



# OBSERVER

## OBSERVE TO LEAD

ყოველკვირეული ორენოვანი  
გაზეთი საქართველოში

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NEWSPAPER IN GEORGIA

## THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE GEORGIAN ELECTORAL YEAR

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Since the election year has started, electoral campaigns are put into actions. As previous years' experience illustrates, ruling government and members of the parliamentary majority begin collecting electoral points by appealing on sensitive issues that have a big public approval. This kind of populist activities are land registration in ownership, initiation of pension reforms and bringing to the fore religious and traditional topics (such as defining marriage as a bond between man and woman in the constitution) with a huge acceptance in the majority of the Georgian population.

## FRANCE VOTED FOR THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE PURCHASE OF SEX

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Socialist member of Parliament Maud Olivier, who authored the new law, says that the bill aims to protect those sex workers, who want to leave the business. "We cannot accept that a body can be bought because one has money and the other is struggling financially or is in the hands of a prostitution network, in need of urgent revenues and does not have any other immediate solutions.



## MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN OR INVESTMENT FOR FUTURE?

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Lia Eliava, expert in economic issues, sees the new initiative of the Ministry of Economy as positive: "Supporting startups is not a bad initiative. Even though a large amount of the money assigned is going to go down the drain and 85-90% of startups are going to fail, the survivors will develop and prove to be beneficial for the country".



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### OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATE OF LARI AGAINST FOREIGN CURRENCIES

1 USD	=	2.2868
1 EUR	=	2.6005
1 GBP	=	3.2159
1 CHF	=	2.3881
10 RUB	=	0.3400
10 UAH	=	0.8921
1 TRY	=	0.8000



# INDEPENDENT GEORGIA IS 25 YEARS OLD

Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union on April 9, 1991

## WARS & RESULTS



**18%**  
of the whole area  
of Georgia

is occupied by the  
Russian forces

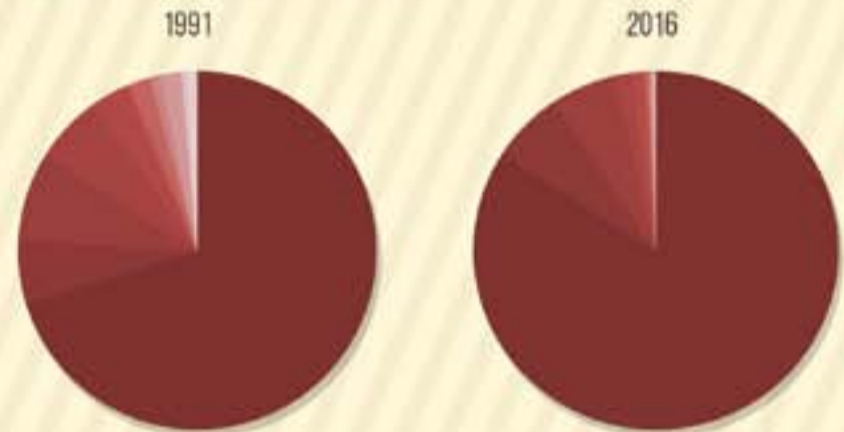
## POPULATION

Population Growth according to the GeoStat



Negative dynamic of the population of Georgia is conditioned by the labour and political migrations, which were caused by the difficult social and political environment in the country

Statistics Ethnic Groups



Percentage of ethnic Georgian population in 1991 was 70.7%, though in 2016 it has been grown till 83.9%

## ECONOMICS

Nominal GDP dynamic since 1994



GDP (per capita) dynamic since 1994



## SYMBOLS

In 1990 Georgian National Government has adopted a regulations dedicated to the state symbols. Government refused the Soviet symbols and accepted the symbols of Georgian Democratic Republic (1918-1921)



In 2004 the government that came as a result of the Rose Revolution, has adopted five-crossed Medieval Georgian flag, new coat of arms and anthem



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Infographic by **TEIMURAZ SHA**

# THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE GEORGIAN ELECTORAL YEAR

GIORGI CHAPIDZE

Last week government of Georgia stated that October 8 is the date for upcoming parliamentary election. According to Georgian Prime Minister, this is a “political decision” and will not be overturned. Besides, the decision doesn’t imply that electoral campaign will start in April as far as this occurrence would have cost additional 7-8 million for the country’s budget. Apart from financial deliberations, the government take into consideration the possibility of the second round in certain majoritarian electoral districts and are willing to conclude the process until the winter. In winter especially in mountainous regions climate factors may hinder to accumulate constituency. As stated by Georgian minister of economy and sustainable development Dimity Kumsishvili, next year’s budget requires approval of the MPs and if the process is dragged on due to the reason of the second round Georgian parliament may not have sufficient time for discussions. Because of this reason Kumsishvili is for appointing election’s date on October 8.

Since the election year have started, electoral campaigns are put into actions. As previous years’ experience illustrates, ruling government and members of the parliamentarian majority begin collecting electoral points by appealing on sensitive issues that have a big public approval. This kind of populist activities are land registration in ownership, initiation of pension reforms and bringing to the fore religious and traditional topics (such as defining marriage as a bond between man and woman in the constitution) with a huge acceptance in the majority of the Georgian population.

First of all, pension reform is of pivotal importance that was discussed at Georgian parliament on April 6. In line with new legislation, the sum of pension will increase in correlation with inflation rate and, in case of substantial economic growth, seniors will get higher pensions. Considering the inflation of Georgian currency and decreasing its purchasing power, changing pensions in conjunction with the inflation rate is very populist initiative as long as this issue has been the major problem in the country whereas seniors are get-

ting less than in previous year.

Second topical issue is combining social (existing Georgian model) and cumulative pension systems and establishing hybrid model. In case of cumulative pension system employers from private and public economic sector would be required to suggest to their employees putting monthly deposit in pension account comprising of 2% of their salary. Employee would maintain the right to decide the percentage of such kind of deposit but the upper limit would be introduced that is not certain at this point of time. If the citizen demises his successor would inherit the accumulated money. Therefore, voters would get the sum of the money calculated considering both social and cumulative pension models. Most probably, this sort of hybrid pensions have a big public approval. This initiative may be introduced to attract attention by making desired steps and rise government’s rating that means a higher chances in October’s election. Fluctuating pensions in proportion to inflation rate is a preferred initiative for the absolute majority of Georgian electorate.

Georgian parliament started discussing the new legislative project with reference to land registration in ownership initiated by the ministry of Justice of Georgia. The project was presented in Parliament by the Justice minister Tea Tsulukini. According to the minister, land registration procedure will be simplified and barriers and other restrictions will be lifted in order to promote citizens to officially possess the land. Tsulukiani stated that the problem stems from the 1990s and Georgia is in need of legislative initiatives tailored to the population. The concrete mechanisms for lightening the procedural obstacles are introducing common measurement methods for the land area, help in finding ownership documents, changing inaccurate documents and involvement of public register service in bureaucratic procedures.

It is worth noting that discussing land registration issues in Georgia is a characteristic of electoral year. For instance, Georgian government issued a decree on June 28, 2012 about simplification of registration



procedures on lands and creating cadastral data (national agency executed registration procedure without any payment and the price of cadastral information was only 3 Laris) that can be justified by the motive of collecting votes for the 2012 parliamentary elections. Bearing in mind that land registration concerns affect on a majority of Georgian population its simplification is a populist step designed for the electoral campaign.

