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, infrastructure, research, education, business support and regional Black Sea cooperation.

The desk research indicates that these responsibilities and functions are distributed across several sector-specific institutional channels. Public authorities are mainly organized around economic development, environmental protection, infrastructure, education and local implementation mandates. Academic and research institutions contribute through environmental research, marine-related education, data collection and applied sectoral studies. Business support organizations are active mainly in tourism, logistics and general private sector development, while civil society organizations contribute primarily through environmental advocacy, community engagement and project-based initiatives.

At the transnational level, Georgia participates in Black Sea and EU-supported cooperation frameworks, including platforms connected to the Common Maritime Agenda, environmental cooperation, regional development, and research and innovation cooperation. These mechanisms offer practical entry points for knowledge exchange, institutional learning and alignment with wider Black Sea priorities.

The mapping also points to several areas for further assessment, including the limited visibility of dedicated blue economy or maritime clusters, the strong environmental orientation of civil society engagement, and the project-based nature of many transnational cooperation activities.

Overall, the desk research suggests that Georgia already has a broad institutional base relevant to the blue economy. However, the mapping also indicates that these actors and responsibilities are mainly organized through separate sectoral frameworks rather than through a dedicated blue economy coordination structure. The institutional mapping therefore frames the next stages of the report around three practical questions: how

¹² Black Sea Connect, DOORS and BRIDGE-BS, official project websites, accessed 16 June 2026

coordination works in practice, where implementation capacity is weakest, and which actors need to be better connected in future blue economy governance.

2. Legal and Strategic Framework

2.1 EU Policy Framework for the Blue Economy

The European Union has developed a comprehensive and multi-layered policy framework to govern maritime and coastal activities, integrating economic development, environmental sustainability, and spatial planning. This framework is directly relevant for partner countries in the Black Sea region, including Georgia, particularly when assessing alignment with the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA).

Conceptual and Governance Foundations

The EU's approach to maritime governance is grounded in the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), which introduced a shift from fragmented, sector-specific management toward an integrated, cross-sectoral governance model. The IMP recognizes that maritime sectors—including transport, fisheries, tourism, energy, and environmental protection—are interdependent and require coordinated policy-making to ensure efficient and sustainable use of marine resources.¹³

Building on this governance approach, the Blue Growth Strategy defined the economic dimension of the blue economy, identifying key sectors with high development potential, such as coastal and maritime tourism, aquaculture, blue energy, marine biotechnology, and seabed resources. Importantly, the strategy emphasized that economic growth should be aligned with environmental sustainability and innovation, establishing a dual objective of competitiveness and ecosystem protection.¹⁴

Together, these frameworks establish the conceptual basis of the EU blue economy model, combining economic development with integrated governance and sustainability principles.

Environmental and Ecosystem-Based Governance

Environmental protection is a central pillar of EU maritime policy, primarily operationalized through the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The MSFD establishes a comprehensive framework for achieving “good environmental status” (GES) of marine waters through an ecosystem-based approach, requiring Member States to assess environmental conditions, define targets, monitor marine ecosystems, and implement coordinated measures.¹⁵

The Directive explicitly recognizes the cumulative pressures on marine ecosystems, including pollution, overexploitation, and climate change, and promotes the integration of environmental considerations across maritime sectors. It also highlights the transboundary nature of marine ecosystems, requiring regional cooperation and coordination among countries sharing the same sea basin.

Spatial Planning and Multi-Use of Maritime Space

¹³ European Commission, *An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union*, 2007.

¹⁴ European Commission, *Blue Growth: Opportunities for Marine and Maritime Sustainable Growth*, 2012.

¹⁵ European Parliament and Council, *Marine Strategy Framework Directive*, 2008.

The increasing intensity and diversity of maritime activities have led to growing competition for marine space. In response, the EU adopted the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSP Directive), which introduces spatial planning as a key governance tool.¹⁶

The MSP Directive aims to:

- promote sustainable development of maritime sectors;
- optimize the allocation of marine space;
- reduce conflicts between competing uses; and
- support ecosystem-based management.

It requires Member States to develop maritime spatial plans that integrate economic, environmental, and social objectives, while also addressing land–sea interactions and cross-border coordination. This approach is particularly relevant for emerging blue economy sectors, where co-existence and multi-use of maritime space are increasingly important.

Regional Dimension: Black Sea Cooperation Frameworks

At the regional level, EU maritime policy is complemented by sea-basin cooperation frameworks. In the Black Sea region, the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) provides a platform for regional cooperation, aiming to align national policies, promote sustainable blue growth, and strengthen coordination among participating countries.¹⁷

The CMA is supported by the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), which focuses on strengthening scientific cooperation, innovation capacity, and data-driven policy-making in areas such as marine ecosystems, sustainable economic activities, and ocean observation systems. The SRIA highlights the importance of research and innovation as key enablers of a sustainable and competitive blue economy.¹⁸

These regional frameworks are not legally binding but play a critical role in promoting policy convergence, knowledge exchange, and coordinated action across the Black Sea basin.

Recent Policy Developments: Towards Integrated Ocean Governance

The EU policy framework continues to evolve toward greater integration and strategic coherence. A key recent development is the European Ocean Pact, which aims to provide a unified and holistic framework for ocean governance, aligning environmental protection, economic development, maritime security, and international cooperation.¹⁹

The Ocean Pact emphasizes the need for:

- stronger coordination across policy areas and governance levels;

¹⁶ European Parliament and Council, *Maritime Spatial Planning Directive*, 2014.

¹⁷ Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, *About CMA*, 2019.

¹⁸ European Commission, “Launch of the Black Sea SRIA Implementation Plan,” 2023.

¹⁹ European Commission, *European Ocean Pact*, 2025.

- enhanced sustainability and competitiveness of the blue economy;
- improved protection and restoration of marine ecosystems; and
- increased resilience and security of maritime infrastructure and activities.

In parallel, the EU's Strategic Approach to the Black Sea reinforces the importance of the region as a geopolitical and economic priority, linking blue economy development with broader objectives related to security, resilience, connectivity, and regional cooperation.²⁰

For Georgia, these EU and Black Sea regional frameworks offer a benchmark for assessing national sectoral policies, alignment with CMA priorities, and the potential development of more integrated blue economy governance. They are also relevant for strategic connectivity initiatives such as the Black Sea Submarine Cable Project, which aims to strengthen electricity interconnection between Georgia and Europe and support the Black Sea's role as a strategic energy and connectivity corridor.²¹

2.2 National Blue Economy Strategies: Georgia

Georgia does not currently have a dedicated, comprehensive national strategy explicitly framed under the concept of the blue economy. Instead, blue economy-related development is shaped through a set of sectoral policies and strategic documents addressing maritime transport, tourism, environmental protection, fisheries, and regional development. As a result, the policy landscape appears to be organized mainly through sectoral frameworks, with limited integration across sectors and no single strategic document guiding maritime and coastal development as a unified blue economy agenda.

Absence of an Integrated Blue Economy Strategy

Unlike the European Union, which has established an integrated framework combining economic, environmental, and spatial dimensions of maritime governance, Georgia has not yet formalized the blue economy as a distinct policy domain. There is no overarching “blue growth” strategy, maritime development strategy, or integrated coastal and marine framework that consolidates sectoral priorities into a single policy agenda.

From a desk-research perspective, this absence may have several implications. It can limit the ability to define a common strategic direction for blue economy development, weaken coordination between institutions responsible for different sectors, and constrain alignment with regional frameworks such as the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea. In addition, the lack of an integrated strategy may reduce the effectiveness of policy planning and make it more difficult to mobilize targeted investments and funding for cross-sectoral initiatives. Consequently, blue economy development in Georgia appears to remain implicit and indirect, rather than strategically coordinated.

²⁰ European Commission, *The European Union's Strategic Approach to the Black Sea Region*, 2025.

²¹ Georgian State Electrosystem, “Black Sea Submarine Cable Project,” official project information, accessed 16 June 2026, <https://www.gse.com.ge/projects/international-projects/Black-Sea-Submarine-Cable-Project>; European Commission, *The European Union's Strategic Approach to the Black Sea Region*, 2025.

Sectoral Policy Framework

Despite the absence of an integrated strategy, a number of sectoral policies and strategic documents contribute to the development of blue economy-related sectors.

Tourism represents one of the most developed and economically significant sectors. The Georgia National Tourism Strategy 2025 provided the primary strategic framework for tourism development during the 2015–2025 period. However, it did not incorporate blue economy principles, nor did it explicitly address marine or coastal resource management within a broader integrated framework.

Importantly, the strategy itself acknowledged that Georgia did not have a formal tourism policy at the time, with the sector being guided instead by a general policy direction focused on rapid growth in international arrivals. This reflects a broader pattern in national policy-making, where sectoral development has been driven primarily by growth-oriented objectives rather than integrated, sustainability-based frameworks.

The Tourism Strategy 2025 focused on increasing visitor numbers, enhancing infrastructure, improving marketing effectiveness, and expanding tourism products. While it introduced a gradual shift toward attracting higher-spending visitors and increasing value per tourist, its overall orientation remained predominantly economic. Marine and coastal tourism—particularly along the Black Sea—was addressed mainly in terms of destination development, without integration into wider maritime spatial planning or ecosystem-based management approaches.²²

Maritime transport, ports and logistics are addressed through national transport, maritime and infrastructure policy frameworks, including strategic documents related to the development of maritime transport and port infrastructure. These frameworks emphasize port modernization, maritime safety, regional connectivity and Georgia's role as a transit corridor between Europe and Asia. While these priorities contribute to the economic dimension of the blue economy, their connection with environmental sustainability, maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal governance remains indirect.²³

Fisheries and aquaculture are regulated within broader environmental and agricultural policy frameworks, including the Law of Georgia on Aquaculture and related regulations on fishing, fish stock protection and aquaculture management. Although the sector is relatively small in economic terms, it is important for marine resource management, local livelihoods, food production and sustainability. Existing policy attention is mainly directed toward resource management, licensing, compliance and sector regulation, while its integration with wider maritime economic development, coastal planning and blue economy diversification remains limited.²⁴

Environmental protection and marine ecosystem management are addressed through national environmental strategies, action plans and legislation, including the National Environmental Action Programme, climate-related policy frameworks, biodiversity-related instruments, water resources regulation and environmental assessment

²² GNTA, *Georgia National Tourism Strategy 2025*, 2015.

²³ MoESD, *National Transport and Logistics Strategy of Georgia 2023–2030*; Government of Georgia, *Maritime Transport Strategic Development Concept*, 2023.

²⁴ Parliament of Georgia, *Law of Georgia on Aquaculture*, 2020; Government of Georgia, *Technical Regulation on Fishing and Protection of Fish Stock*, 2013.

procedures. These frameworks support conservation, pollution control, monitoring and climate resilience. In addition, coastal and marine environmental studies, including donor-supported analytical work, provide relevant evidence for understanding coastal pressures and ecosystem-related risks.

However, marine and coastal issues are generally embedded within broader environmental policy frameworks rather than addressed through a dedicated marine or integrated coastal strategy.²⁵

Overall, sectoral policies provide partial coverage of blue economy components, but remain largely disconnected from each other, reflecting a traditional sector-based approach rather than a coordinated maritime policy framework.

Emerging Strategic Elements and Policy Transition

Although a comprehensive blue economy strategy is not yet in place, several developments indicate a gradual shift toward more integrated approaches.

First, the evolution of tourism policy highlights an ongoing transition. The Tourism Strategy 2025 already signaled a move from volume-based growth toward higher value-added tourism, emphasizing increased spending per visitor and improved quality of tourism products. Building on this trajectory, Georgia is currently in the process of developing a new Tourism Strategy 2035, which will replace the existing Tourism Strategy 2025. This ongoing policy process represents a critical window of opportunity to address existing structural gaps, including the lack of integration between tourism development, coastal management, and broader blue economy frameworks.²⁶

Second, Georgia is increasingly aligning with European Union regulatory and environmental standards, particularly through participation in regional cooperation initiatives such as the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea. Engagement in EU-funded programmes further supports institutional development, knowledge transfer, and cross-sectoral coordination.

Third, there is growing recognition of sustainability and climate resilience within national policy documents, particularly in relation to environmental protection and infrastructure development. Ongoing reforms in environmental governance, data systems, and regulatory frameworks further suggest a gradual shift toward more structured and evidence-based policy-making.

However, these developments remain incremental and are not yet consolidated into a dedicated national framework for blue economy development.

²⁵ MEPA, *Fourth National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia for 2022–2026*; Government of Georgia, *Georgia's 2030 Climate Change Strategy and 2021–2023 Action Plan*; World Bank, *Impacts of Climate Change on Georgia's Coastal Zone*, 2020.

²⁶ MoESD/SUDA, *Development of Georgia's National Tourism Strategy 2035*, Terms of Reference.

2.3 Legislative Analysis: Key Laws Governing Maritime and Coastal Space

Georgia's legislative framework includes a range of laws relevant to blue economy development. These laws are distributed across sectoral domains, including maritime space, navigation, spatial planning, environmental protection, water resources, fisheries and aquaculture, and tourism. While they provide a legal basis for individual blue economy-related sectors, they are not currently organized under a unified or integrated maritime or blue economy framework.

Maritime Space and Navigation

The legal foundation for maritime governance in Georgia is established by the Law of Georgia on Maritime Space, which defines the country's jurisdiction over internal waters, territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf. This law provides the basis for exercising sovereign rights over marine resources and activities.²⁷

In parallel, the Maritime Code of Georgia regulates maritime navigation and related economic activities, including shipping, port operations, fishing, offshore activities, and maritime safety. Together, these laws form the core legal framework for maritime transport, logistics, and navigation.²⁸

However, while these instruments define jurisdiction and regulate maritime activities, they do not by themselves establish an integrated maritime spatial planning system. The Code of Georgia on Spatial Planning, Architectural and Construction Activities provides a legal basis for spatial planning to include Georgia's territorial sea and economic zone, including areas related to marine resources, aquaculture, tourism development and environmental protection.²⁹ Nevertheless, Georgia does not yet appear to have a dedicated maritime spatial planning framework equivalent to the EU Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, nor a fully operational mechanism for coordinating competing maritime uses across sectors such as tourism, transport, fisheries, aquaculture, infrastructure and environmental protection.

