

A Cross-Country Comparative Review of Budget Documents in the South Caucasus

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Summary

Active participation of society in budget processes, as well as the ability of society to demand accountability from the government, is possible only through access to detailed budget information. With limited exceptions, citizens' access to budget information cannot be restricted under the pretext of state secrecy or by any argument other than those accepted in international practice. Regardless of whether they live in rural or urban areas, people residing in any geographic location of the country should be able to easily obtain information, including from internet sources, about expenditure volumes for education, healthcare and infrastructure in their area, the amount of funds allocated to national defence, as well as the monthly salaries received by police officers, security personnel, military servicemen, doctors and teachers who are responsible for public security, defence, health and the education of children. Only under these conditions can public information be considered accessible.

In recent years, the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Azerbaijan has significantly expanded the scope of budget information disclosed through its official website. However, the issue is not limited to the volume of information alone, but also concerns its quality. In some cases, a large amount of arbitrary text may convey less information than a much smaller volume of well-structured data. From this perspective, alongside the number of disclosed budget documents, their content, scope, completeness, usefulness for the public and

capacity to meet public needs are of critical importance. Recommendations issued by international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in the field of budget transparency and public disclosure of budget data define advanced standards for information accessibility.

During parliamentary discussions of the draft state budget, the Milli Majlis, which is required to disclose all budget information, limits itself to publishing only the draft Law on the State Budget for the following year. To assess the extent to which the disclosure of budget data meets the criteria outlined above, it is insufficient to rely solely on internationally accepted standards. One useful approach is cross-country comparison. In this context, comparing countries from the same region, particularly those that may serve as examples of good practice, allows for a more objective assessment.

Over the past ten to fifteen years, alongside Azerbaijan, significant efforts have also been undertaken in the other two South Caucasus countries, Georgia and Armenia, to improve public access to budget information. Taking this into account, a comparative analysis of budget information disclosed to the public in all three countries of the region has been conducted. It should be noted that the analysis focuses on budget documents disclosed at the stage when the draft budget is submitted for parliamentary discussion, rather than documents published after the budget has been approved. This period is of particular importance for encouraging public participation in budget discussions through transparency of information.

The analysis consists of the following four sections:

- International initiatives in the field of budget information accessibility
- Budget information disclosed to the public by the

Government of Georgia for the next fiscal year and the medium-term period

- Budget information disclosed to the public by the Government of Armenia for the next fiscal year and the medium-term period
- Budget information disclosed to the public by the Government of Azerbaijan for the next fiscal year and the medium-term period

The review assesses the level of disclosure of budget information for 2026 and the subsequent three years in all three South Caucasus countries. Budget data for each country are presented in national currencies. In addition to comparing budget information and documents, interested readers may calculate cross-country differences in budget indicators using the average monthly exchange rates of the national currencies of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia against the United States dollar for the reporting period of November 2025. According to the exchange rates set by the central banks for that period:

1 United States dollar equals 2,7 Georgian lari,
1 United States dollar equals 382 Armenian dram,
1 United States dollar equals 1,7 Azerbaijani manat.

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