Another consideration is initiative to define marriage in the constitution as a bond between man and woman. Gedevan Popkhadze a member of parliamentarian majority suggest a referendum on the Election Day to decide the question by knowing public opinion. This initiative is initiated in the socio-economic reality when even the discussion about the same-sex marriage is not in the agenda. Therefore, bringing this topic to the fore has a populist nature and aims at gaining political dividends among the population who approves this kind of constitutional change.

Besides the fact that general poll has not detected population’s determination in this issue, supposedly defining marriage in this way has a big approval. Especially the parish of Georgian Orthodox church who is believed to be defender of traditional values. Therefore, this initiative targets a certain segment of the electorate and is within ruling party’s interests. In addition to social reforms, government of Georgia has undertaken a project

called “Check in Georgia”. Within the framework of this initiative Georgian and foreign artist would perform concerts all over the country during the year. First event will take place on April 24 in the sport palace of Tbilisi when Eros Ramazzotti performs in front of Georgian audience. On May 27 Robbie Williams will sing for the concert dedicated to the 25 years of Georgian independence and also “Maroon 5” will visit Batumi on June 7. These projects would cost Georgian governmental reserve 29 million and aims at promoting tourism. Nevertheless, this initiative may also target creating positive grounding in youth for voting the Georgian Dream coalition and be a part of “Bread and circuses” tactic.

Georgian minister of economy and sustainable development Dimity Kumsishvili presented a project “Public-private partnership in professional education” on April 8. The project purposes to detect priorities on a labor market and to create job vacancies that is one of the pullets of education reform. The primary goal of the initiative is promoting employment during the study process and after its completion. According to vice-PM, government will try to involve as many persons as possible in this initiative. The same implication can be found in the initiative of financing start-ups with 35 million Laris.

This kind of employment programs do not target ameliorating unemployment in long term perspective but decrease this

percentage for several months to affect on voting process. This reality do no support democracy and only serves certain parties’ interests despite the fact that these are not unlawful initiatives. This program resembles to the targeted spending of budget in July- August 2012 when up to 25000 students got temporary jobs and 500 Laris as a salary. In the same year financing “Viticul-ture and wine-making programs” increased threefold (with 309%) and simultaneously funding of effective functioning of the governmental bodies decreased by 50%. Similar internship programs have been executed in electoral years in 2006-2007 with the expenditure of respectively 24 and 60 million. Apparently, current government pursues a practice established by the United National Movement and employs populist initiatives.

Executing populist projects in the election years by means of new legislations and private initiatives voiced by the majority leaders is a part of propaganda. New employment program targets the same objectives and is a basis for a speculation that Georgian budget is spent for electoral purposes. This kind of projects are pension reforms, simplifying land ownership registration procedure, defining marriage in constitution and professional development initiatives. The same conclusion may be drawn up by taking into consideration the agenda of previous electoral years that has already formed as a characteristic of Georgian electoral year.

## THE 3<sup>RD</sup> MEETING OF THE LITHUANIAN-GEORGIAN COMMISSION FOR EUROPEAN AND EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION HAS BEEN

On 7 April 2016, as part of the official visit of Georgian Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze to Lithuania, the 3rd meeting of the Lithuanian-Georgian Commission for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration was held in Vilnius.

The meeting, which was co-chaired by the Georgian and Lithuanian Foreign Ministers, was also attended by directors of the departments of the Foreign Ministries of the two countries.

Talking points included the issues on the agenda: Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration, security environment, bilateral relations, economic cooperation, Georgia's territorial integrity, multilateral relations and co-operation in the sphere of strategic communications.

Minister Linkevičius reaffirmed Lithuania's readiness to promote the process of Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Members of the delegations endorsed their commitment to work towards strengthening the bilateral cooperation between Georgia and the EU, seeking to fully implement the Association Agreement and to take greater advantage of the opportunities provided by it.

Discussions focused on the progress achieved by Georgia in the process of implementation of the visa liberalisation action

plan, which will facilitate the enhancement of people-to-people contacts and the establishment of active business and economic ties.

The delegations highlighted the increasing potential of bilateral co-operation in the economic sphere, focused on new opportunities of co-operation provided for by the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, and by the Eastern Partnership, and underlined the need to establish direct and close ties between business communities and organisations.

Particular emphasis was put on effective communication with the society. The delegation welcomed the implementation of Communication and Information Strategy of the Government of Georgia in the sphere of EU Integration for the period of 2014-2017. Lithuania committed to continue to share its experience with Georgia in the sphere of communications.

The Lithuanian delegation expressed its readiness to continue supporting Georgia in developing administrative and institutional opportunities, underlined that Lithuania will continue the implementation of four projects begun in 2015 and reaffirmed that in 2016 will complete the projects in the spheres of health

protection, environment protection, climate change prevention, agriculture, social development and equal civil rights.

The members of the Lithuanian delegation acknowledged that Georgia's contribution to NATO operations and missions, as well as its broader role in preserving regional security and stability were particularly highly evaluated. The delegation underlined that Georgia will continue undertaking reforms in the fields of defence and security in order to achieve its goals to join NATO and noted that prospects for Georgia's NATO membership will be reconfirmed at the forthcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016.

The Lithuanian delegation reaffirmed its support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The significant role of the European Union in ensuring security and stability in Georgia was also underlined. The Georgian delegation thanked Lithuania for active participation in the European Union Monitoring Mission.

The two delegations agreed to hold the next meeting of the Lithuanian-Georgian Commission in Georgia.

In conclusion, Mikheil Janelidze and Linas Linkevičius signed the Final Protocol of the Commission.

## NATO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY FORUM HELD IN TBILISI

NATO Public Diplomacy Forum held in Tbilisi

In the framework of NATO Week in Georgia, Tbilisi hosted the NATO Public Diplomacy Forum for the first time. Participants discussed the latest trends and challenges in the area of public diplomacy and communication.

I hope the international community's efforts to de-escalate tension in the neighborhood will bring tangible results. This is essential for peace and stability in our region and not only", - Prime Minister declared during his speech at the NATO Public Diplomacy Forum. Giorgi Kvirikashvili commented on the situation in Karabakh and he expressed hope that the situation will be de-escalated as a result of the international community's efforts.

"We spare no effort to retain the positive dynamics of the NATO integration process and to make NATO-Georgia relations even more significant in terms of progress and tangible results in this direction. Georgia, as an aspirant country, puts particular emphasis on strengthening its ties with NATO and performs important responsibilities in terms of NATO's rapid reaction forces and NATO missions. In a view of NATO approximation, Georgia expects significant progress in both political and practical terms during the Warsaw summit, "- the Prime Minister noted.

The second day of the Forum related to the discussions on the upcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw, role of effective strategic communications to this direction and the existence circumstances in the region. President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili and Defence Minister Tinatin Khidasheli opened the panel.

"Georgia is a country which always contributes for global stability. This effort is depicted not only by political statements, but also by participation in international operations where Georgian soldiers show their worth. According to Georgia's position,

we firmly say there is no question in our country about the future of Georgia. We see our cultural and political future to EU, we see NATO as a security umbrella where we are aspiring to, which will be strengthened with our integration and which will bring more peace to the countries in the region and globally," stated President of Georgia.