Environmental Assessment and Ecosystem Protection

Environmental governance is primarily regulated through the Environmental Assessment Code, which establishes procedures for environmental impact assessment (EIA), strategic environmental assessment (SEA), transboundary environmental impact assessment and public participation. This framework applies to strategic documents and public or private activities that may have significant environmental effects, including those in coastal and maritime areas.³⁰ This legislation is highly relevant to blue economy development, as it ensures that major infrastructure projects, tourism developments and industrial activities are subject to environmental scrutiny. It also provides a procedural basis for integrating environmental considerations into decision-making.

²⁷ Parliament of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Maritime Space.

²⁸ Parliament of Georgia, Maritime Code of Georgia.

²⁹ Parliament of Georgia, Code of Georgia on Spatial Planning, Architectural and Construction Activities.

³⁰ Parliament of Georgia, Environmental Assessment Code.

However, the Environmental Assessment Code operates primarily as a regulatory and procedural instrument rather than a strategic maritime planning tool. It does not provide a comprehensive mechanism for coordinating different maritime sectors or for managing cumulative impacts across maritime and coastal uses.

Water Resources and Pollution Control

A significant recent reform is the adoption of the Law of Georgia on Water Resources Management, which introduces principles of integrated water resources management. The law aims to establish a unified approach to water protection, sustainable use and environmental safety.³¹

This is particularly relevant for the blue economy, as marine ecosystems are directly influenced by land-based activities, river basin management, wastewater discharge, and pollution flows. The integration of water management principles strengthens the environmental dimension of maritime and coastal governance.

Nevertheless, the law remains focused on water resources rather than maritime economic activities. Its contribution to the blue economy depends on how effectively it is linked with coastal development, environmental monitoring, pollution control and sectoral planning.

Fisheries and Aquaculture Regulation

Fisheries and aquaculture are also relevant to the legislative framework for the blue economy. The Law of Georgia on Aquaculture and related fisheries regulations provide the legal basis for aquaculture development, fishing activities, fish stock protection and resource management. These instruments are important for the sustainable use of marine and inland aquatic resources, although they remain sector-specific and are not integrated into a wider maritime spatial planning or blue economy governance framework.³²

Sector-Specific Legislation: Tourism Governance and Regulatory Modernization

In addition to maritime and environmental legislation, tourism legislation is relevant to the blue economy because coastal and maritime tourism is one of the most economically significant activities along Georgia's Black Sea coast.

A major recent development in Georgia's legislative framework is the adoption of the Law of Georgia on Tourism, which establishes a comprehensive legal basis for tourism sector governance.³³

The law defines state policy objectives, institutional responsibilities, and regulatory mechanisms for tourism development. It promotes the sustainable development of tourism, emphasizing the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection and the preservation of cultural and natural resources.

³¹ Parliament of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Water Resources Management.

³² Parliament of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Aquaculture; Government of Georgia, Technical Regulation on Fishing and Protection of Fish Stock.

³³ Parliament of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Tourism.

It also introduces a structured governance system, clarifying the roles of the Government of Georgia, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, and the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA), while strengthening the involvement of local self-government bodies. A particularly important institutional innovation is the introduction of Tourist Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), which are designed to facilitate coordinated destination-level development through public-private cooperation.

In addition, the law incorporates regulatory provisions related to the registration of tourism activity entities, package travel, linked travel arrangements, tourist insurance and other consumer protection-related mechanisms, reflecting alignment with European regulatory approaches. These provisions significantly improve the legal environment for tourism service provision and market functioning.

From a blue economy perspective, this law represents a significant step forward in modernizing tourism governance and introducing sustainability-oriented principles. However, its scope remains largely sector-specific. It does not establish formal linkages with maritime spatial planning, coastal zone management, or broader blue economy governance frameworks.

As a result, while the Law on Tourism strengthens regulation within the tourism sector, it does not address the broader challenge of integrating tourism into a comprehensive maritime and coastal governance system.

2.4 Alignment with the Common Maritime Agenda and Regional/Local Policy Coherence

This subsection assesses how Georgia's existing legal and strategic framework relates to the priorities of the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) for the Black Sea and how far national, regional and local policy levels are connected in blue economy-related areas.

Alignment with CMA Priorities

Georgia's current policy framework shows partial alignment with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea. Several national policy areas correspond to CMA priorities, including maritime connectivity, coastal and maritime tourism, environmental protection, fisheries and aquaculture, research and innovation, and skills development. Georgia's participation in CMA-related processes, SRIA implementation, EU-funded regional projects and Black Sea cooperation platforms also creates a practical route for policy dialogue, institutional learning and regional alignment.³⁴

The strongest areas of alignment appear to be maritime transport and connectivity, environmental protection, research cooperation, and coastal tourism development. Maritime transport and logistics priorities are linked to Georgia's role as a Black Sea transit and connectivity hub. Environmental strategies and monitoring systems relate to CMA priorities on marine ecosystem protection and sustainability. Research and innovation cooperation is supported through the SRIA framework, while tourism policy and local destination development are relevant to sustainable coastal and maritime tourism.

³⁴ Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, official framework documents; Black Sea SRIA and SRIA Implementation Plan; Georgian national sectoral strategies and laws reviewed in Sections 2.1–2.3.

However, this alignment remains uneven and only partially institutionalized. Georgia's national strategies and laws do not yet use the blue economy as an explicit organizing framework, and CMA priorities are not systematically translated into a dedicated national blue economy strategy, maritime spatial planning system, or integrated coastal governance framework. As a result, alignment with the CMA is visible mainly through sectoral policies and project-based cooperation rather than through a consolidated national policy mechanism.

Regional and Local Policy Dimension

At the regional and local level, blue economy-related issues are most relevant for Georgia's Black Sea coastal areas, particularly Adjara, Guria, and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti. Local authorities are involved in spatial planning, municipal infrastructure, tourism development, local economic development and service provision. In Adjara, tourism institutions and local development bodies play an especially important role because of the region's concentration of coastal tourism, port activity and maritime-related economic functions.

Regional and municipal policies contribute to blue economy-related development mainly through tourism, infrastructure, urban development, environmental management and investment promotion. However, these policies are generally not framed as blue economy strategies. Coastal and maritime issues appear to be addressed mainly as part of broader regional development, tourism, infrastructure or environmental planning rather than through integrated coastal or maritime governance.

This indicates that regional and local authorities are important for implementation, but their role in blue economy policy formulation remains limited. Stronger links between national strategies, coastal municipalities and regional institutions would be important for improving coordination in areas such as coastal tourism, port-city relations, coastal infrastructure, environmental protection and community engagement.

Coherence Across EU, National and Regional Levels

Overall, Georgia's legal and strategic framework shows several points of connection with EU and Black Sea regional priorities, but coherence across governance levels remains partial. At the EU and Black Sea level, the blue economy is framed through integrated maritime governance, ecosystem-based management, maritime spatial planning, innovation, sustainability and regional cooperation. At the national level, Georgia addresses many of these issues through separate sectoral strategies and laws. At the regional and local level, implementation is mainly linked to tourism, infrastructure, local planning and environmental management.

The main coherence gap is therefore not the absence of relevant policy areas, but the absence of an integrated mechanism that connects them into a common blue economy framework. Existing policies support important components of the blue economy, but coordination between maritime transport, tourism, fisheries, environmental protection, research, innovation and regional development remains limited.

This gives future policy development a concrete starting point. Further alignment with the CMA could be supported by clearer national coordination, stronger links between sectoral policies, greater involvement of coastal regions and municipalities, and more systematic use of regional cooperation platforms to support national blue economy priorities.

2.5 Desk Research Summary: Legal and Strategic Framework

The desk research on the legal and strategic framework shows that Georgia's blue economy-related policy environment is shaped by both external reference frameworks and national sectoral instruments. At the European and Black Sea regional level, frameworks such as the Integrated Maritime Policy, Blue Growth Strategy, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, Common Maritime Agenda, Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, European Ocean Pact and the EU Strategic Approach to the Black Sea serve as external benchmarks for integrated maritime governance, environmental protection, spatial planning, research, innovation and regional cooperation.

At the national level, Georgia does not yet have a dedicated strategy formally framed around the blue economy. Instead, relevant policy directions are addressed through separate sectoral frameworks covering tourism, maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, water resources, infrastructure and regional development. These documents and policy areas provide important building blocks for blue economy development, but they are not currently organized under one integrated strategic framework.

The legislative review also shows that several laws are relevant to maritime and coastal development, including legislation on maritime space, maritime navigation, spatial planning, environmental assessment, water resources management, fisheries and aquaculture, and tourism governance. These legal instruments regulate important components of the blue economy, such as jurisdiction over maritime space, shipping and port-related activities, environmental assessment procedures, water protection, fisheries and aquaculture management, and tourism sector governance.

From the desk research perspective, the main issue requiring further assessment is the relationship between these separate legal and strategic instruments. The reviewed framework indicates that Georgia has relevant sectoral legislation and policy documents, but their connection to integrated coastal governance, maritime spatial planning, blue economy coordination and Common Maritime Agenda alignment remains limited and indirect.

This legal and strategic mapping informs the stakeholder interviews, SWOT analysis and final recommendations, where the practical implications of policy coherence, legal integration, institutional coordination and strategic alignment are assessed in more detail.

3. Funding Instruments

3.1 National Public Funding and State Support

Public funding mechanisms relevant to blue economy development in Georgia are distributed across several sectoral institutions and state programmes rather than organized within a comprehensive blue economy financing framework. Existing support mechanisms primarily target tourism development, infrastructure modernization, environmental protection, research and innovation, and regional economic development. As a result, public financing contributes to blue economy-related sectors, but it remains dispersed across sector-specific programmes. Recent SRNSFG support for Black Sea and coastal-region research shows that dedicated blue-economy-relevant research funding has started to emerge, but a broader financing framework covering innovation, investment, implementation and long-term coordination is still not clearly established.

Tourism and Regional Development Support

Tourism represents one of the most significant sectors receiving public support relevant to the blue economy. However, financing and implementation responsibilities are distributed across multiple institutions with different functional roles.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA), operating under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, primarily focuses on destination marketing, tourism promotion, tourism product development, destination support activities, service quality improvement, tourism events and campaigns, and strengthening the competitiveness of tourism destinations.³⁵

At the same time, large-scale tourism-related infrastructure investments are primarily coordinated through the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI). These investments include road connectivity, municipal infrastructure, public spaces, water and sanitation systems, and broader infrastructure improvements in tourism destinations, including Black Sea coastal regions.³⁶

In addition, Enterprise Georgia/Georgian Economic Development Corporation JSC has supported private sector investment in tourism and hospitality through investment promotion, financial support programmes and business development incentives. Following the 2026 institutional reform, these business financing and development support functions are expected to continue through Georgian Economic Development Corporation JSC, while investment promotion is being reorganized under a separate institutional framework.³⁷

Together, these mechanisms have contributed to the expansion of tourism infrastructure and services in coastal regions. However, tourism-related public financing remains institutionally fragmented and primarily growth-oriented, with limited integration into broader maritime governance, coastal sustainability, or blue economy policy frameworks.

Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Support

Public support for research and innovation relevant to the blue economy is mainly implemented through the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia and the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG). SRNSFG supports Georgia's science, technology and innovation system through state grant competitions, targeted programmes, international cooperation instruments and academic development mechanisms. Its funding instruments cover areas relevant to the blue economy, including environmental sciences, coastal and marine ecosystems, climate-related research, information technologies, engineering and applied innovation.³⁸

³⁵ Georgian National Tourism Administration, official website and programme information.

³⁶ Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, official website and infrastructure programme information.

³⁷ Enterprise Georgia, official website and transformation notice; Georgian Public Broadcaster, "PM announces establishment of Georgia's new Economic Development Corporation and Independent Investment Agency," 8 April 2026.

³⁸ Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, "Mission / Objectives / Tasks"; Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, "Applied Research Grants," official website.

In recent years, SRNSFG support has moved beyond only indirect relevance to the blue economy. Since 2024, the Foundation has announced the dedicated grant competition “Black Sea Blue Development” for research on the Black Sea and coastal regions. The competition supports the creation of new knowledge, the development of Black Sea and coastal-region research, dissemination of research results, local scientific capacity, international cooperation, involvement of young researchers and implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.³⁹

The thematic scope of supported projects demonstrates direct relevance to the blue economy. Funded and evaluated project topics include Black Sea pollution reduction, ecological assessment of Georgia’s coastal zone, toxic metals entering the Black Sea through Georgian rivers, flood and wetland risks in Poti, AI-based ecomonitoring for the Poti coastal region, invasive species, coastal cultural heritage and support for implementation of the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda. This indicates that Georgia now has a national research funding instrument specifically addressing Black Sea and coastal-region issues.

SRNSFG is also involved in international blue-economy research cooperation. In 2025, together with the EU Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, the Foundation announced a call on digitalisation and innovation for resilient marine ecosystems, businesses and communities.⁴⁰ The call covers priority areas directly aligned with the blue economy, including ocean digital twins, blue-economy sectors and marine multi-use infrastructures, regional sea-use planning and management, blue bioresources, and resilient coastal communities and businesses.

In addition, the Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency supports innovation and startup development through grants, technology programmes and entrepreneurship initiatives. Although GITA instruments are not specifically designed around the blue economy, they may support related innovation in environmental technologies, sustainable tourism, digital solutions, data systems and applied technologies relevant to coastal and marine sectors.⁴¹

Overall, the research and innovation support landscape should therefore be characterised as emerging rather than absent. Georgia now has dedicated Black Sea and blue-economy-relevant research calls through SRNSFG, including both national “Black Sea Blue Development” competitions and participation in European blue-economy cooperation instruments. At the same time, support remains limited in scale, largely project-based, and fragmented across research, innovation and sectoral institutions. A comprehensive national blue-economy research and innovation programme, with sustained multiannual financing, marine technology development, data infrastructure, business–science collaboration and policy uptake mechanisms, is still not fully established.

Environmental and Climate-Related Funding

Environmental and climate-related funding is primarily coordinated through the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), often in cooperation with international donors and development partners. Public support mechanisms focus on biodiversity conservation, protected areas management, environmental monitoring, water resource management, pollution control, and climate adaptation initiatives.⁴²

³⁹ Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, “Black Sea and Coastal Region Research Grant Call — ‘Black Sea Blue Development’,” 2024–2026 call announcements and final results/ranked project list.

⁴⁰ Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, “SRNSFG and the EU Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership Announce a Call,” 15 September 2025.

⁴¹ Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency, official website, “Startups” and “National Innovation Ecosystem — GENIE.”

⁴² Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, official website and environmental programme information.

These programmes contribute to the environmental sustainability dimension of the blue economy, particularly in relation to marine and coastal ecosystem protection. However, funding is generally directed toward environmental management objectives rather than integrated blue economy development or sustainable maritime economic activities.

Infrastructure and Connectivity Investments

Public investments in transport and infrastructure also play an important role in supporting blue economy-related sectors, particularly maritime transport, logistics, tourism destinations, and regional connectivity. Infrastructure development is mainly coordinated through the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) and the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development.

Strategic investments in roads, municipal infrastructure, coastal infrastructure, water and sanitation systems, transport connectivity, and logistics corridors strengthen Georgia's role as a regional transit and connectivity hub within the Black Sea region. These investments indirectly support maritime economic activities and coastal development.

Nevertheless, infrastructure financing is generally approached from a transport, municipal infrastructure, and economic development perspective rather than through integrated maritime planning or blue economy policy objectives.

3.2 EU and International Financial Instruments

International donors and European Union funding mechanisms play a central role in supporting blue economy-related activities in Georgia. In contrast to the limited availability of dedicated national financing instruments, international programmes provide significant financial, technical, and institutional support across sectors such as environmental protection, tourism, research and innovation, transport connectivity, and regional cooperation.

As a result, many blue economy-related initiatives in Georgia are strongly dependent on externally funded programmes and project-based cooperation mechanisms.

European Union Funding and Regional Cooperation Programmes

The European Union represents one of the most important external sources of support for blue economy-related development in Georgia, particularly through regional cooperation, research, environmental, education, and institutional development programmes.

A key mechanism is the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme, which supports cross-border cooperation among Black Sea countries in areas including environmental protection, climate resilience, innovation, tourism, and regional cooperation. These programmes are particularly important for promoting CMA-related priorities and strengthening institutional collaboration at the Black Sea level.⁴³

⁴³ Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme, official programme information.

Georgia also participates in Horizon Europe, the EU's research and innovation framework programme, which provides opportunities for scientific cooperation, innovation partnerships, and research funding relevant to marine ecosystems, climate adaptation, sustainability, and digital transformation. Within this framework, initiatives such as the Restore our Ocean and Waters Mission and the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership (SBEP) are particularly relevant to blue economy-related research, innovation, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable maritime development.⁴⁴

In addition, Erasmus+ programmes contribute to blue economy-related capacity building through higher education cooperation, academic mobility, curriculum development, and institutional partnerships. While Erasmus+ is not specifically designed as a blue economy financing instrument, it supports the development of skills, knowledge exchange, innovation ecosystems, and international cooperation relevant to sustainability, maritime governance, tourism, environmental management, and regional development.

The LIFE Programme also provides a relevant EU-level reference for environmental and climate-related support, particularly in areas such as biodiversity, ecosystem protection, climate action, pollution reduction, and environmental governance. Although its use in Georgia depends on eligibility conditions and project structures, its thematic priorities are closely connected to the environmental dimension of the blue economy.⁴⁵

Additional EU-supported initiatives contribute to institutional strengthening, policy development, and regional cooperation through technical assistance, capacity-building activities, and thematic projects linked to maritime governance, environmental sustainability, and regional development.

However, despite these opportunities, participation in EU funding programmes remains uneven across sectors and institutions. Access to funding often depends on institutional capacity, international partnerships, and project preparation capabilities, which vary significantly among Georgian stakeholders.

International Financial Institutions and Development Partners

International financial institutions and development organizations also play a major role in financing infrastructure, environmental protection, climate adaptation, and regional development initiatives relevant to the blue economy.

The World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and other development partners support projects related to transport infrastructure, regional connectivity, municipal development, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and tourism infrastructure.⁴⁶

In coastal and maritime contexts, international financing has contributed to:

- transport and logistics infrastructure modernization;
- municipal and coastal infrastructure development;

⁴⁴ European Commission, Horizon Europe; European Commission, Restore our Ocean and Waters Mission; Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, official programme information.

⁴⁵ European Commission, Erasmus+; European Commission, LIFE Programme, official programme information.

⁴⁶ World Bank, EBRD and Asian Development Bank, Georgia country/project information.

- environmental protection and ecosystem management;
- climate resilience and disaster risk reduction;
- tourism infrastructure and destination development.

In addition, organizations such as UNDP, GEF, and other international agencies support environmental governance, biodiversity conservation, climate-related initiatives, and community-based sustainability projects relevant to marine and coastal ecosystems.⁴⁷

These funding mechanisms provide essential financial and technical support, particularly in areas where domestic institutional and financial capacity remains limited.

Blue Economy and Innovation-Oriented Instruments

Although Georgia participates in a number of programmes relevant to innovation and sustainability, dedicated blue economy financing instruments remain limited.

EU-level instruments and initiatives such as the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), BlueInvest, and other thematic blue economy investment mechanisms offer useful models for maritime innovation, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, blue technologies, and private investment support. However, for Georgia, direct access to such specialized instruments may depend on eligibility conditions, partnerships with EU-based actors, or participation through relevant project structures.⁴⁸

Similarly, access to venture financing, innovation funding, and investment support for emerging blue economy sectors — such as marine biotechnology, renewable marine energy, maritime technologies, circular economy initiatives, and blue data systems — remains underdeveloped.

Consequently, most external financing relevant to the blue economy in Georgia is concentrated in traditional sectors such as tourism, infrastructure, environmental management, research cooperation, capacity building, and regional cooperation rather than emerging maritime innovation sectors.

3.3 Private Investment and Public-Private Partnerships

Private investment plays an important role in the development of several blue economy-related sectors in Georgia, particularly tourism, transport and logistics, real estate, and infrastructure development. However, private financing remains concentrated in commercially established sectors, while investment in emerging or innovation-driven blue economy activities remains limited.

At present, Georgia does not have a dedicated “blue finance” ecosystem or specialized investment mechanisms targeting sustainable maritime sectors. Instead, private sector participation occurs mainly through traditional investment models and sector-specific commercial activities.

⁴⁷ UNDP Georgia and Global Environment Facility, official programme/project information.

⁴⁸ European Commission, European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund; European Commission, BlueInvest, official programme information.

Tourism and Hospitality Investment

Tourism and hospitality represent the most active area of private investment relevant to the blue economy. Domestic and foreign investment has been directed toward hotel development, coastal real estate, tourism infrastructure, restaurants, entertainment facilities, and related services, particularly in Black Sea coastal destinations such as Batumi and Adjara.

Private investment has contributed to the expansion of tourism infrastructure and accommodation capacity over the past decade. Public institutions, including Enterprise Georgia/Georgian Economic Development Corporation JSC, have also supported private sector participation through investment promotion activities, financial support mechanisms, and business support programmes.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, tourism-related private investment has primarily focused on commercial growth and real estate development rather than sustainability-oriented maritime development. Environmental sustainability, coastal carrying capacity, ecosystem protection, and integrated coastal planning are often weakly integrated into investment decision-making processes.

Transport, Ports, and Logistics

Private sector participation is also important in maritime transport, ports, and logistics. Port operations, cargo handling, logistics services, and transport infrastructure involve both domestic and international private actors.

Georgia's strategic geographic position as a regional transit corridor has attracted investment interest in transport connectivity and logistics infrastructure. Public-private cooperation is therefore relevant for infrastructure modernization and regional connectivity projects.⁵⁰

However, investment remains concentrated in traditional transport and logistics activities, while innovation-oriented maritime industries and sustainable blue economy sectors remain underdeveloped.

Public-Private Partnerships and Destination-Level Cooperation

Public-private partnership mechanisms exist in Georgia as a framework for infrastructure development and investment attraction, including in sectors such as transport, municipal infrastructure, tourism-related development, and urban regeneration. However, these mechanisms are generally not structured around integrated blue economy objectives.

⁴⁹ Enterprise Georgia, official website and programme descriptions.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia / Maritime Transport Agency, official information on ports, logistics and maritime transport.

In the context of coastal and maritime development, PPP-type cooperation may be relevant for:

- tourism destination development;
- municipal infrastructure improvements;
- transport and connectivity projects;
- urban regeneration initiatives in coastal cities.

An important example of a formalized destination-level public-private cooperation model is the introduction of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) under the Law of Georgia on Tourism. The DMO model is intended to support collaborative destination governance by bringing together public institutions, tourism stakeholders and local actors within a shared development framework.⁵¹

However, practical implementation remains limited. In many cases, private sector participation in destination governance structures appears to remain relatively weak, and cooperation mechanisms continue to depend heavily on public sector leadership and donor-supported initiatives. As a result, the potential of DMOs to function as effective public-private cooperation platforms for integrated and sustainable tourism development has not yet been fully realized.

More broadly, PPP and public-private cooperation mechanisms are usually designed from sectoral or infrastructure perspectives rather than through coordinated maritime or coastal governance approaches.

Emerging Sectors and Investment Gaps

Private investment in emerging blue economy sectors remains very limited in Georgia. Areas such as marine biotechnology, renewable marine energy, maritime technologies, circular economy initiatives, sustainable aquaculture innovation, blue data systems, and blue carbon projects have not yet attracted significant investment activity.

Several factors contribute to this situation:

- absence of targeted investment incentives for blue economy sectors;
- limited market maturity;
- weak innovation ecosystems;
- regulatory uncertainty in emerging maritime sectors;
- insufficient research-commercialization linkages;
- low awareness of blue economy investment opportunities.

As a result, the private investment landscape remains concentrated in traditional sectors with established commercial returns, while innovation-driven and sustainability-oriented maritime sectors remain largely underdeveloped.

⁵¹ Parliament of Georgia, *Law of Georgia on Public-Private Partnership*; Parliament of Georgia, *Law of Georgia on Tourism*.

3.4 Accessibility and Funding Gaps

Despite the existence of multiple national, international, and private financing mechanisms relevant to blue economy-related sectors, access to funding in Georgia remains uneven and fragmented. Financial support is distributed across different institutions, programmes, and sectors, often without a coordinated framework linking funding priorities to broader blue economy objectives.

As a result, while individual sectors receive varying forms of financial support, the overall financing environment lacks coherence, continuity, and strategic integration.

Accessibility Challenges

One of the main barriers to effective utilization of funding opportunities is uneven institutional and organizational capacity. Access to international programmes, donor funding, and innovation-oriented financial instruments often requires technical expertise, administrative capacity, project preparation skills, and international partnerships, which are not equally available across institutions and stakeholders.

Public institutions and larger organizations generally demonstrate stronger capacity to access and manage external funding, while smaller municipalities, SMEs, local organizations, and emerging sectoral actors often face greater barriers to participation.

Co-financing and pre-financing requirements may also create barriers for smaller municipalities, SMEs, civil society organizations and emerging sectoral actors, especially where internal financial resources and project-management capacity are limited.

In addition, many funding programmes operate through complex application and reporting procedures, creating administrative burdens that can discourage participation, particularly among smaller organizations and private sector actors.

Limited awareness of available funding instruments and weak project-development capacity can further reduce access to funding, particularly for smaller municipalities, SMEs, civil society organizations and emerging blue economy actors.

Fragmentation of Financing Mechanisms

Funding relevant to the blue economy is currently dispersed across separate sectoral and institutional channels, including tourism, infrastructure, environment, research, innovation, and regional development. However, these mechanisms are rarely coordinated within a common strategic framework.

This fragmentation creates several challenges:

- duplication of activities and priorities;
- weak coordination between funding institutions;
- limited support for cross-sectoral initiatives;
- insufficient integration between environmental and economic financing objectives;

- difficulties in developing long-term and integrated maritime projects.

As a result, financing mechanisms often reinforce sectoral silos rather than supporting integrated blue economy development.

Dependence on Donor-Driven Funding

Another major characteristic of the current funding landscape is the strong dependence on externally funded programmes and donor-supported initiatives. Many projects related to environmental sustainability, regional cooperation, innovation, and institutional development rely heavily on EU programmes, international organizations, and development partners.

While these programmes provide essential financial and technical support, they are frequently project-based and limited in duration. This creates challenges related to continuity, long-term sustainability, and institutionalization of project outcomes after funding periods end.

In addition, donor priorities do not always fully align with national strategic needs, which may contribute to fragmented implementation and short-term project orientation.

Limited Financing for Emerging Blue Economy Sectors

Traditional sectors such as tourism, transport, and infrastructure receive comparatively stronger financial support due to their commercial viability and established economic importance. In contrast, emerging blue economy sectors remain significantly underfunded.

Areas facing limited access to financing include:

- marine innovation and technologies;
- sustainable aquaculture modernization;
- marine renewable energy;
- circular economy initiatives related to marine resources;
- blue carbon and ecosystem restoration projects;
- marine environmental monitoring and maritime data systems.