While delivering a speech Tinatin Khidasheli noted, that Georgia's choice is irreversible. She emphasized Georgia's path towards upcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw and outlined: "The most important is that at Warsaw Summit, NATO member states, NATO as organization itself should remain unit, strong and endeavor the tasks NATO is created for. As NATO aspirant country, Georgia's mission is to be a participant of this unity. There shouldn't be any other issues, agendas within NATO state members. We hope Warsaw Summit will answer all the questions that remained unanswered in Wales. During two decades Georgia has been reliable and loyal partner for NATO. All this time we tried to prove and show with all forms, resources and means how valuable is to have trusty and reliable partner in the Caucasus. Our soldiers' worthy reputation in NATO and EU led missions is the best message and pass to these organizations".

The final Forum session included a working meeting for representatives of media and government agencies, where participants discussed issues, such as Media tools for diverse opinions, propaganda sources and tools, identifying an information war and mechanisms for effective reaction.

Representatives of legislative and executive branches of the government, government agencies working on public diplomacy and communication related matters, representatives of NATO Head Quarters and invited experts participated in the NATO-Georgia Public Diplomacy Forum that took place on April 4-5.



# WHAT EU-TURKEY AGREEMENT MIGHT MEAN OVER MIGRANT CRISIS?

GURAM PTSKIALADZE

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned the European Union on Thursday that official Ankara will not implement a crucial deal on reducing the flow of migrants, if EU fails to fulfill its side of the bargain.

“There are precise conditions. If the European Union does not take the necessary steps, then Turkey will not implement the agreement,” – stated Erdogan while making a speech at his presidential palace in Ankara.

Additionally, speaking of migrant crisis, Turkey’s president emphasized that his country deserved something in return for its commitment to Syrian refugees, on whom it has spent some \$10 billion since the Syrian conflict began in 2011. Also, he pointed out that some three million people are being fed on their budget and there have been promises but nothing has come for the moment.

The above mentioned deal was signed between EU and Turkey on 18 March, when EU leaders met with their Turkish counterpart, Prime Minister of Turkey Ahmed Davutoğlu. They reached an agreement aimed at stopping the flow of irregular migration via Turkey to Europe, breaking the business model of smugglers and offering migrants an alternative to putting their lives at risk.

According to the agreement, all irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands from March 20 will be taken back to Turkey. In return, for every Syrian returned to Turkey, another Syrian will be resettled from Turkey to the EU. The EU will further speed up the disbursement of the initially allocated 3 billion euros and will mobilize an additional 3 billion euro once these resources are used and provided commitments have been met. The sides will work to improve humanitarian conditions inside Syria.

As for deals that are in favor of Turkey in addition to these 6 billion euro, EU leaders and Turkey agreed to accelerate the fulfilment of the visa liberalization roadmap, with a view to lifting visa requirements for Turkish citizens by end of June 2016 at the latest. They reconfirmed their commitment to re-energize the accession process as set out in the joint statement of 29 November 2015.

No sooner had the two sides signed an agreement, than Cyprus spoke up saying that they will veto a planned EU-Turkey deal on refugees unless Ankara recognises the country’s Greek Cypriot government. It was stated by the president of the country Nicos Anastasiades interviewed by euronews on Thursday.

No secret that Cyprus has been divided since the Turkish military invaded the island in 1974 and Anastasiades said that Nicosia would block any agreement at a two-day meeting of EU leaders in Brussels unless there was a change to Turkey’s long-standing policy towards the Greek Cypriot government.

“That is what I stressed to our partners during the previous Council on March 7th,” the Cypriot president said. “As long as Turkey doesn’t implement its obligations, we don’t have any other choice.

Signing the agreement enables us to make several conclusions; Turkey is appeared to have a raised chance of getting closer to EU. To remind, Turkey started its partnership with the European Economic Community (the official name for the EU before 1992) back in 1963 with the hopes of gains eventual accession. In 1987, it submitted its official application for full membership. However, it wasn’t until 2005 that Turkey officially began negotiating the accession criteria. Accession talks have not ended yet, let alone accession process. If we compare the duration of other countries’ accession process with Turkey’s one, we can see the difference: most of applicant countries’ accession process lasted no more than a decade, whereas Turkey, as mentioned, submitted its application form in 1987 and the light at the end of the tunnel is not on the verge of appearing in a near future.

Notwithstanding, the migrant crisis and the agreement might help to a great extent EU-Turkey’s relations to be improved as sides started a deeper negotiations and EU’s promise to get a visa-free regime might be an impetus toward Turkey’s accession within EU. However, several factors work against Turkey and EU to be a closer partners.

Among them we should men-

tion divided Cyprus that has been the main obstacle for Turkey on the way of joining EU. The tiny Mediterranean country (excluding norther part that is occupied by Turkey itself and is self-independent separatist country with mostly Turkish inhabitants) is EU member state. For Cyprus, any issue regarding Turkey is a red line and as we saw, Cyprus will do its best to hinder Turkey to improve relations with EU.

So, we can easily imagine how Turkey will be able to become a member state unless the issue over Cyprus is not solved. Furthermore, before joining EU, if Turkey still really wants it, they should improve relations with one more EU member state – Greece. EU realizes that adversarial countries within it is unprofitable in many aspects that is why EU asks Turkey for solving some foreign issues with its neighbors. Also, some problems within Turkey (the Kurds problem, democracy problems) and within EU itself (EU is afraid of Turkey’s large economy and population, plus its different culture and bordering an assailable and fragile region of Middle East).

Although Turkey has always been one of the most important countries for the European Union and it has always yearned for joining EU, recently situation has changed. Eurozone crisis at a time when Turkish economy went on performing quite well led the government to take a more skeptical view of EU membership. Support for joining EU has reduced in recent years among Turkish population.

Erdogan’s comment on the agreement points out that sees EU as an equal partner, not superior and shows that Turkey is not going subordinate on all the issues EU asks for. Erdogan’s government, by stating that Turkey will not implement the agreement if EU fails to keep their promise, proudly demonstrates that joining the EU is no longer a top priority for Turkey and at the same time, gives evidence how far Turkey matters for EU and migrant crisis allowed Turkey to be so.

Migrant crisis made EU more dependent on Turkey and it is obvious that without Turkey’s desire and commitment coping with migrant crisis would be

be much more difficult. Migrant crisis changed a view of how we might see relations between EU and Turkey. From now on, not only Turkey should have a willingness to deepen relations with EU, but also the organization should make steps. Turkey is

no longer in a disadvantageous situation when it begged EU to further the relations. Erdogan’s statement tells us that not only Turkey needs EU (and that is a dubious question within Turkey already), but EU needs Turkey too.

## BREAKING NEWS

### U.S. was aware that Istanbul could become a target of terrorism

The US Embassy in the Republic of Turkey warned its citizens about the potential terrorist attack in Istanbul and Antalya in the morning on 9th April.