These sectors often face higher investment risks, lower market maturity, and limited institutional support, reducing their attractiveness for both public and private financing.

Overall, the main funding gap is not only the lack of individual funding sources, but the absence of a coordinated financing framework that connects available national, international, donor-supported and private instruments with long-term blue economy priorities. The practical relevance of these funding-access barriers is further examined through stakeholder evidence in Chapter 5.

3.5 Desk Research Summary: Funding Instruments

The desk review of funding instruments shows that financing relevant to blue economy development in Georgia is distributed across national public programmes, EU and international funding mechanisms, donor-supported initiatives, private investment and public-private cooperation mechanisms.

At the national level, public support is mainly linked to tourism development, regional infrastructure, research and innovation, environmental protection, climate-related initiatives and transport connectivity. Most mechanisms remain organized through separate sectoral institutions and programmes rather than through a unified blue economy financing framework. However, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia has introduced a more directly relevant research funding instrument through the “Black Sea Blue Development” grant competition, which supports research on the Black Sea and coastal regions and contributes to the implementation of the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda.

EU and international financial instruments provide important support for research cooperation, environmental protection, regional collaboration, capacity building, infrastructure modernization and innovation-related activities. Programmes and instruments such as Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, LIFE, the Restore our Ocean and Waters Mission, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, and international development finance mechanisms are relevant for Georgia’s participation in Black Sea and European cooperation frameworks. SRNSFG’s participation in the EU Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership call further strengthens Georgia’s access to transnational blue-economy research and innovation cooperation.

Private investment is most visible in commercially established sectors such as coastal tourism, hospitality, real estate, maritime transport, ports and logistics. Public-private partnership and destination-level cooperation mechanisms are also relevant for infrastructure and destination development. However, desk research indicates that specialized blue finance mechanisms and sustainability-oriented investment instruments remain limited.

The reviewed funding environment also points to several issues requiring further assessment, including dispersed financing mechanisms, uneven access to funding, dependence on donor-driven projects, limited co-financing capacity among some stakeholders, and weak financing for emerging blue economy sectors such as sustainable aquaculture, marine renewable energy, blue carbon, circular economy initiatives, marine environmental monitoring, maritime data systems and market-oriented marine innovation.

Overall, Georgia’s funding environment should be assessed as gradually emerging rather than absent. Dedicated blue-economy-relevant research calls now exist, especially through SRNSFG, but the broader financing system remains project-based and insufficiently coordinated. The funding review therefore highlights the practical financing constraints that matter most for implementation: access to funds, co-financing capacity, project-development skills, investment prioritization and long-term coordination.

4. Target Group Mapping and Sector Analysis

This section maps the main blue economy-related sectors in Georgia and identifies the key target groups associated with each sector, including public institutions, private sector actors, research and education bodies, civil society organizations, and local authorities. The analysis focuses on sectors with the highest relevance for Georgia’s Black Sea context and assesses their institutional setting, investment environment, structural challenges, and potential alignment with blue economy and CMA priorities.

4.1 Coastal and Maritime Tourism

Sector Overview

Coastal and maritime tourism represents one of the most important and economically developed blue economy-related sectors in Georgia. The Black Sea coastline, particularly the Adjara region and the city of Batumi, has become a major tourism destination, attracting both international and domestic visitors and contributing significantly to regional economic development.⁵²

Over the past decade, tourism growth has been driven by substantial investment in hospitality infrastructure, transport connectivity, urban development, destination promotion and tourism services. Coastal tourism activities include seaside recreation, hospitality services, entertainment, cultural tourism, conference and event tourism, and supporting service industries such as restaurants, retail and transport.

The tourism sector has become especially important in the economic structure of coastal municipalities, generating employment, investment, and infrastructure development. As a result, coastal tourism currently represents the most visible and commercially developed component of Georgia's blue economy.

However, despite its economic importance, maritime and coastal tourism development in Georgia has historically been approached primarily through a growth-oriented tourism framework rather than through an integrated maritime or coastal governance perspective.

Institutional and Strategic Framework

The governance of coastal and maritime tourism is primarily coordinated through the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD) and the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA). GNTA is responsible for tourism marketing, destination promotion, tourism product development, destination support activities, service quality improvement, tourism events and campaigns.

At the regional level, the Adjara Department of Tourism and Resorts is especially relevant because tourism activity is concentrated along the Black Sea coast. Through its tourism development and destination management functions, the institution contributes to regional tourism promotion, product diversification, and tourism infrastructure development.

Large-scale tourism-related infrastructure investments, including roads, municipal infrastructure, public spaces, water and sanitation systems and coastal rehabilitation, are primarily implemented through the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) and municipal authorities. Public institutions, including Enterprise Georgia / Georgian Economic Development Corporation JSC, have also supported private sector participation in tourism and hospitality through investment promotion, business support and financial support mechanisms.⁵³

Strategically, tourism development has been guided primarily through the Georgia Tourism Strategy 2025 and related sectoral policy documents. However, these frameworks were largely oriented toward increasing visitor

⁵² Georgian National Tourism Administration, tourism statistics and official information.

⁵³ Georgian National Tourism Administration; Adjara Department of Tourism and Resorts; Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure; Enterprise Georgia/Georgian Economic Development Corporation JSC, official websites and programme information.

flows, tourism revenues, and destination competitiveness rather than integrating tourism within broader blue economy or coastal governance frameworks.

The development process for Georgia's National Tourism Strategy 2035 represents an important policy transition. This new strategy may provide an opportunity to update national tourism priorities and strengthen the integration of tourism competitiveness, sustainability, regional development, destination management and coastal tourism planning. From a blue economy perspective, it also creates a potential entry point for linking tourism policy more clearly with coastal management, environmental protection and maritime governance.⁵⁴

The adoption of the Law of Georgia on Tourism represents an important step toward modernizing tourism governance and strengthening institutional coordination mechanisms. The law also introduced the concept of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), intended to support collaborative destination governance through public-private cooperation.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, integration between tourism policy, environmental sustainability, coastal management, and maritime spatial planning remains limited. As a result, tourism governance continues to operate largely as a sector-specific framework rather than as part of a coordinated blue economy strategy.

Funding and Investment Environment

Coastal and maritime tourism has attracted substantial public and private investment over the past decade. Public support mechanisms include destination marketing, tourism promotion, infrastructure investments, and tourism development programmes implemented through GNTA, MRDI, municipal authorities, and Enterprise Georgia/Georgian Economic Development Corporation JSC.

Private investment has been especially concentrated in:

- hotel and accommodation development;
- coastal real estate;
- restaurants and entertainment facilities;
- tourism services and hospitality infrastructure.

International financial institutions and donor-funded programmes have also contributed to tourism infrastructure modernization, urban regeneration, sustainability initiatives, and regional development projects in coastal areas.

Despite this strong investment activity, financing remains fragmented and primarily growth-oriented. Investment decisions are often driven by commercial and real estate considerations, while sustainability, ecosystem protection, coastal carrying capacity, and long-term maritime planning receive comparatively less attention.

Key Challenges and Structural Gaps

Although coastal tourism is one of the strongest economic sectors in Georgia, several structural challenges limit its contribution to a sustainable and integrated blue economy model.

⁵⁴ Georgian National Tourism Administration, Georgia National Tourism Strategy 2025; Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia / Spatial and Urban Development Agency, Development of Georgia's National Tourism Strategy 2035, Terms of Reference.

⁵⁵ Parliament of Georgia, *Law of Georgia on Tourism*.

A major challenge is the limited integration between tourism development and coastal environmental management. Rapid tourism growth has increased pressure on coastal ecosystems, urban infrastructure, waste management systems, and public services, particularly in high-intensity tourism destinations.

In addition, tourism governance remains fragmented across national, regional, and municipal institutions. While multiple institutions are involved in tourism development, coordination mechanisms remain relatively weak, especially in relation to environmental planning and integrated coastal governance.

Another challenge is the relatively limited implementation of participatory and collaborative governance mechanisms. Although the Law on Tourism introduced Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) as public-private cooperation structures, practical implementation remains uneven, and private sector participation in destination governance is still relatively weak.

Seasonality also remains an important structural issue, particularly in Black Sea coastal tourism. Economic activity remains concentrated during limited seasonal periods, affecting employment stability, infrastructure utilization, and long-term sustainability.

Finally, tourism development has historically focused more on quantitative growth indicators, such as visitor numbers and infrastructure expansion, than on integrated sustainability indicators linked to environmental protection, resource management, and blue economy principles.

Potential and Relevance to the Blue Economy and CMA

Despite these challenges, coastal and maritime tourism represents one of the sectors with the strongest potential for alignment with blue economy and Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) priorities.

Several factors support this potential:

- strategic Black Sea location;
- strong tourism demand and infrastructure base;
- growing policy attention to sustainability;
- opportunities for regional tourism cooperation;
- increasing integration with European tourism and sustainability standards.

The ongoing development of the Tourism Strategy 2035 may also provide an important opportunity to strengthen integration between tourism policy, sustainability objectives, coastal management, and broader blue economy frameworks.

In addition, there is significant potential for:

- sustainable coastal tourism models;
- eco-tourism and nature-based tourism;
- diversification of tourism products;
- improved destination governance;
- stronger integration between tourism and environmental protection initiatives.

If supported by stronger institutional coordination, sustainability-oriented planning, and improved integration with maritime governance frameworks, coastal tourism could become a leading sector in Georgia’s transition toward a more integrated and sustainable blue economy model.

4.2 Maritime Transport, Ports, and Logistics

Sector Overview

Maritime transport, ports, and logistics represent one of the strategically most important blue economy-related sectors in Georgia. Due to its geographic location between Europe and Asia and its access to the Black Sea, Georgia plays a significant role as a regional transit and connectivity corridor within the South Caucasus and wider Black Sea region.

The sector is centered around key Black Sea ports, particularly Poti and Batumi, which support cargo transportation, transit trade, energy logistics, and regional connectivity. Maritime transport is closely linked with Georgia’s broader transport and logistics system, including railways, road corridors, and international trade routes connecting Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and European markets.⁵⁶

In addition to port and logistics infrastructure, Georgia’s Black Sea connectivity is also shaped by strategic submarine infrastructure. The Black Sea Submarine Cable Project is particularly relevant in this regard, as it aims to create a high-voltage electricity connection between Georgia and Europe across the Black Sea. Although it belongs primarily to the energy and connectivity domain, it is relevant to blue economy analysis because it involves maritime space, seabed infrastructure, energy security, regional cooperation and long-term integration between the South Caucasus and European markets.⁵⁷

The development of transport and logistics infrastructure has become an important component of Georgia’s economic policy and regional integration strategy. As a result, maritime transport and logistics represent one of the most institutionally and economically significant sectors associated with the blue economy in Georgia.

However, despite its economic and geopolitical importance, the sector is primarily approached through transport, trade, and infrastructure policy frameworks rather than through an integrated maritime governance or blue economy perspective.

Institutional and Strategic Framework

The governance of maritime transport and logistics is primarily coordinated through the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD), which oversees transport policy, logistics development, port-related activities, and maritime connectivity.

⁵⁶ MoESD, National Transport and Logistics Strategy of Georgia 2023–2030; Maritime Transport Agency, official information.

⁵⁷ Georgian State Electrosystem, “Black Sea Submarine Cable Project,” official project information, accessed 16 June 2026, <https://www.gse.com.ge/projects/international-projects/Black-Sea-Submarine-Cable-Project>.

The Maritime Transport Agency plays a central regulatory role in maritime safety, vessel registration, shipping regulation, and implementation of international maritime standards. Port operations and logistics activities are implemented through a combination of public and private actors, including port operators and logistics companies.

Strategically, the sector is strongly linked to Georgia’s broader connectivity and transit ambitions, including regional transport corridors and international trade integration initiatives. The National Transport and Logistics Strategy of Georgia 2023–2030 and the Maritime Transport Strategic Development Concept identify transport connectivity, logistics efficiency, port development, maritime safety and transit competitiveness as important policy priorities.⁵⁸

These priorities include:

- modernization of transport infrastructure;
- strengthening transit competitiveness;
- improving logistics efficiency;
- increasing regional connectivity;
- attracting investment into transport and port infrastructure.

Large-scale infrastructure development is also supported through the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI), particularly regarding road infrastructure and regional connectivity.

Despite the strategic importance of maritime transport, the sector is not currently integrated into a broader maritime spatial planning or blue economy governance framework. Coordination between transport development, environmental sustainability, coastal planning, and marine ecosystem management remains relatively limited.

Funding and Investment Environment

Maritime transport and logistics have attracted significant public and private investment over recent decades. Infrastructure modernization, port development, logistics expansion, and regional connectivity projects have been supported through a combination of:

- state investments;
- international financial institutions;
- private sector participation;
- public-private cooperation mechanisms.

International financial institutions, including the World Bank, EBRD, ADB, and other development partners, have played an important role in financing transport infrastructure modernization and regional connectivity projects.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ MoESD, National Transport and Logistics Strategy of Georgia 2023–2030; Government of Georgia, Maritime Transport Strategic Development Concept, 2023.

⁵⁹ World Bank, EBRD and Asian Development Bank, Georgia country/project information.

Private investment has also been significant in port operations, logistics services, cargo handling, and transport infrastructure. Georgia's role as a regional transit corridor has increased the commercial attractiveness of the sector, especially in relation to trade and logistics activities.

However, financing remains concentrated on traditional transport and infrastructure priorities rather than sustainability-oriented maritime development. Environmental considerations, green port development, and integrated coastal planning are often addressed separately from infrastructure investment decisions.

Key Challenges and Structural Gaps

Despite its strategic importance, the maritime transport and logistics sector faces several structural and governance-related challenges.

One major issue is the limited integration between transport infrastructure development and environmental or coastal governance frameworks. Port expansion, logistics infrastructure, and coastal urbanization may create pressures on marine ecosystems and coastal environments if not integrated into broader sustainability planning mechanisms.