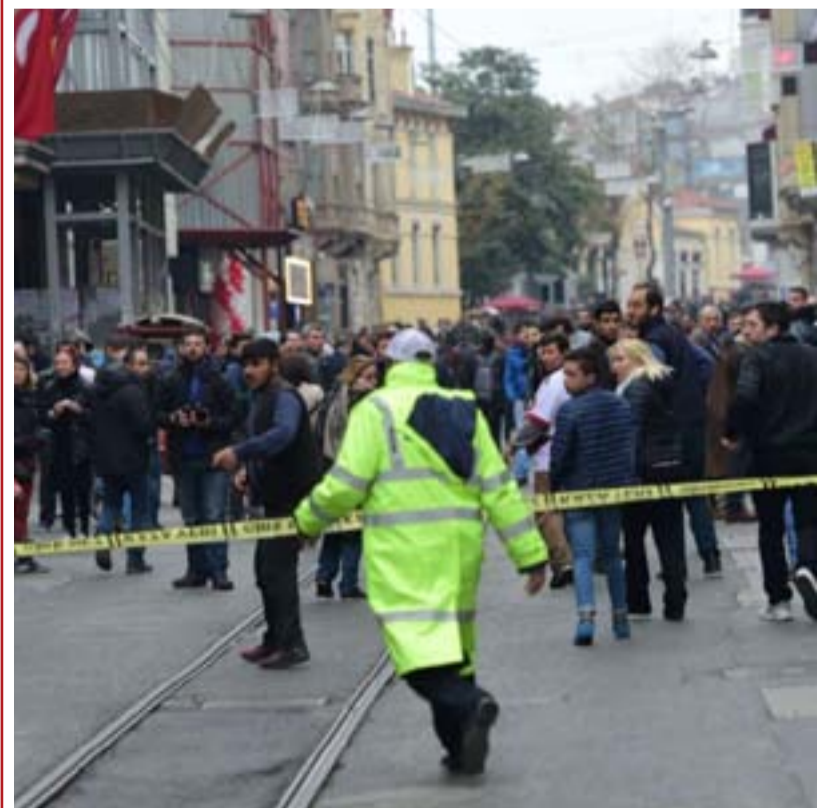
“The US mission in Turkey warns American citizens that in tourist zones, especially in Istanbul and Antalya. Be particularly cautious when being in public places in these cities”, - it is said in the statement published on the Embassy webpage.

In a few hours the expectations of the US Special Forces came true; at least three people got in-

jured as a result of the explosion. No lives claimed.

However, the USA was not the only one that was spreading information about the potential danger. On April 8, Israel appealed to its citizens not to go to Turkey or to leave it as soon as possible.

Since April 10, safety measures have been taken; the police have been concentrated on main squares and in main public places. Snipers are watching potentially dangerous zones from the top of the high buildings.



# FRANCE VOTED FOR THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE PURCHASE OF SEX

SALOME KHVEDELIDZE

After almost three year-long debate, French National Assembly recognized prostitution as one of the worst forms of violence against women and voted for the criminalization of the purchase of sex on April 6th.

Under the new law, anyone who pays to a sex worker, will not only be fined, but also required to attend classes on the harms of prostitution. There will be a €1,500 fine for a first offence, rising up to €3,750 for a second, which would also be put on the person's criminal record.

New legislation sparked a fierce debate. French Parliament has been debating on the issue since 2013, but after several hearings, the final vote was delayed – there was a disagreement between the upper house Senate and the lower house National Assembly. The final draft of the bill was passed by 64 votes to 12, with the majority of the 577 Assembly members not voting.

Such move makes France one of few European countries that follow the Nordic model. The model means criminalizing consumers instead of sex workers. Women, men and children who are involved in prostitution, will receive social support from the government. The group of countries that follow the Nordic model include countries like Sweden, Norway and Iceland, with Northern Ireland, Denmark and Finland having the similar laws.

Socialist member of Parliament Maud Olivier, who authored the new law, says that the bill aims to protect those sex workers, who want to leave the business. “We cannot accept that a body can be bought because one has money and the other is struggling financially or is in the hands of a prostitution network, in need of urgent revenues and does not have any other immediate solutions. We needed to change this idea in society of prostitution as a necessary evil, being done on a voluntary basis.” Bruno Le Roux, the head of the Socialist group in parliament, said: “You do not hire a woman like you hire a car. Our society should no longer tolerate it.”

The new law was approved by other officials as well. Manuel Valls, the Prime Minister

of France, posted a message on Twitter, stressing that the vote was “a major advance” for women's rights in France. As for the Minister for women's rights, Laurence Rossignol, she told the National Assembly before the vote, that prostitution was “violence done to women” and the new measure would send an important message to all those women who have to work as prostitutes, that “the state, the Parliament and society finally recognizes the violence of the system of prostitution.”

Although some sex workers, as well as the officials, oppose the new law. The French union of sex workers protested against the new law, saying that the legislation that outlaws paying for sex and imposes fines for clients, is nothing but “repressive”. It is known, that the bill makes available €4.8m annually to assist sex workers in quitting prostitution and helping pass the burden of the offence on clients. The French union of sex workers STRASS thinks, that the law will only make 30 000 – 40 000 sex workers more vulnerable and will not bring positive changes.

The fact, that the law comes after more than two and half years

**“The problems are not actually being dealt with, but are rather pushed underground, which only makes the problem worse and also invisible. I am confident, that it will be the same in this case too. The sex workers will become more vulnerable and marginalized, because underground industries are way too corrupt, violent and uncontrollable,”**

- Ida Bakhturidze

of political wrangling, spurring heated debates on the controversial topic, only proves that not only some MPs, but part of French society as well, is skeptical; Swedish model is subject of criticism. Opposing party considers that the new legislation might force sex workers to go underground, which makes them more vulnerable to abuse.

Ida Bakhturidze, the member of the Independent Group of Feminists and WECF Georgia Coordinator, says, that “Swedish model” (Sweden was first to pass the bill in 1999) is “government's ineffective, populist way to deal with the problem and it is even dangerous for those wom-



en, who work in the industry.”

“The problems are not actually being dealt with, but are rather pushed underground, which only makes the problem worse and also invisible. I am confident, that it will be the same in this case too. The sex workers will become more vulnerable and marginalized, because underground industries are way too corrupt, violent and uncontrollable,” she says.

It should be noted, that the study issued by a government

France or other countries.

“Decreased rate do not always mean that it changes the scale of the issue, especially when we are talking about illegal activities. It is only logical, that compiling statistics of underground activities becomes more difficult, so maybe decreased rate is caused by that,” said feminist activist.

“There is a lot written about increased internet prostitution along with the decrease of prostitution in Sweden, so in reality, maybe it is just the shape that

drunk or under the influence of drugs.

Ida Bakhturidze argues, that even if decreased rate points to the fact the problem is being solved, the example of Sweden is not applicable to other countries.

“Neither France nor any other country can provide as good social welfare as Swedish. When you cannot offer your citizen alternative ways of income or create good living conditions, imposing restrictions to the one who makes money, is not a solution, especially when you do not even ask sex workers what they prefer,” says Ida Bakhturidze, adding that it seems like criminalization is a lie sugarcoated by government. Either way, as experience shows, lately countries have two conflicting approaches when dealing with prostitution: legalization of prostitution or outlawing it. Legalization, as well as outlawing it, raises many questions. Involvement in prostitution in most cases is not voluntary, and often related to trafficking and prostitution involving children. Moreover, prostitution is basically paid exploitation and directly related to the culture of violence. Obviously, when more than 90 percent of respondents say, that if they had a choice, they would not be involved in prostitution, confirms that the state should not avoid responsibility and look for effective, adequate and maybe even new ways to eliminate the problem.

agency in Stockholm found that street prostitution had been cut by more than half since 1995 and that the number of men admitting to having purchased sex was down more than 40 percent. These findings were consistent with an official report completed by the Swedish government in 2010: it concluded that the law had reduced trafficking and transformed attitudes toward buying sex.

However, despite this, the opposing party still came with arguments against the bill and a gender specialist Ida Bakhturidze talks about that. According to her, the reality is not relevant to

changed and not the problem itself,” she added.

According to the review of the research that the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education commissioned from Malmo University, the Internet and mobile phones may have accelerated the reduction in street prostitution by bringing “clients” and sex workers together electronically. The new legislation raised questions about safety and security of sex workers: the opposing party argues that the law forces women who sell sex into dangerous situations; for instance, its leads women to jump into cars without first checking if the driver is

# LARGEST INVESTOR'S PUBLIC REPORT TO GOVERNMENT

Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Energy Kakha Kaladze, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Dimitri Kumsishvili, Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Nodar Javakjishvili, Minister of Finance Nodar Khaduri, and Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Giga Agulashvili attended a report by Adjaristsqali Georgia LLC (AGL), the country's largest investor. The event was also attended by representatives of international finance institutions (IFC, EBRD, ADB,) and experts working in the energy sector.

This event was jointly organized by the Ministry of Energy and Adjaristsqali Georgia.

Speeches were delivered by the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Energy Kakha Kaladze, Chairman of Advisor's Board of Adjaristsqali Georgia Kyrre Olaf Johansen, and the company's CEO Ronny Solberg.

AGL is implementing one of the largest infrastructure investments in Georgia, the Shuakhevi Hydro Power Plant (HPP) project. AGL is a joint venture between India's Tata Power and Norway's Clean Energy Invest (40 percent each), and IFC, a member of the World Bank Group (20 percent). AGL is investing a total of USD 416 million and employing 730 Georgian citizens on this project.

AGL has already finished 75% of construction and will complete the project by the end of the year. Hydropower generation will start functioning in the spring with a power station capable of generating 187 MW of clean energy for domestic and foreign consumption. This will contribute to the Georgia's effort to achieve energy independence and increase its export capacity.

AGL's activities are not limited to the construction of a hydropower station in highland Adjara. Driven by a deep sense of social responsibility, the company is also supporting the economic and social development of the Adjara region and improving the of living standards of those living within the project area. AGL's social responsibility efforts focus on three main areas: education and awareness raising, community empowerment, and infrastructure projects.

By the time the project is completed, the company will have contributed millions of laris to local municipal budgets through a 10% profit tax. Local governments will use this money to improve the living conditions of the people living in the Adjara region

AGL is committed to protecting the environment in the project area both during construction and after commissioning,



and they are implementing mitigation and compensation measures to minimize its impact. AGL constantly strives to comply with all relevant Georgian legislation and, in addition, adhere to the highest international environmental standards and best practices. The project is the first hydropower project in Georgia certified by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for carbon emission reductions. It is expected to produce about 450 gigawatt hours of power annually and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 200,000 tons per year.

In his speech, Kakha Kaladze stated, "Today we celebrate the implementation one of the largest and most important project

in Georgia since gaining our independence. This is an enormous step in the development of our energy sector. Our goal is the rational utilization of energy resources in order to ensure our country's energy independence. Cooperation with international finance institutions and leading companies is a significant precondition for the development of Georgia's economy which is closely to the development of the energy sector. As a result of the successful collaboration of EBRD, IFC, ADB, TATA Power and Clean Energy Invest, a USD 416 million investment was made in Georgia's energy sector. This included an investment in social projects that focused on infrastructural development and raising the level of education and

awareness."

Ronny Solberg, CEO of AGL, said in his address, "We believe that the Shuakhevi Hydro Power Plant will promote the long-term development of upper Adjara. Social responsibility is one of our main priorities, and we are implementing more than 70 social projects in the Project area. We have built roads and water systems, rehabilitated schools and kindergartens, and carried out a variety of educational programs for local students and teachers. I am particularly proud of our initiative to develop local small business by providing them with training and financial support. Our goal as a company isn't just to build a hydro power plant, it is also to strengthen and develop the region where we work."

## DIMITRY KUMSISHVILI: "I WOULD RECOMMEND PEOPLE ENGAGED IN THE TOURISM SECTOR TO BE VERY ACCURATE WITH THE PRICE SETTING"



Vice Prime Minister of Georgia, Dimitry Kumsishvili claims that the demand on tourism to Georgia has significantly increased which is confirmed by several studies. Compared to the last year, we expect much more income from tourism this year. In 2015, the tourism generated 1935 million USD, which is by 148 million more compare to 2014.

"I would recommend people engaged in the tourism sector to be very accurate with the price setting since we have competing neighboring countries. Therefore, it is very important to have adequate prices compared to provided services if we do not want to lose tourist," said

Kumsishvili. According to him the Ministry actively cooperates with the number of airlines in order to make low-cost tickets for wider audience.

"As you know, Tbilisi International Airport runway is under reconstruction and in June we will already have completely renewed runway there. Until that time, the Airport is operating in a very intense regime because we accept guests only from 8:00PM until 10:00AM. At the same time, in order to attract even more tourists, with the financial support of the Georgian National Tourism Administration, we shall provide support to such projects as Check in Georgia," claimed the Minister.

## Studies launched to examine the potential of solar energy in Gardabani Municipality



A project memorandum between the Ministry of Energy of Georgia and the "Solar Energy Company" was approved at the sitting of the government on April 8. As explained by the Ministry, the memorandum covers studying the solar potential in Gardabani municipality, in the town of Gardabani and village of Kalinino. In particular, studying techno-economic issues related to building an electrical substation for the purpose of building, owning and operating it in the future. In accordance with the

memorandum, the company will be doing techno-economic research on the territory of Gardabani during 12 months, as well as holding public discussions, preparing an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and presenting a corresponding proposition to the Ministry of Economy.

The American company "Headwall Power International", with "Solar Energy Company" as an official representative in Georgia, has international experience in respect of alternative energy sources.

# MONEY DOWN THE DRAIN OR INVESTMENT FOR FUTURE?

GVANTSA SILIKASHVILI

Apart from developing small and medium regional enterprises, the Georgian government have shown interest in funding startups as well. “30-35 million laris have already been allocated to funds to be distributed among Tbilisi and country regions,” said Dimitri Kumsishvili, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia. We tried to consult the Ministry for details but we were denied in our request.

In recent years we have frequently heard the term “Startup” the international definition of which is a newly set up business with no particular number of tangible assets or human resources. However, as Sandro Asatiani, rector of “GeoLab” points out, in Georgia, by the term “startup” they usually refer to companies with innovative tech startups.

By now it remains unknown whether the initiative introduced by the Ministry of Economy concerns only startups specializing in technology or any business startup. However, in January 2016, at the opening of Tech Park, the government announced innovative technologies as one of its priorities.

“Rapid economic growth is impossible without advancement of fields based on innovation, research and development”, - said Giorgi Kvirikashvili.

For this purpose, yet in 2013, when Kvirikashvili was the acting Minister of Economy, he supported the launch of Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA). Actually, one of the responsibilities imposed on this department was to support startups, and up to 15 startups were financed by the World Bank. Then this process went to be terminated as the necessary funds were not approved. Temur Maisuradze, one of the initiators of GITA, supposes that the Prime

Minister is revitalizing the terminated process.

Lia Eliava, expert in economic issues, sees the new initiative of the Ministry of Economy as positive: “Supporting startups is not a bad initiative. Even though a large amount of the money assigned is going to go down the drain and 85-90% of startups are going to fail, the survivors will develop and prove to be beneficial for the country”.

The growing number and development of startups is very important for developing countries with low domestic production. It can be said that when financing startups, the state is making an investment of sorts, because in case of success, a startup will turn into a large business.

It should be remarked that the practice of financing startups is a common and already a tried method abroad. In leading countries, the state spends even billions on funding them, which hints that such a process is necessary and beneficial not only for startups but also for the state itself.