Another challenge is the absence of maritime spatial planning mechanisms capable of coordinating competing uses of coastal and maritime space. Transport and infrastructure planning are generally implemented through sector-specific approaches rather than integrated maritime governance systems.

The sector also remains heavily dependent on regional geopolitical dynamics and international trade flows, creating vulnerability to external economic and political developments.

In addition, while transport infrastructure development has advanced significantly, innovation and diversification within the maritime economy remain relatively limited. Emerging areas such as green shipping, sustainable port operations, maritime digitalization, low-carbon logistics, port environmental management, and maritime data systems remain underdeveloped.

Coordination between transport, tourism, fisheries, environmental protection, and coastal development policies also remains relatively weak, reinforcing the broader fragmentation identified throughout previous sections of the report.

Potential and Relevance to the Blue Economy and CMA

Maritime transport and logistics represent one of the sectors with the strongest strategic relevance to the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) and broader Black Sea regional cooperation frameworks.⁶⁰

Georgia's geographic position provides significant opportunities for:

- strengthening regional maritime connectivity;

⁶⁰ Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, official framework documents.

- enhancing trade integration;
- supporting Black Sea transport cooperation;
- improving multimodal logistics systems;
- increasing integration with European and regional transport corridors.

The Black Sea Submarine Cable Project further strengthens Georgia's strategic relevance within Black Sea connectivity by linking maritime space with energy interconnection, regional cooperation and long-term integration with European markets. Although the project is primarily an energy infrastructure initiative, it is relevant to blue economy analysis because it involves seabed infrastructure, strategic use of the Black Sea, environmental assessment, energy security and cross-border connectivity.

There is also growing potential for:

- modernization of port infrastructure;
- development of greener and more sustainable logistics systems;
- digitalization of maritime transport;
- green port management and improved environmental performance;
- increased compliance with international environmental and maritime standards;
- integration of sustainability principles into infrastructure planning.

The sector could also benefit from stronger alignment between transport policy, environmental sustainability objectives, and integrated maritime governance frameworks.

If combined with improved cross-sectoral coordination and long-term strategic planning, maritime transport and logistics could become a central pillar of Georgia's broader blue economy transition and regional Black Sea cooperation efforts.

4.3 Fisheries and Aquaculture

Sector Overview

Compared to tourism and maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture represent a relatively small but strategically important component of Georgia's blue economy. The sector contributes to food production, local livelihoods, and regional economic activity, particularly in coastal and rural communities.

Marine fisheries activities are concentrated along the Black Sea coast, while aquaculture development remains limited in scale and is primarily focused on inland production systems.⁶¹ Despite its relatively modest economic contribution, the sector is important from the perspective of sustainability, biodiversity management, food security, and coastal community development.

⁶¹ FAO, Georgia — National Aquaculture Sector Overview; FAO, Aquaculture Market in the Black Sea: Country Profiles.

At present, fisheries and aquaculture in Georgia remain underdeveloped relative to their potential. Sector development is constrained by limited modernization, weak investment levels, fragmented governance, and insufficient integration into broader maritime and blue economy frameworks.

Institutional and Strategic Framework

The fisheries and aquaculture sector is primarily governed through the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA), which is responsible for fisheries regulation, licensing, resource management, environmental sustainability, and implementation of sector-related policies.

Regulatory responsibilities include:

- fisheries licensing and monitoring;
- resource management and sustainability measures;
- aquaculture regulation;
- environmental oversight and compliance.⁶²

The sector is also influenced by broader environmental and biodiversity policies, particularly in relation to marine ecosystem protection and sustainable resource use.

The Law of Georgia on Aquaculture provides an important legal basis for aquaculture regulation and development, while fisheries-related rules and technical regulations support resource management and sector oversight. In addition, Georgia has approved a national aquaculture strategy, which represents an important step toward more structured sector development.⁶³

However, this remains a sector-specific aquaculture framework rather than a broader integrated fisheries, maritime, or blue economy strategy. Existing approaches remain largely regulatory and sectoral, while links with coastal development, tourism, marine environmental management, maritime spatial planning and regional blue economy governance remain limited.

Funding and Investment Environment

Public and private investment in fisheries and aquaculture remains comparatively limited relative to other blue economy-related sectors.

Public support mechanisms are mainly connected to:

- agricultural and rural development programmes;
- environmental management initiatives;
- donor-supported sustainability and resource management projects.

⁶² Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia / National Environment Agency, fisheries, aquaculture and water biodiversity information; Parliament of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Aquaculture.

⁶³ FAO, "Georgia Approves National Aquaculture Strategy Through EU, Sweden and FAO Support," 2024.

International organizations and development partners have supported selected initiatives related to aquaculture development, fisheries sustainability, biodiversity protection, environmental monitoring, and rural economic development. However, large-scale investment and modernization programmes remain limited.

Private sector participation is generally concentrated in small and medium-scale fishing and aquaculture activities, with relatively low levels of technological modernization and innovation investment.

As a result, the sector faces difficulties in improving productivity, sustainability standards, infrastructure quality, processing capacity, and value chain development.

Key Challenges and Structural Gaps

Several structural and institutional challenges constrain the development of fisheries and aquaculture in Georgia. One major challenge is the limited scale and modernization of the sector. Infrastructure, processing capacity, technology adoption, and value chain integration remain relatively weak, reducing competitiveness and limiting opportunities for expansion.

Another important issue is the limited integration between fisheries and aquaculture governance and broader blue economy planning. Sector management is primarily approached through agricultural, environmental and regulatory frameworks rather than through integrated maritime economic development strategies.

Environmental sustainability also represents a critical concern. Sustainable resource management, biodiversity protection, overfishing prevention, aquatic animal health, and ecosystem monitoring require stronger institutional capacity, improved data systems, and effective enforcement mechanisms.

The sector additionally faces:

- limited access to financing and investment;
- weak research and innovation support;
- insufficient technical expertise and training;
- limited integration into regional and international value chains;
- low attractiveness for private investors.

In addition, coordination between fisheries policy, aquaculture development, environmental governance, tourism development, and coastal management remains relatively fragmented.

Potential and Relevance to the Blue Economy and CMA

Despite current limitations, fisheries and aquaculture possess important long-term potential within Georgia's blue economy framework.

Several opportunities exist in relation to:

- sustainable fisheries management;
- modernization of aquaculture systems;
- value-added seafood production;
- improved environmental sustainability standards;

- regional cooperation and knowledge exchange;
- integration with EU and CMA sustainability priorities.

The sector is particularly relevant to CMA objectives related to marine sustainability, ecosystem-based management, and regional cooperation in marine resource governance.⁶⁴

Increased investment in sustainable aquaculture technologies, research and monitoring systems, processing capacity, technical skills development, aquatic animal health, and environmental standards would be necessary to improve the sector's long-term competitiveness, sustainability, and integration into broader blue economy value chains.

At the same time, stronger integration between fisheries governance, aquaculture development, environmental protection, and broader maritime planning would be necessary to support sustainable sector expansion.

4.4 Marine Environmental Protection and Ecosystem Management

Sector Overview

Marine environmental protection and ecosystem management represent a fundamental component of the blue economy in Georgia, particularly in the context of sustainable coastal development, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and alignment with European and Black Sea regional environmental frameworks.

Georgia's Black Sea coastline includes important marine and coastal ecosystems that support biodiversity, tourism, fisheries, and broader environmental functions. Coastal wetlands, marine habitats, protected areas, and river systems connected to the Black Sea play a critical role in maintaining ecological balance and supporting economic activities linked to maritime and coastal resources.⁶⁵

At the same time, marine and coastal ecosystems face increasing pressure from urbanization, tourism development, pollution, infrastructure expansion, climate change, and unsustainable resource use. As a result, environmental protection has become increasingly important within national policy discussions and regional cooperation initiatives related to the Black Sea.

Despite this growing recognition, marine ecosystem governance in Georgia remains primarily embedded within broader environmental and biodiversity management frameworks rather than within a dedicated marine or blue economy strategy.

Institutional and Strategic Framework

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) is the primary institution responsible for environmental governance relevant to marine and coastal ecosystems. Its responsibilities include biodiversity

⁶⁴ Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, official framework documents.

⁶⁵ Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia, official information on protected areas; World Bank, Impacts of Climate Change on Georgia's Coastal Zone, 2020.

conservation, environmental policy, pollution control, water resource management, fisheries regulation, and climate-related environmental measures.

Supporting institutions include:

- the National Environment Agency (NEA), responsible for environmental monitoring, hydrological and marine data collection, and analytical functions;
- the Agency of Protected Areas (APA), which manages protected territories and biodiversity conservation areas relevant to coastal and marine ecosystems.⁶⁶

Environmental governance is supported through several national policy instruments and legal frameworks, including the National Environmental Action Programme, environmental assessment procedures, biodiversity protection measures, water resource management reforms, and climate-related policy initiatives.⁶⁷

Georgia also participates in regional environmental cooperation frameworks related to the Black Sea, including the Black Sea Commission and CMA-related sustainability initiatives.⁶⁸

However, marine environmental governance remains fragmented across institutions and policy areas. Coordination between environmental protection, coastal development, tourism expansion, infrastructure planning, and maritime economic activities remains relatively weak.

In addition, Georgia does not currently possess a comprehensive marine strategy or integrated coastal zone management framework capable of systematically linking environmental sustainability with broader maritime economic development.

Funding and Investment Environment

Environmental protection and ecosystem management activities are supported through a combination of:

- state environmental programmes;
- international donor funding;
- EU-supported regional cooperation initiatives;
- climate and biodiversity-related projects.

International organizations and development partners, including UNDP, GEF, the World Bank, EU programmes, and other environmental cooperation mechanisms, play a particularly important role in financing environmental monitoring, biodiversity conservation, protected areas management, climate adaptation, and sustainability projects.⁶⁹

Funding is often directed toward:

- ecosystem conservation;

⁶⁶ Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia; National Environment Agency; Agency of Protected Areas, official websites and institutional information.

⁶⁷ MEPA, Fourth National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia for 2022–2026; Parliament of Georgia, Environmental Assessment Code; Parliament of Georgia, Law of Georgia on Water Resources Management; Government of Georgia, Georgia's 2030 Climate Change Strategy and 2021–2023 Action Plan.

⁶⁸ Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution, official information; Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, official framework documents.

⁶⁹ UNDP Georgia, GEF and World Bank, Georgia country/project information.

- pollution reduction;
- environmental monitoring systems;
- climate resilience;
- protected area management;
- sustainable resource management initiatives.

Despite the importance of environmental funding, financial support remains heavily project-based and donor-driven. Long-term financing mechanisms for marine ecosystem restoration, coastal resilience, and integrated environmental management remain relatively limited.

In addition, environmental financing is often weakly connected to economic sector planning, reducing opportunities for integrated blue economy approaches combining sustainability and economic development objectives.

Key Challenges and Structural Gaps

Several structural challenges constrain the effectiveness of marine environmental protection and ecosystem management in Georgia.

One major challenge is the increasing environmental pressure associated with tourism growth, urbanization, infrastructure expansion, and coastal development. These pressures affect marine ecosystems, coastal biodiversity, water quality, and environmental sustainability.

Another important issue is the fragmented nature of governance and policy coordination. Environmental institutions often operate separately from economic development and infrastructure planning processes, limiting the integration of sustainability considerations into broader maritime and coastal development decisions.

The absence of maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management mechanisms also limits the ability to manage competing uses of coastal and marine space effectively.

Additional challenges include:

- limited environmental monitoring capacity in some areas;
- dependence on donor-funded projects;
- insufficient integration of scientific research into policy-making;
- weak enforcement capacity for environmental regulations;
- limited long-term financing for ecosystem restoration and climate adaptation.

Climate change also represents an increasing risk for coastal ecosystems, infrastructure, biodiversity, and local communities, reinforcing the need for more integrated and resilience-oriented approaches to marine governance.

Potential and Relevance to the Blue Economy and CMA

Marine environmental protection is directly linked to several core principles of the blue economy and the Common Maritime Agenda (CMA), particularly ecosystem-based management, sustainability, climate resilience, and regional cooperation.

Georgia possesses significant opportunities to strengthen:

- marine biodiversity conservation;
- coastal ecosystem restoration;
- climate adaptation and resilience measures;
- regional environmental cooperation;
- environmental monitoring and data systems;
- integration of sustainability principles into maritime development.

Growing alignment with EU environmental standards and increasing participation in Black Sea regional cooperation initiatives also create opportunities for strengthening institutional capacity and policy integration.

In addition, environmental sustainability could serve as an important foundation for the long-term development of other blue economy sectors, particularly tourism, fisheries, and coastal infrastructure development.

However, realizing this potential would require stronger coordination between environmental governance and economic sector planning, improved institutional integration, and more sustainable long-term financing mechanisms.

4.5 Emerging and Underdeveloped Blue Economy Sectors

In addition to the more established sectors of tourism, maritime transport, fisheries, and environmental management, the blue economy framework also includes a range of emerging sectors linked to innovation, sustainability, marine technologies, alternative resource use, and new forms of maritime value creation. In the Georgian context, however, many of these sectors remain either underdeveloped, weakly institutionalized, or largely absent from national economic and policy frameworks.⁷⁰

As a result, Georgia's blue economy currently remains concentrated primarily in traditional maritime-related sectors, while newer and innovation-driven blue economy activities have yet to achieve significant economic or institutional development.

Marine Renewable Energy

Marine renewable energy remains largely undeveloped in Georgia. Although the Black Sea may provide long-term potential for offshore renewable energy development, particularly offshore wind, there are currently no significant marine renewable energy projects implemented at commercial scale in Georgia.