Of course, the government cannot be the only one to take on responsibility for financing startups. Businessmen are also involved in this area abroad but in Georgia this is an issue. As Davit Dvalishvili, a member of Technology Association of Georgia (TAG), pointed out while discussing this topic, businessmen avoid financing startups in Georgia due to the high-risk environment.

Another source of funding is a bank loan, but this is not an option for Georgian startups. Businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, hardly have any access to loans. As for startups, they are not given loans - one of the reasons being the fact that Georgian banks focus on short-term loans and large gain. The

above-mentioned kind of loans are risky for them.

Given the conditions where it is difficult to get your business idea funded along with banks unwilling to allocate money for such an activity, the announced initiative becomes twice as necessary. This is exactly what student Tina Osadze, representative of one of the startups, talks about. Within the framework of the project “Start Business with Fab-Lab”, she has, along with friends, launched “Populus”, a brand featuring handmade bags without analogy.

“Considering the national culture, we added Khevsurian embroidery to wooden bags. We deemed this distinctive element to be capable of making the product more interesting as well as helping us to establish firmly. We did not waste time looking for sponsors. After one or two vain attempts, we decided to self-finance our business. It is hard to get one finance something that does not exist”.

In the case of “Populus” this was possible, as the necessary initial funds amounted to 400 laris. But as the business grows, so do expenses, especially because they do not have a working space and have to do their job at home. That’s why, Tina sees the initiative introduced by the state as important: “It would be very good if the state gave some initial financial support to a company as it is getting started”.

Along with funding-related problems come taxes too, as large and small businesses are taxed equally. As economist Lia Eliashvili pointed out, it is an internationally accepted practice to exempt startups from such taxes during the first 2-3 years. The Georgian government is currently working in this respect and it is planned to introduce a Dividend Reinvestment Plan (DRIP).



In particular, we are referring to the announcement made by the Prime Minister in January, according to which the government is intensively working on tax liberalization and planning to introduce the Estonian model of tax system in Georgia. Profit made by a company will be returned in the economy. The companies that use the profit gained for the company, i.e. reinvest, will be exempted from taxation.

Except for the above-mentioned difficulties, it is not so easy to execute your ideas independently. As it turns out, there are opportunities for beginners in this respect too. One of them is the international entrepreneurship and innovation network I-HUB which was launched last year.

I-HUB is an innovation hub; after having paid the membership fee, they accept a startup specializing in innovation and entrepreneurship in their working space and help and monitor them so that that the startup can develop into an ideal business.

One of the startup support programmes is Gamefounders, in the game industry. It involves not only funding and consulting but also promoting the teams. Gamefounders is one of those accelerator programmes that Georgian companies can join in on as well.

As for small and medium businesses, in this respect, there has been an attempt by the government to support them since 2014. Within the framework of the programme “Produce in Georgia”, anyone interested has an opportunity to get funding to execute their ideas in the regions of Georgia. Baia Abuladze is one of those who, within the framework of the project, managed to launch her own wine brand “Baia’s wine”. In her interview with OBSERVER, she advised startups to think a lot and make an effort to execute their ideas.

“This is a great tradition of our family and I naturally got involved. There are lots of difficulties – physical work, expenses, sales, dependence on nature and studying new methods. The programme “Produce in Georgia” played a big role in turning our family business into a brand”.

However, the programme is only focused on regions and production, which mainly implies financing an entrepreneur who runs or has already been running a business and wants to develop it. Within the framework of the new initiative of the Minister of Economy, funds will supposedly be assigned to startup. This paves the way for people to execute their innovative ideas, get financial benefit and employ people.

## GEORGIAN-GERMAN “AD GROUP” OPENS ITS FIRST SHOP IN TBILISI



“My German House” was opened at 12 Bakhtrioni St. on April 9 and ever since the ribbon-cutting ceremony the shop has been full of people.

The voracious interest shown by customers is mainly due to the German quality and reasonable prices.

The cozy atmosphere and the authenticity of the brands presented in the shop reminded

some of living in Germany and doing the shopping there. Hundreds of customers that could not phlegmatically walk past the shop-windows decorated in German flag colors have already bought personal articles and household goods.

The German products and the atmosphere in the shop makes you feel like visiting this place over and over again and mov-

ing this coziness to your house. Leading German brands Tchibo, Nur Die and others are represented in the shop.

The Georgian-German company “AD Group” already arouses so much interest in Tbilisi that in the future it is likely to also come across branches in other districts of the capital, which would be a great present for those keen on German products.



# “BRIDGE - INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT” IN STEP WITH NEEDS OF GENDER-SENSITIVE SOCIETY

TAMAR UMPRIANI **EXCLUSIVE**

Gender mainstream in Georgia is becoming more and more active day by day, however not many people realize its meaning and importance. OBSERVER interviewed Nino Janashia, programme manager of the local non-governmental organization “Bridge-Innovation and Development” about the necessity of forming a gender-sensitive society. The abovementioned organization and Georgian representatives of the British charity organization “Oxfam” supported the conference regarding “Gender and Food Safety” on March 29. At the conference guests familiarized themselves with the results of gender analysis of the concept of food safety, gender-sensitive approaches to nutrition issues, and also listened to reports about barriers and economic needs for women’s involvement in agriculture.

**What encouraged the formation of the new organization and how are the activities of Bridge and Oxfam related?**

The Bridge-Innovation and Development is a new non-governmental organization which was founded in 2015. We will carry on the same job and activities that Oxfam has been carrying out for years. The job mainly includes fighting against poverty, supporting socially unprotected vulnerable groups and especially supporting agricultural development. In addition, we are currently launching a new project as a continuation of the range of Oxfam’s activities. The project has been executed in the highlands of Adjara. This programme involves disaster risk management and we are going to replicate it in Kakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti region. Our scope of work also includes human rights and gender equality issues, which means that we try to fully integrate principles of gender equality and human rights in every project that we carry out.

**What caused the gender mainstream to activate in agriculture and what do statistics demonstrate in this respect?**

We believe that gender equality principles must be taken into

account in every field, this is just an approach of ours – the country will not develop without equal involvement of men and women in the country’s development. As for safety, this is the issue that Oxfam has been successfully working on; with their support the Food Safety Group has been formed within the Ministry of Agriculture and a food safety action plan has been introduced. When we studied the action plan and the strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture, we realized that a gender mainstream was necessary. These conceptions lacked gender aspects and gender perception, thus we along with experts, tried to prepare a gender analysis of the country’s food safety policy. As it turned out, rather important changes need to be brought about in the country’s food safety policy so that it is based on gender equality principles.

Why gender in particular? If we have a look at statistics, the Global Gender Gap Report that is published annually last year we witnessed Georgia being left behind ranking 82th out of 145 countries based on the extent to which we use women’s potential. Food safety means both food production and consumption. Women’s potential must be used in the production cycle as well as in the consumption process. A woman must be able to consume food to the extent she deems necessary so that gender gap can be eliminated both in production and consumption. Our main objective is to eliminate inequality between men and women both in production and consumption.

**What are the main barriers for women involved in agriculture?**

There are lots of barriers; First of all, I would like to touch upon the issue of land ownership. According to statistics, 80% of landowners in Georgia are men and 20% - women. This means that, culturally and traditionally, based on our stereotypes the property is inherited by a male. This creates a barrier to economic independence for women. If a woman wishes to start a busi-

ness, this, of course, requires funds as well as maintenance tools that she does not have. The other issue is education, the basic knowledge that a woman needs in agriculture – she has to either learn it from someone else or take training courses. But if we observe various training sessions, it is mostly men attending them just because women have to work twice as hard in the village – on the one hand, manage their agriculture and, on the other hand, manage the family which is much harder.

As for the wage, there is a trend in the whole world that a man’s salary is higher than a woman’s. Even financial institutes deem a woman’s business less reliable when approving a loan. This is written nowhere, but if you study loan approval statistics you will see that financial institutes do consider a business run by a man more reliable. The story is the same in the village – a woman’s work is less appreciated. “Bridge”, “Oxfam” and “Action Global” initiated a film featuring the invisible barriers for women living in the village and after a long time of searching we finally found the only girl that can drive a tractor. Based on her example, we can conclude that working with such vehicles does not require special strength and even more so, dealing with modern technology is not based on physical strength, but rather – on knowledge.

**To what extent are governmental bodies involved in working on these issues and are they innovators themselves?**

Generally, the Georgian Law is absolutely neutral in terms of gender. When representatives of one gender have special needs, I think, the law must be gender sensitive. After we introduced gender recommendations to the Ministry of Agriculture, I think, they got interested in cooperating with us.

**What is the organization’s approach to the issue of nutrition?**

We rely on the comprehensive nutrition research done by Oxfam. In terms of nutrition, men



and women have different needs, especially during the reproductive cycle. It is important for the state to equally consider the needs of both sexes. The nutrition research shows that in case of consumption of five groups of food in the family, women consume one group fewer, which means that she sacrifices food for someone else’s benefit. This is, of course, an expression of motherly care, but the state should pay attention to the gender mainstream when carrying out various projects.

Socially unprotected and vulnerable groups and internally displaced persons need support, it is necessary to take into account the needs of mothers and children. In Georgia there are a big number of people with anemia which is, to some extent, connected with poor nutrition. Eventually, this leads to health problems and it becomes necessary to plan one’s nutrition and take these aspects into consideration.

**There was a sitting held at the Parliament regarding fortification of everyday essentials. What is the viewpoint of “Bridge”- is it necessary to**

**carry out similar programmes in Georgia?**

This was a very important and necessary step taken by the state. I think a law on food safety must also be in force and the group of everyday essentials should be specified in the law. However, this is a vitally important decision and it must be executed on the grounds of a very firm base, with active participation of experts and professionals. It is vital to increase agricultural production and become less dependent on import in order to create a stable food environment.

**What are your recommendations with respect to gender and food safety?**

We have a set of recommendations that are still being processed. We hope to continue working with the Food Safety Group at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Women living in the village must be fully involved in economic development. There is a law on gender equality and a gender equality action plan which, in case of being used, can serve as a great potential for the country, and if not used – as an obstacle.

# 18-YEAR-OLD GEORGIAN SEMI-FINALIST AT GIST TECH-I 2016

TAMAR UMPRIANI **EXCLUSIVE**

The Georgian innovative idea called MotionX became a semi-finalist among representatives of 104 participating countries at Global Innovation through Science and Technology (GIST) competition announced by the US Department of State.

The idea belongs to 18-year old Nikoloz Gachechiladze, student of the faculty of International Business Administration at LCC International University. And the execution of his idea provides education accessibility in virtual mode.

“MotionX is the idea through which the process of shooting, editing and uploading videos on the internet will be automated. This will enable educational institutions in developing regions to upload study materials online easily and at minimal cost,” said Nikoloz Gachechiladze in the interview with OBSERVER.

The main part of the idea is the technological invention which, after having installed cameras,

will shoot, edit and upload videos by itself. As a consequence, the project will ensure the involvement of people that until now had no access to information in educational processes. Apart from this, the project includes materials adaptation (linguistic, cultural and contextual), which will encourage involvement of local educational institutions.

“It is noteworthy that this project is of international importance as we have no information about a similar system on the market that works in the same way. The system will be available in every language depending on where it is located”– Gachechiladze pointed out.

The young innovator is actively involved in different kinds of activities that aim to introduce novelty and improve the well-being of society. He wants to create a worthy product that will bring large-scale positive changes in the field of education. As Gachechiladze says, he has

had the idea of creating MotionX for a long time and a competition like this is an excellent opportunity for him to actually execute the idea.

The Global Innovation Competition GIST NET enables young innovators to get experience on their base, develop their ideas and execute them. Within the framework of the programme, representatives of 135 developing countries have presented their ideas and upgraded their qualifications since 2011 through different competitions and academic camps.

By now, representatives of Syria and Jordan are leading the competition followed by Georgians. “Particularly in the field of education, the representative of Jordan is presenting a project which supports teaching levels of mathematics with the use of a mobile phone application. And the representative of Syria (through an educational programme) is presenting an inven-



tion that will help children study electronics and develop logical thinking,” says Nikoloz.

Finalists of the competition will be elected based on online voting which started on the GIST Network webpage on April 1 and will continue for one month. 30 participants will proceed to the last round and on June 30 they will be meeting at the summit

in Silicon Valley, California where after the review they will be presenting their ideas to the audience to gain a victory. At this time, anyone can easily find Nikoloz Gachechiladze among the contestants and vote for the Georgian innovative idea in case of execution of which quality education will become available for large numbers of people.



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# 7 RULES FOR SELF-MANAGEMENT AS A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

TAMAR UMPRIANI **EXCLUSIVE**

The young pianist Nino Kotrikadze who works in Germany and has been awarded a second prize at the “Steinway & Sons” competition, paid a visit to Ilia State University (Iliauni) on April 6. The pianist shared her experiences with students and named the seven rules for self-management that play the biggest role in achieving success to OBSERVER readers.

## 1. Be organized

Manage time correctly and wisely, as time is the invaluable treasure that you will never be able to get back. The turning point that can put you on a completely different track may occur any time and we must be ready for it both professionally and intrinsically.

## 2. Believe in yourself

It is vitally important to believe in your abilities so much that others also get convinced.

## 3. Execute your ideas

Believe that what you are doing is right and good. Try to execute any creative initiative no matter how difficult and unreal it might seem in the beginning. I personally perceive music deep and in different contexts. Without this it is impossible to become a good artist. It is not just playing the piano and getting royalties.

## 4. Always be in a good mood

Giving and getting positive attitude is perhaps the greatest human mission. A sincere smile can definitely make one have a positive attitude towards you.

## 5. Be determined

Whatever might happen, stick to your childhood dreams be-

cause they are the most sincere and neat. Grandmother wanted me to become a doctor, but I still stuck to my childhood dream and I keep moving towards my goal. I decided to play music at the age of 11, the stimulus came from the first solo concert but I do not think I am only a pianist because being a musician involves lots of areas. I would like to remark that ever since I was left completely alone in an unfamiliar environment, I survived by the impulses I had gotten from my childhood teachers: Lali Rcheulishvili and Rezo Tavadze; the unforgettable emotion that I used to get when coming up on stage. Make every effort to make your dreams come true most of which might be lost and faded in everyday life.

## 6. Be responsible

Find balance inside yourself and determine how long it will take you to work on yourself, do not rely on banal old-fashioned guidelines. Working on yourself is very individual, for some it takes more, for others – less. But this does not mean that we are going to make every day of ours routine and uninteresting. For instance, there are compositions that I do not have to practice before a concert. Many world-famous pianists (I will resist from naming them) do not practice the compositions that they are supposed to play at a concert every day. Along with aging and getting more experience, one does not have to work for hours. This applies to people of all professions, not only musicians or artists.