Energy policy in Georgia continues to focus primarily on hydropower and terrestrial renewable energy sources, while offshore renewable energy has not yet emerged as a strategic policy or investment priority. As a result,

⁷⁰ European Commission, *Blue Growth: Opportunities for Marine and Maritime Sustainable Growth*; European Commission, *EU Blue Economy Report 2025*.

institutional frameworks, technical expertise, regulatory mechanisms and investment incentives related to marine renewable energy remain very limited.⁷¹

Marine Biotechnology and Innovation

Marine biotechnology and marine-related innovation sectors remain at a very early stage of development. There is currently limited research-commercialization capacity, weak integration between scientific research and private investment, and minimal institutional focus on marine biotechnology applications.

Although some research and environmental monitoring activities exist within universities, public agencies, and research institutions, these are generally not linked to broader blue economy innovation ecosystems or commercialization frameworks.

Shipbuilding and Ship Repair

Shipbuilding and ship repair activities are relatively limited in Georgia compared to larger maritime economies in the Black Sea region. Existing activities appear to be mainly small-scale and service-oriented rather than industrially integrated or export-oriented.

As a result, the sector currently plays only a minor role within Georgia's maritime economy and has limited strategic visibility within national blue economy-related discussions.⁷²

Blue Carbon, Ecosystem Restoration, and Circular Economy Initiatives

Blue carbon initiatives, marine ecosystem restoration financing, and circular economy approaches linked to marine resources remain largely underdeveloped. Although environmental protection and biodiversity conservation activities exist, these are typically implemented through broader environmental programmes rather than through dedicated blue economy mechanisms.

Similarly, marine waste management and pollution control remain primarily environmental governance issues rather than innovation-driven blue economy sectors. While regional and donor-supported projects address marine pollution and environmental sustainability, integrated circular economy approaches linked to coastal and maritime systems remain limited.

Marine Environmental Monitoring, Maritime Data Systems, and Digital Technologies

⁷¹ MoESD, Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of Georgia; IEA, Georgia Energy Profile; World Bank, Technical Potential for Offshore Wind in the Black Sea.

⁷² Government of Georgia, Maritime Transport Strategic Development Concept, 2023.

Marine environmental monitoring and marine data collection activities are primarily conducted through public environmental institutions such as the National Environment Agency and through research-oriented projects supported by international partners.⁷³

However, integrated maritime data systems, digital maritime technologies, and advanced marine observation infrastructure remain relatively limited. Data collection and monitoring functions are often fragmented across institutions and projects, reducing opportunities for integrated maritime planning and evidence-based blue economy governance.

Maritime digitalization, green port technologies, alternative fuels, energy-efficiency systems, and digital logistics solutions may become increasingly relevant for Georgia's blue economy transition. However, these areas remain at an early stage of development and require stronger technical capacity, investment support, institutional coordination, and links between public agencies, research institutions, ports, and private sector actors.

Cross-Cutting Skills and Commercialization Gaps

A cross-cutting limitation across emerging blue economy sectors is the weak connection between research, skills development, investment, and commercialization. Areas such as marine biotechnology, maritime digitalization, sustainable aquaculture technologies, green port management, and marine environmental monitoring require specialized technical skills and stronger links between academic institutions, public agencies and private sector actors.

Without targeted policy support, investment incentives, research-commercialization mechanisms, and skills development programmes, these emerging sectors are unlikely to develop beyond isolated projects or small-scale initiatives.

Overall, emerging and underdeveloped blue economy sectors in Georgia represent long-term potential rather than immediate economic drivers. Their future development would require clearer strategic prioritization, stronger research and innovation capacity, improved access to finance, and better integration with national blue economy, environmental, energy, transport, and regional development policies.

4.6 Desk Research Summary: Sector Analysis

The sectoral desk review shows that Georgia's blue economy-related activities are concentrated mainly in traditional and already established sectors, particularly coastal and maritime tourism, maritime transport, ports and logistics, fisheries and aquaculture, and marine environmental protection. Emerging sectors such as marine renewable energy, marine biotechnology, blue carbon, maritime technologies, circular economy initiatives, green port technologies, and marine environmental monitoring and maritime data systems remain at an early stage of development.

⁷³ National Environment Agency of Georgia, official functions and environmental monitoring information; EMODnet, Georgia / National Environmental Agency profile.

Coastal and maritime tourism appears as the most visible and commercially developed blue economy-related sector, particularly along the Black Sea coast and in Adjara. The desk review indicates strong investment activity, public sector support and destination development, but also shows that tourism is still mainly governed through a sector-specific tourism policy framework rather than through integrated coastal or maritime governance. The ongoing development of Tourism Strategy 2035 may provide an opportunity to strengthen the integration of tourism competitiveness, sustainability, destination governance and coastal management.

Maritime transport, ports and logistics are strategically important because of Georgia's Black Sea location and its role as a regional connectivity and transit corridor. The reviewed materials show that this sector is supported by infrastructure investment, port-related activity and logistics development, while its connection with environmental planning, maritime spatial planning and broader blue economy coordination remains limited.

The Black Sea Submarine Cable Project further reinforces this connectivity dimension by adding a strategic energy interconnection component to Georgia's Black Sea role, linking maritime space, seabed infrastructure, energy security and regional cooperation.

Fisheries and aquaculture are smaller in economic scale but relevant for local livelihoods, food production, marine resource management and environmental sustainability. The desk review indicates that the sector is mainly addressed through environmental, agricultural and regulatory frameworks, with limited modernization, investment and integration into broader blue economy planning. The approval of a national aquaculture strategy represents a positive sector-specific step, although it does not yet amount to an integrated fisheries, maritime or blue economy framework.

Marine environmental protection and ecosystem management represent an important sustainability dimension of the blue economy. Existing institutions, environmental legislation, monitoring functions and donor-supported initiatives provide a basis for marine and coastal ecosystem protection. At the same time, the desk review shows that environmental governance is still largely treated as a separate policy domain rather than being systematically integrated with maritime economic development.

Across the reviewed sectors, environmental sustainability appears as a cross-cutting condition for long-term competitiveness, particularly because coastal tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, port development, maritime transport and coastal infrastructure all depend on the quality and resilience of the Black Sea ecosystem.

The review of emerging blue economy sectors indicates that Georgia has not yet developed a strong policy, investment or innovation ecosystem for areas such as marine renewable energy, marine biotechnology, blue carbon, circular economy solutions, maritime digitalization, green port technologies, and marine environmental monitoring and maritime data systems. These areas remain mostly underdeveloped, but they may become relevant for long-term diversification and future alignment with EU and Black Sea blue economy priorities.

Overall, the sector mapping shows that Georgia's blue economy is strongest in sectors that already have institutional and commercial roots, while future diversification depends on weaker and less mature areas such as marine innovation, aquaculture modernization, maritime data systems, green port technologies and ecosystem-based solutions.

5. Stakeholder Interviews: Field Research

5.1 Respondent and Institutional Profile

To complement the desk research and document analysis, targeted stakeholder interviews and structured stakeholder responses were collected from representatives of institutions involved in blue economy-related sectors in Georgia. The objective of the field research was to gather expert perspectives on the current state of blue economy development, assess existing legal, institutional and financial frameworks, identify key bottlenecks and opportunities, and collect recommendations for future policy development.

The stakeholder mapping was designed to ensure representation from institutions involved in policy-making, implementation, research, environmental management, maritime education, local governance, private sector activity, business development, and civil society or expert engagement. The sample therefore covered both policy-level and implementation-level perspectives, as well as sector-specific expertise in maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, marine monitoring, coastal management, maritime education, logistics, investment promotion, and research and innovation cooperation.

Table 2. Stakeholder Groups Represented in the Field Research

Stakeholder Group	Institutions / Organizations Represented	Main Area of Expertise
Public authorities and local government	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development; Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture / Environmental Supervision Department, Black Sea Protection Convention Division; National Environment Agency; Batumi Municipality	Maritime transport policy; environmental governance; Black Sea protection; fisheries and aquaculture; marine monitoring; municipal services; waste management; local-level implementation
Academic, research, maritime education and innovation support institutions	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; Institute of Oceanography and Hydrology; Batumi State Maritime Academy; Batumi Navigation University; Horizon Europe Georgia Office	Marine research; oceanography; hydrology; maritime education and training; blue skills; environmental and maritime studies; EU research and innovation cooperation
Private sector and business support organizations	Trans Logistik Ltd.; International Business Development and Investment Promotion Center (IBDIPC)	Maritime transport and logistics; investment promotion; business development; coastal and maritime tourism
Civil society, independent experts and regional environmental cooperation actors	GIS and remote sensing expert; Black Sea Commission / Integrated Coastal Zone Management expert representation	Integrated coastal zone management; marine observation; environmental cooperation; regional Black Sea initiatives

Source: Author's compilation based on BlueDial stakeholder interviews / structured stakeholder responses, Georgia, 2026.

The institutions and experts represented in the field research cover the principal sectors associated with blue economy development in Georgia, including maritime transport and logistics, coastal and maritime tourism,

fisheries and aquaculture, marine environmental protection, marine monitoring and data, maritime infrastructure, education and research, and regional cooperation. As a result, the findings provide a broad and relevant evidence base for assessing stakeholder perceptions of the opportunities, constraints, and development priorities of the blue economy in Georgia.

5.2 Summary of Interviews

Legal and Strategic Framework

Stakeholder responses indicate that Georgia's blue economy strategic framework is generally perceived as partially developed, but not yet consolidated into a unified national policy direction. Respondents recognized that several sectoral laws, strategies and policy instruments are relevant to blue economy development; however, these instruments are dispersed across different policy areas and are not connected through a dedicated national blue economy strategy.

The interviews confirm that Georgia's current framework relies mainly on sector-specific policy and legal instruments. Maritime transport is covered through maritime legislation and transport-related strategic documents; fisheries and aquaculture are addressed through sectoral environmental and resource-management frameworks; while environmental protection is reflected in broader environmental, climate, water, waste management and biodiversity policies. Some respondents also referred to regional and EU-level frameworks, particularly the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and related Black Sea cooperation initiatives, as useful guides for future policy alignment.

The strongest level of perceived alignment with blue economy objectives was identified in maritime transport, port development, maritime safety, environmental protection and marine monitoring. These are areas where Georgia already has relatively established institutional responsibilities, regulatory instruments, and links with international or regional commitments. This finding reflects Georgia's strategic role as a Black Sea transport and logistics corridor, as well as the increasing importance of marine environmental protection in national and regional cooperation.

At the same time, stakeholders identified important gaps in areas that require a more integrated and innovation-oriented approach. Fisheries and aquaculture, coastal and maritime tourism, marine innovation, blue technologies, private sector investment, research commercialization, and integrated coastal zone management were viewed as less developed or insufficiently connected to a broader blue economy vision. These gaps suggest that the current framework is stronger in traditional and institutionally established sectors, but weaker in emerging, cross-sectoral and innovation-driven areas of the blue economy.

A recurring concern was the absence of a unified legal and strategic framework that would link economic development, environmental protection, research, innovation, investment, and coastal governance. Several respondents emphasized that existing laws and strategies do not provide sufficient mechanisms for cross-sectoral coordination. As a result, blue economy-related priorities are often addressed separately within different institutions, rather than through an integrated maritime or coastal governance framework.

The interviews also suggest that awareness of EU and Black Sea regional frameworks varies across stakeholder groups. The Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea appears to be the most visible regional reference point, while knowledge of wider EU frameworks is less consistently reflected in national implementation practices. This

indicates that Georgia's participation in regional and European initiatives has not yet been fully translated into coordinated domestic policy planning.

Overall, stakeholders did not describe Georgia's blue economy challenge as a policy vacuum. They pointed instead to a coordination problem: existing sectoral laws and strategies cover many relevant areas, but they do not yet create a single framework for managing maritime transport, coastal tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, research, investment and coastal governance together.

Institutional Framework and Cooperation

Stakeholder responses indicate that Georgia has several institutions with mandates relevant to blue economy development, but these mandates are largely organized around separate sectoral responsibilities rather than an integrated blue economy governance framework. Public institutions, agencies, municipalities, academic organizations, and private sector actors are active in areas such as maritime transport, environmental protection, fisheries and aquaculture, marine monitoring, coastal management, education, and logistics. However, stakeholders generally viewed the institutional system as fragmented and insufficiently coordinated.

The responses suggest that the main institutional challenge is not the absence of relevant actors, but the absence of a clear coordination mechanism capable of linking these actors under a common blue economy agenda. Responsibilities are distributed across different institutions according to sectoral mandates: economic and transport-related issues are mainly linked to the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development; environmental and resource-management issues to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and its agencies; and local implementation functions, such as municipal services, waste management and coastal-level actions, to municipal authorities. This structure allows individual sectors to function, but limits integrated planning across the blue economy as a whole.

A recurring issue identified by respondents was weak horizontal coordination between institutions. Several stakeholders emphasized that communication between agencies is not sufficiently systematic, particularly where economic development, environmental protection, research, investment, and local governance intersect. This affects the ability to develop joint priorities, coordinate funding opportunities, share data, and design cross-sectoral initiatives. In this context, the blue economy is often treated as a collection of separate sectoral activities rather than as a coordinated policy field.

Vertical coordination between national and local levels was also identified as a challenge. Local authorities, particularly in coastal areas, play an important role in practical implementation, including waste management, pollution prevention, public awareness, local infrastructure, and coastal maintenance. However, stakeholder responses suggest that municipalities are not yet sufficiently integrated into national-level strategic planning for the blue economy. This weakens the link between national policy objectives and local implementation capacities.

The interviews also point to a limited connection between policy-making, research, education, and the private sector. Academic and maritime education institutions possess important expertise in marine sciences, oceanography, hydrology, maritime transport, environmental studies, and blue skills development. Nevertheless, respondents indicated that this knowledge is not always systematically used in policy design or sectoral planning. Similarly, private sector participation remains relatively limited in strategic discussions, despite the importance

of business actors in maritime transport, logistics, investment promotion, tourism, and other blue economy-related activities.

At the regional level, several stakeholders recognized the relevance of Black Sea cooperation initiatives, including the Common Maritime Agenda and related research and innovation frameworks. However, the interviews suggest that participation in regional initiatives remains more project-based than institutionally embedded. International cooperation provides useful opportunities for knowledge exchange, funding, and capacity development, but these opportunities are not yet fully translated into stable domestic coordination mechanisms.

Overall, the stakeholder interviews indicate that Georgia's institutional framework covers the main components of the blue economy, but lacks an integrated coordination structure. Strengthening institutional cooperation would require clearer allocation of roles, regular inter-agency communication, stronger involvement of municipalities, improved data-sharing mechanisms, and more systematic cooperation between public institutions, academia, the private sector, and civil society.

Funding Instruments and Accessibility

Stakeholder responses indicate that financing for blue economy-related initiatives in Georgia is available mainly through external and project-based mechanisms rather than through a dedicated national blue economy financing framework. Respondents referred to EU and international programmes, including Horizon Europe, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters", the Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin Programme, Erasmus+, the LIFE Programme, UNDP-supported initiatives, and other international or regional cooperation instruments. National and local grants were also mentioned, but they appear to play a more limited and sector-specific role.

The responses suggest that access to funding varies significantly across institutions. Stakeholders with stronger international networks, research capacity, and experience in EU-funded projects appear better positioned to access available financial instruments. By contrast, local actors, smaller organizations, private sector representatives, and institutions with limited project-development capacity face greater difficulties. This indicates that the main funding challenge is not only the availability of financial instruments, but also the ability of local stakeholders to identify, prepare, co-finance, and manage competitive projects.

Several barriers to funding access were repeatedly identified. These include complex administrative and bureaucratic procedures, difficulties in securing co-financing, limited awareness of available opportunities, weak project-writing capacity, insufficient technical expertise, and limited links with regional and European networks. Some respondents also emphasized that funding sources are fragmented and that specialized financial instruments for blue economy development remain limited. As a result, blue economy initiatives often depend on temporary donor-funded projects rather than stable and coordinated national financing mechanisms.

Stakeholders identified the largest funding and investment gaps in sectors that require long-term planning, specialized knowledge, technology, and infrastructure. These include fisheries and aquaculture, marine environmental monitoring, research and innovation, blue technologies, port management, pollution reduction, and protection of Black Sea biological resources. Some respondents also pointed to gaps in coastal and maritime tourism development, environmental protection, education, and scientific infrastructure.

Overall, stakeholder responses indicate that Georgia's blue economy financing environment remains fragmented and strongly dependent on external funding opportunities. While EU and international programmes provide

important support for research, cooperation, environmental protection, capacity building, and innovation, the absence of a coordinated national blue economy funding framework limits the continuity, scale, and strategic direction of these initiatives. Strengthening access to finance would require improved information-sharing, project preparation support, co-financing mechanisms, stronger participation in regional and EU networks, and more targeted financial instruments for priority blue economy sectors.

Business Environment and Private Sector Engagement

Stakeholder responses suggest that the business environment for blue economy development in Georgia remains at an early stage of formation. While several economic activities are already connected to the blue economy, particularly maritime transport, logistics, port-related services, coastal tourism, and investment promotion, these activities are not yet organized within a coherent blue economy business ecosystem. The private sector is therefore present in individual sectors, but its role in shaping an integrated blue economy agenda remains limited.

The responses indicate that traditional blue economy-related sectors, especially maritime transport and logistics, are perceived as having stronger business potential due to Georgia's strategic location on the Black Sea and its role in regional connectivity. Coastal and maritime tourism is also viewed as an important economic sector, particularly in Adjara and other coastal areas. However, stakeholders noted that tourism-related development is not yet sufficiently linked with an integrated approach to environmental sustainability, coastal management, and community-level benefits.

Several respondents emphasized that the private sector faces important regulatory, financial, and institutional barriers. These include fragmented regulations, bureaucratic procedures, limited access to targeted funding, weak investment incentives for sustainable blue economy activities, and insufficient coordination between public institutions and business actors. Some respondents also pointed to challenges related to taxation, customs procedures, banking conditions, and maritime-related regulatory requirements. These barriers reduce the ability of businesses to invest in new blue economy activities or modernize existing operations.

The responses also suggest that business opportunities are unevenly distributed across sectors. Maritime transport, logistics, port services, and coastal tourism are more visible and commercially developed, while fisheries and aquaculture, marine innovation, blue technologies, circular economy solutions, environmental services, and research-based business activities remain significantly less developed. This reflects a broader gap between established economic sectors and emerging blue economy opportunities that require specialized knowledge, innovation capacity, and long-term investment.

Another recurring issue is the limited integration of business actors into policy dialogue and strategic planning. Although private sector participation is essential for investment, innovation, job creation, and value chain development, stakeholders indicated that cooperation between government, academia, and business remains insufficient. Public-private dialogue exists in some sectors, but it is not yet institutionalized around a common blue economy framework. As a result, business perspectives are not systematically incorporated into the design of blue economy policies, funding instruments, or regional cooperation initiatives.

The responses also point to a weak innovation and commercialization environment. Academic and research institutions possess relevant knowledge in marine sciences, maritime education, environmental monitoring, and coastal management, but this knowledge is not yet strongly connected to private sector innovation or market-oriented solutions. This limits the development of new blue economy products, services, technologies, and business models.

Overall, stakeholder responses indicate that Georgia has clear private sector potential in maritime transport, logistics, coastal tourism, and related services, but the broader blue economy business environment remains fragmented and underdeveloped. Strengthening private sector engagement would require clearer strategic direction, targeted investment incentives, improved regulatory conditions, stronger public-private dialogue, and better links between business, research, innovation, and environmental sustainability.

Development Potential, Skills and Future Priorities

Stakeholder responses indicate that Georgia has clear potential for blue economy development, but this potential remains uneven across sectors and is constrained by institutional, financial, technological and skills-related barriers. Respondents generally viewed maritime transport, logistics, coastal tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, and marine research as the most relevant areas for future development. At the same time, several stakeholders emphasized that emerging sectors such as marine renewable energy, marine biotechnology, climate adaptation, coastal protection, marine monitoring, and blue technologies remain underdeveloped but could become important in the longer term.

The strongest development potential was associated with sectors where Georgia already has existing assets or institutional experience. Maritime transport and logistics were repeatedly identified as priority areas because of Georgia's Black Sea location, port infrastructure, transit function, and regional connectivity role. Sustainable coastal tourism was also frequently mentioned, reflecting the economic importance of the Black Sea coast and the need to move from general tourism growth toward more sustainable and better-managed coastal development.

Fisheries and aquaculture were also identified as important future sectors, although respondents generally viewed them as requiring stronger policy support, investment, research capacity, environmental safeguards, and modernization. Several responses suggested that these sectors are not yet sufficiently developed and are affected by weak infrastructure, limited innovation, traditional production methods, regulatory challenges, and insufficient scientific and technical support. This indicates that fisheries and aquaculture are seen both as an opportunity and as an area where current gaps are particularly visible.

Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of environmental protection, marine monitoring, coastal resilience, and climate adaptation. This reflects growing concern over the vulnerability of Georgia's Black Sea coastal areas to pollution, coastal erosion, unsustainable construction, wastewater-related pressures, biodiversity loss, and climate-related risks. In this context, environmental protection is not viewed only as a regulatory issue, but also as a precondition for the long-term competitiveness of tourism, fisheries, ports, and other blue economy sectors.

A recurring theme across the responses was the importance of blue skills. Respondents identified gaps in maritime and engineering specializations, interdisciplinary blue economy knowledge, environmental monitoring, project development, innovation management, international cooperation, and research commercialization. Several stakeholders emphasized the need for new educational programmes, vocational education and training, updated teaching materials, retraining opportunities, and stronger cooperation between universities, research institutions, businesses, and public authorities.

The responses also show that stakeholders see innovation and research capacity as essential for future development. However, the current connection between science, policy and business remains weak. Research institutions and maritime education providers possess relevant expertise, but this knowledge is not yet sufficiently translated into practical policy tools, commercial solutions, technology development, or investment projects.

Strengthening the science-policy-business interface would therefore be important for improving evidence-based decision-making and supporting emerging blue economy sectors.

In terms of future priorities, respondents emphasized the need to develop an official blue economy initiative or strategy, strengthen cooperation between institutions, mobilize public and private funding, improve data collection and information sharing, support science-policy dialogue, enhance resilience to climate change, and create new jobs and business opportunities. These priorities suggest that stakeholders view blue economy development not only as a sectoral agenda, but as a broader governance, investment, innovation, and capacity-building process.

Overall, stakeholder responses indicate that Georgia's blue economy potential is strongest where existing economic activities, natural assets, and institutional experience can be connected to sustainability objectives. However, realizing this potential will require more than sectoral development alone. It will require an integrated strategic framework, stronger institutional cooperation, targeted funding, improved technical and professional skills, better use of research and data, and a clearer connection between economic growth, environmental protection, and coastal resilience.

5.3 Areas for Improvement

Stakeholder responses indicate that the main barriers to blue economy development in Georgia are systemic rather than limited to individual sectors. Respondents emphasized that Georgia already has relevant institutions, sectoral laws, policy documents, research capacity, maritime education institutions, private sector actors and civil society expertise. However, these elements are not yet connected through a coordinated blue economy framework.

Several priority areas for improvement were identified. The first is the need for a unified national vision or formal blue economy initiative that would connect sectoral priorities in maritime transport, tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, infrastructure, research and innovation. Such a framework would help clarify institutional responsibilities, strengthen alignment with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and provide a clearer basis for future policy coordination.

The second area concerns institutional cooperation. Stakeholders repeatedly referred to fragmented responsibilities, weak inter-agency communication, limited information-sharing and insufficient coordination between national and local levels. This suggests the need for a more regular coordination mechanism involving public institutions, municipalities, academia, the private sector and civil society.

A third area relates to the legal and regulatory basis for integrated coastal and maritime governance. Stakeholder feedback points to the need for stronger attention to integrated coastal zone management, maritime spatial planning principles, environmental safeguards and mechanisms for balancing competing uses of coastal and marine resources.

Access to finance was also identified as a major challenge. Although EU and international programmes create funding opportunities, many stakeholders face barriers related to co-financing, administrative procedures, project preparation capacity and limited awareness of available instruments. This is particularly relevant for municipalities, SMEs, research groups and emerging blue economy sectors.

Finally, stakeholders emphasized the importance of blue skills, technical capacity, data systems and stronger science-policy-business cooperation. Improving education, vocational training, marine and coastal data collection, environmental monitoring and research commercialization would strengthen the practical foundations for future blue economy development.

Overall, stakeholder responses confirm that Georgia's blue economy challenges are mainly coordination and implementation challenges. These findings are carried into the SWOT analysis and recommendations, particularly in relation to governance, funding access, skills, data systems and science-policy-business cooperation.

6. Potentials and Gaps: SWOT Analysis

6.1 Overview of the SWOT Approach

The SWOT analysis consolidates the desk research findings from Sections 1–4 and the stakeholder interview findings from Section 5. It identifies the main internal strengths and weaknesses of Georgia's blue economy framework, as well as the external opportunities and threats that may influence future development.

The SWOT analysis connects the desk research and stakeholder evidence with the recommendations. It identifies where Georgia already has blue-economy-relevant assets, where governance and financing gaps remain, and which areas require priority policy action.

6.2 SWOT Matrix

The SWOT matrix below summarizes the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats affecting blue economy development in Georgia. It reflects the combined findings of the desk research, sectoral analysis and stakeholder interviews.

Table 3: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps	Opportunities	Threats
Strategic Black Sea location supporting regional connectivity, logistics and submarine energy infrastructure.	Absence of a unified national blue economy strategy or formal coordination framework.	Development of a national blue economy strategy aligned with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.	Continued policy fragmentation could prevent integrated blue economy development.
Existing maritime transport and port functions through Batumi and Poti.	Fragmented policy and institutional responsibilities across sectors and institutions.	Integration of blue economy priorities into Tourism Strategy 2035 and other national strategies.	Climate change, coastal erosion, pollution and ecosystem degradation could undermine key sectors.
Strong coastal tourism base, especially in Adjara and the wider Black Sea coastal area.	Limited integration between tourism, coastal management, environmental protection and local benefits.	Modernization of maritime transport, ports, logistics and strategic Black Sea connectivity infrastructure, including green, digital and submarine energy links.	Unsustainable coastal construction and weak land-use control could increase environmental pressure.
Existing sectoral legal and policy instruments in transport, tourism, fisheries, aquaculture, environment and water management.	Lack of integrated coastal zone management and maritime spatial planning mechanisms.	Sustainable development of coastal and maritime tourism, including diversification, eco-tourism and destination management.	Weak enforcement could reduce the effectiveness of existing legal and policy frameworks.
Relevant public institutions involved in transport, environment, fisheries, monitoring and municipal services.	Weak horizontal coordination between national institutions and limited vertical coordination with local levels.	Modernization of fisheries and aquaculture through scientific support, infrastructure, quality standards and value-chain development.	Fisheries and aquaculture may remain underdeveloped without investment and technical support.
Academic, research and maritime education capacity in marine sciences, oceanography, hydrology and blue skills.	Weak science-policy-business cooperation and limited research commercialization.	Expansion of marine environmental monitoring, pollution control, biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration.	Dependence on donor-funded projects may limit continuity and national ownership.
Participation in Black Sea regional cooperation frameworks, including the CMA and research initiatives.	Limited dedicated funding and strong dependence on project-based donor financing.	Stronger participation in Horizon Europe, Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin, Erasmus+, LIFE and SBEP.	Limited administrative and co-financing capacity may restrict access to funding.
Growing awareness of environmental sustainability, marine protection and climate resilience.	Insufficient technical expertise, blue skills and project-development capacity among some actors.	Development of blue skills through maritime education, vocational training and professional retraining.	Skills shortages could constrain emerging blue economy sectors.
Existing environmental monitoring and marine data-related institutions.	Fragmented data systems and limited use of evidence-based coastal and marine planning.	Growth of innovation-oriented areas, including marine monitoring technologies, blue digital solutions, circular economy and climate adaptation services.	Emerging sectors may remain marginal without targeted policy and financial support.
Initial private sector activity in maritime transport, logistics, coastal tourism and investment promotion.	Private sector engagement in blue economy policy dialogue remains weak and under-institutionalized.	Improved science-policy-business cooperation to turn research capacity into policy tools, investment projects and market-oriented solutions.	Regional geopolitical instability and competition in Black Sea transport corridors may affect investment confidence.

Source: Author's synthesis based on desk research, sectoral analysis and BlueDial stakeholder interviews / structured stakeholder responses, Georgia, 2026.

6.3 Key Strategic Implications of the SWOT

The SWOT analysis shows that Georgia already has several important foundations for blue economy development, including its Black Sea location, maritime transport and logistics function, coastal tourism base, environmental institutions, and academic and maritime education capacity. However, these strengths currently operate mainly as separate sectoral assets rather than as parts of an integrated blue economy development framework.

The main strategic implication is that Georgia's challenge is not the absence of blue economy-related sectors, but the limited coordination between them. Maritime transport, coastal tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, research, education and innovation are all relevant to the blue economy, but they are still governed, financed and developed largely through separate institutional and policy channels.

The SWOT also shows an imbalance between established and emerging areas of the blue economy. Georgia's strongest assets are concentrated in traditional sectors such as maritime transport, ports and logistics, coastal tourism and environmental governance. By contrast, emerging and innovation-oriented areas such as marine technologies, sustainable aquaculture, marine biotechnology, marine renewable energy, circular economy solutions, marine data systems and research commercialization remain less developed.

Environmental sustainability emerges as a central strategic condition for blue economy development. The long-term competitiveness of coastal tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, ports, maritime transport and coastal infrastructure depends on the health and resilience of the Black Sea ecosystem. Environmental protection, pollution prevention, climate resilience and integrated coastal management should therefore be treated not only as environmental priorities, but also as economic development priorities.

The SWOT further indicates that Georgia can make stronger use of regional and European cooperation opportunities. The Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, Horizon Europe, Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin, Erasmus+, LIFE, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership and other international programmes can support funding access, knowledge exchange, capacity building and innovation. However, effective participation requires stronger project-development capacity, co-financing mechanisms, institutional coordination and wider involvement of municipalities, academia, civil society and the private sector.

Overall, the SWOT points to an implementation challenge. Georgia already has many of the assets needed for blue economy development, but they need to be connected through clearer coordination, better financing, stronger science-policy-business links and more systematic use of

Black Sea and EU cooperation platforms. These implications directly inform the recommendations in Chapter 7.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Key Conclusions

The analysis confirms that Georgia's blue economy agenda is emerging from existing maritime, tourism, environmental, research, infrastructure and regional development systems rather than from a dedicated national policy framework. This creates a mixed picture: the country has relevant assets, institutions, expertise and cooperation channels, but they are not yet organized around shared blue economy priorities. As a result, policy coherence remains limited and alignment with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea depends mainly on sectoral policies and project-based cooperation.

The legal and strategic framework contains several important building blocks, including maritime, environmental, tourism, water, fisheries, waste management and climate-related legislation and policies. Nevertheless, the absence of an integrated blue economy strategy, maritime spatial planning mechanisms and comprehensive coastal governance tools remains a major gap. Existing laws and strategies support individual sectors, but they do not yet provide a unified framework for balancing economic development, environmental protection, innovation and the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources.

Institutionally, Georgia has relevant public bodies, agencies, municipalities, academic institutions, maritime education providers, private sector actors and civil society expertise. However, mandates remain fragmented and coordination is weak, particularly between national and local levels and across economic, environmental, research and private-sector domains. This reduces the capacity to design and implement cross-sectoral blue economy initiatives.

The funding environment is also insufficiently coordinated. Georgia benefits from EU and international programmes, donor-funded projects, sector-specific national instruments and emerging Black Sea research support. However, these instruments do not yet form a comprehensive blue economy financing framework. Access to finance remains uneven, especially for municipalities, SMEs, research institutions and emerging sectors that require project-development capacity, co-financing, technical expertise and international partnerships.

Overall, Georgia's main challenge is to move from sectoral relevance to strategic integration. Future progress will depend on the country's ability to connect sectoral policies, improve institutional cooperation, mobilize targeted funding, strengthen skills and research capacity,

integrate environmental sustainability into economic planning, and use Black Sea and EU cooperation frameworks more systematically.

7.2 Recommendations

7.2.1 Policy Improvements

The main policy task is to make the blue economy visible as a national coordination agenda rather than leaving it implicit in separate sectoral policies. The following recommendations focus on strategy, sectoral integration, maritime spatial planning and CMA alignment.

- **Develop a national blue economy strategy or formal blue economy initiative**

The first priority should be the preparation of a national blue economy strategy or a formal blue economy initiative that brings together maritime transport, coastal and maritime tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, marine environmental protection, coastal infrastructure, research, education and innovation under a common strategic vision.

This framework should clearly define national blue economy priorities, institutional responsibilities, coordination mechanisms and links with existing sectoral strategies. It should not replace existing sectoral policies, but should provide an umbrella framework that connects them and improves policy coherence.

- **Integrate blue economy principles into sectoral policies**

Blue economy principles should be more clearly reflected in relevant sectoral strategies and policy documents, particularly in tourism, transport, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, regional development and innovation policy.

The development of the new Tourism Strategy 2035 provides a timely opportunity to incorporate coastal sustainability, destination governance, environmental resilience, product diversification and Black Sea cooperation priorities into tourism policy.

- **Introduce maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management principles**

Georgia should gradually introduce maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management principles. These tools would help balance competing uses of coastal and marine space, including tourism development, port infrastructure, fisheries, aquaculture, environmental protection and urban expansion.

Even if a full maritime spatial planning system is introduced gradually, the basic principles should already be reflected in policy planning, environmental assessment, infrastructure development and inter-agency coordination.

- **Strengthen alignment with the Common Maritime Agenda and EU blue economy frameworks**

National policy should be more explicitly aligned with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and relevant EU blue economy frameworks. Stronger alignment would improve Georgia's access to regional cooperation platforms, international funding opportunities, research networks and policy learning mechanisms.

7.2.2 Institutional Strengthening

Institutional strengthening should focus on the coordination mechanism needed to connect existing ministries, agencies, coastal municipalities, academia, the private sector and civil society. The following recommendations address coordination, vertical cooperation, science-policy-business links and technical capacity.

- **Establish a permanent blue economy coordination mechanism**

Georgia should establish a permanent coordination mechanism for blue economy-related policy. This could take the form of an inter-agency working group, coordination council or formal platform involving relevant ministries, agencies, coastal municipalities, academic institutions, private sector representatives and civil society organizations.

The mechanism should not duplicate existing institutions, but should improve communication between them, support joint planning and help coordinate priorities across maritime transport, tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, environmental protection, infrastructure, research and innovation. It should also support regular information-sharing, monitoring of implementation progress and alignment with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.

- **Strengthen coordination between national and local levels**

Coastal municipalities should be more actively involved in blue economy planning and implementation. Local governments are directly affected by coastal tourism development, infrastructure pressures, environmental risks, waste management challenges, coastal erosion and community-level economic opportunities.

Stronger coordination between national institutions and coastal municipalities would improve the practical implementation of blue economy policies and help ensure that national priorities are better connected to local development needs. This is especially important for coastal infrastructure, tourism management, environmental protection, public services and community engagement.

- **Institutionalize science-policy-business cooperation**

Georgia should strengthen regular cooperation between public institutions, universities, research organizations, maritime education providers and the private sector. Existing knowledge and expertise are not yet sufficiently connected to policy-making, investment planning or business innovation.

A more institutionalized science-policy-business dialogue would support evidence-based decision-making, improve the use of marine and coastal data, encourage innovation and help develop practical solutions for blue economy sectors. It would also help connect research capacity with investment opportunities, skills development and sectoral modernization.

- **Strengthen institutional capacity for data, monitoring and project development**

Institutional capacity should be strengthened in areas such as marine and coastal data collection, environmental monitoring, data-sharing, project preparation, funding application development and policy analysis. These capacities are especially important for municipalities, research institutions, SMEs and emerging blue economy sectors.

Improved institutional capacity would allow Georgia to participate more effectively in EU and Black Sea regional programmes, attract international funding and design more evidence-based blue economy policies.

7.2.3 Funding Optimization

Funding optimization should focus on turning separate national, donor, EU and private instruments into a clearer financing architecture for blue economy priorities. The following recommendations address funding coordination, EU and international funding access, support for smaller actors and private investment.

- **Develop a coordinated blue economy financing framework**

Georgia should develop a more coordinated approach to financing blue economy-related sectors and initiatives. Existing national, EU, international, donor-supported and private funding instruments should be mapped and linked to common blue economy priorities.

This does not necessarily require the immediate creation of a separate blue economy fund, but it does require better coordination between existing funding mechanisms, clearer identification of priority investment areas, and development of a pipeline of bankable blue economy projects. Priority areas could include coastal sustainability, marine environmental monitoring, sustainable tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, port modernization, green logistics, innovation and skills development.

- **Improve access to EU and international funding instruments**

Georgia should strengthen its capacity to access EU and international funding opportunities relevant to the blue economy, including programmes related to research and innovation, environmental protection, regional cooperation, skills development, infrastructure and private sector competitiveness.

This requires stronger project preparation capacity, improved awareness of available funding instruments, better coordination between institutions, and support for stakeholders in developing high-quality project proposals. Particular attention should be given to participation in programmes

such as Horizon Europe, Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin, Erasmus+, LIFE, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership and other relevant regional and international instruments.

- **Support municipalities, SMEs, research institutions and emerging sectors**

Special attention should be given to stakeholders that often face greater barriers in accessing finance, including coastal municipalities, small and medium-sized enterprises, research institutions, civil society organizations and emerging blue economy sectors.

These actors often lack the administrative capacity, co-financing resources or technical expertise required to participate effectively in competitive funding programmes. Targeted technical assistance, project-development support, information-sharing, partner-matching and co-financing mechanisms would improve their ability to participate in blue economy initiatives.

- **Mobilize private investment and public-private cooperation**

Private investment and public-private cooperation should be more actively mobilized for sustainable blue economy development. Investment incentives could be better aligned with sustainability objectives, especially in areas such as coastal tourism, port infrastructure, logistics, waste management, aquaculture, green technologies and digital maritime solutions.

Public-private cooperation should not only support infrastructure development, but also encourage innovation, environmental performance, skills development, research commercialization and long-term competitiveness in blue economy-related sectors.

7.2.4 Enhancing Black Sea-Level Cooperation

Black Sea-level cooperation should be used as a policy, funding and knowledge channel, not only as participation in regional projects. The following recommendations focus on CMA engagement, research networks, EU programmes and cross-border stakeholder cooperation.

- **Strengthen participation in the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea**

Georgia should make more systematic use of the Common Maritime Agenda as a framework for policy alignment, regional cooperation and project development. National blue economy priorities should be more clearly connected to CMA goals related to healthy marine and coastal ecosystems, competitive maritime sectors, innovation, skills and regional connectivity.

Stronger engagement with the CMA would help Georgia position its blue economy priorities within the wider Black Sea regional context and improve opportunities for cooperation with other Black Sea countries.

- **Improve participation in regional research and innovation networks**

Georgia should strengthen the participation of universities, research institutions, maritime education providers and innovation actors in Black Sea research and innovation networks,

including frameworks linked to the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea. This is particularly important in areas such as marine environmental monitoring, sustainable aquaculture, coastal resilience, maritime technologies, pollution reduction, climate adaptation and blue skills.

Closer involvement in regional research platforms would improve access to data, expertise, joint projects and international partnerships. It would also help connect Georgian research and education institutions more effectively with regional and European blue economy knowledge networks.

- **Use EU and Black Sea programmes more strategically**

Georgia should use programmes such as Horizon Europe, Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin, Erasmus+, LIFE, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters” and other EU or internationally supported initiatives more strategically for blue economy development. These programmes can support capacity building, research cooperation, innovation, environmental protection, skills development and regional partnerships.

To benefit more effectively from these opportunities, Georgia needs stronger project-development capacity, better institutional coordination, improved information-sharing and more active involvement of municipalities, academia, civil society and private sector actors.

- **Promote cross-border cooperation among coastal stakeholders**

Cross-border cooperation should not remain limited to national institutions. Coastal municipalities, universities, maritime training institutions, ports, tourism organizations, environmental NGOs and private sector actors should be more actively involved in Black Sea-level cooperation.

This would support practical knowledge exchange, joint project development and stronger regional integration in areas such as sustainable coastal tourism, marine protection, port development, skills, innovation and marine environmental monitoring. Project-based platforms and networks, including BlueDial-related cooperation tools, could also be used to strengthen stakeholder interaction and policy learning across the Black Sea region.

7.3 Final Conclusion

Georgia’s blue economy agenda is no longer only a conceptual opportunity, but it is not yet an integrated policy framework either. The country has relevant maritime, coastal, environmental, tourism, research and education assets, but these assets are still managed mainly through separate sectoral systems.

The next stage should therefore focus on coordination and implementation. Existing sectoral policies do not need to be replaced, but they need to be connected through a clearer national mechanism that links economic development, environmental sustainability, coastal resilience, innovation, skills and Black Sea cooperation.

If Georgia strengthens institutional coordination, improves access to funding, supports emerging sectors, engages the private sector and uses EU and Black Sea cooperation platforms more strategically, the blue economy can become a practical framework for sustainable coastal and maritime development. Its long-term value will depend on whether economic opportunity is linked with protection of the Black Sea ecosystem.

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