## 7. Be hardworking

Generally, self-education - acquisition of new skills and broadening your horizons - is the most interesting process in a young artist's life. General education and a broad horizon are just as essential for a young musician as basic music skills. In my case, it was the synthesis of education gained at First Classical Gymnasium and at Music School, knowledge of foreign languages, interest for technical and natural sciences that, at a glance, are completely different from music, and also, the great love I had for performing and fine arts. I still live with the knowledge and impressions gotten at an early age and I consider this to be the firm fundament that must pave way for not only an artist's but also an individual's development.



Nino Kotrikadze was born in Tbilisi, 1986 into a musical family. The pianist took up music traditionally at the age of 6 in a class supervised by Lali Rcheulishvili at Music School. Then she matriculated at Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire in a class supervised by Rezo Tavadze and took her bachelor's degree. In 2007-2008 she matriculated at a prestigious conservatoire in Canada with a full scholarship, but eventually she decided to go to Germany because she deemed there to be further opportunities waiting for her. Even though she had to establish herself in a completely unfamiliar environment, she did not face any insuperable obstacles. The musician and rector of Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire Rezo Kiknadze was helping her to deal with

everyday concerns for which she is very grateful to him. The young pianist successfully performs at prestigious concerts in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and the USA. She has produced two audio albums: “Das Elisabeth Fest Album” (2011), which includes the newly discovered compositions by the great Hungarian composer and pianist Franz Liszt and his peer composers, and “Kinderleben” (2014) by the German composer and pianist Theodor Kullak. The master's student at Hanns Eisler Academy of Music in Berlin currently lives in Hamburg; she has an agent that manages her tight concert tours. She combines her performing career with teaching and is actively involved in organizing festivals and concerts.

## 67 students have been granted a scholarship within the framework of “Successful Student Motivation” Programme



Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania granted 67 master's students a scholarship within the framework of the “Successful Student Motivation” programme. The programme aims to motivate students with high academic performance.

The scholarship offered by the municipality can be granted to a person registered in Tbilisi who is a master's student at a state high-educational institution and has obtained no less than 91

points in every university course (Grade A). The programme includes one semester and each student gets 450 laris.

“The programme that aims to stimulate successful master's students is still in action. We want them to become more motivated.

Successful students are the guarantee of a successful city and country. This is a humble investment in our own future. We should create the right environ-

ment for them to improve their qualifications and get a better education. This is exactly what the programme aims at,” said Davit Narmania.

At the first and second stages of the programme up to 150 students were granted a scholarship. The programme will continue in the coming years too.

The event was also attended by representatives of the Tbilisi City Hall and the Tbilisi City Assembly.

## VICTIMS OF BABUSHERA TRAGEDY BURIED WITH MILITARY HONOUR

Victims of the battle for Georgia's territorial integrity were honourably consigned to the grave at the Digomi Brothers' Cemetery on April 9.

The funeral procession was attended by the Minister of Refugees and Accommodation Sozar Subari, Deputy Minister of Defense Davit Ebralidze and Tbilisi Mayor Davit Narmania.

As Sozar Subari stated, it is symbolic that the burial of the 12 heroes coincided with "9th April day".

"9th April is one of the most tragic and heroic days. I guess it is symbolic that the burial of the 12 heroes coincided with this day. 9 of them have been buried at Brother's Cemetery and three of them have been transported to their family cemeteries. 43 people have already been identified. 208 dead bodies have been transported and they are being identified. A lot of people are in-

involved in this process. I would like to give special thanks to the International Committee of the Red Cross for their effort. Also, my special thanks to the Abkhazian party who handle the issue with advertence. They fully realize that this is a humanitarian mission and discussing politics would be out of the question," said Sozar Subari.

The civil funeral rites for the victims of Babushera tragedy held at the Trinity Cathedral lasted for two days. Today, the President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili, Minister of Refugees and Accommodation Sozar Subari and other Parliament Members once again paid tribute to the memory of the fallen soldiers and expressed their condolences to their families.

In 2010, under the guidance of the Red Cross, a bilateral coordination group was formed which is responsible for studying the

cases of the ones missing since the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in 1992-1993.

As a result of a negotiation, they decided on opening Babushera Brothers' Cemetery and exhuming the deceased bodies.

After having opened the graves at Babushera Brothers' Cemetery, in order to identify the deceased bodies, they were transported to Levan Samkharauli National Forensics Bureau. The genetic profiles obtained in Georgia have been sent to DNA Laboratory at University of Zagreb Croatia. By now, 43 deceased bodies transported from Babushera Grave have been identified.

As a result of the ongoing negotiations between the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation and the de facto government of Abkhazia, two more graves will be opened in 2016 and over 100 deceased bodies will be transported.



## THIRD NATIONAL HEPATITIS C ELIMINATION WORKSHOP

The Third National Hepatitis C elimination workshop was held at the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health on April 6. The event has been held for the third time in spring and it includes discussions on Hepatitis C prevention and control issues. The purpose of this year's workshops is to discuss

such pressing issues in Hepatitis C Elimination Programme as the results of seroprevalence of Hepatitis C population research; results of the first elimination phase and a long-term elimination strategy (2016-2020).

According to results of Population Research, spread index of Hepatitis C virus amounts to

7.5% based on a simple test, but the number of laboratory-confirmed cases amount to 5.3%.

By now, up to 8000 patients are involved in the programme.

The workshop was attended by the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs Davit Sergeenko and the US Ambassador to Georgia Ian Kelly.



## SHELTER FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE OPENED IN KAKHETI

LEPL "State Fund for Protection and Assistance of (statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking" made a presentation regarding the opening of a shelter for victims of family violence in the region of Kakheti.

The Deputy Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs Valeri Kvaratskhelia, US Ambassador Ian Kelly, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Archil Talakvadze, Director of State Fund Tamila Barkalaia, representative of United Nations Development Fund for Women Erika Kvapilova and representative of other

non-governmental and state organizations.

The launch of the shelter was co-financed by the State Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women and US Embassy. The State Fund provides various services in respect of family violence: Assistance and defense of legal interests of victims of family violence; providing victims of family violence with a shelter, juridical, psychological, medical and/or other kinds of services; supporting the full reintegration of families and society.

## MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES DISCUSSED DETAILS REGARDING BATUMI MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Gigla Agulashvili met with non-governmental and governmental representatives and businessmen.

Gigla Agulashvili, together with Deputy Minister Teimuraz Murghulia, introduced the importance and perspectives of and activities planned in the context of the 8th Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" to the participants of the meeting.

"Environment for Europe"

will be held in Batumi through June 8-11. The conference will be attended by representatives of diplomatic corps, international organizations and governmental bodies along with up to 800 delegates.

The main topics at the Ministerial will be the Green Economy and Air Quality Improvement for a better environment and human health. The meeting lasted in an interactive regime for two hours at the Environmental Information and Education Center.

## The Parliament starts to discuss the bill presented by the Ministry of Justice

The Parliament has started to discuss the bill presented by the Ministry of Justice which eliminates barriers related to land registration and simplifies the procedure to the greatest extent. The corresponding package of legislative changes was presented to the legislative body by Tea Tsulukiani. The purpose of the changes is to eradicate the difficulties that landowners come across when registering their property. In accordance with the bill approved by the Georgian government, the land registration process will get easier; barriers that landowners used to come across will be eradicated and the registration procedure will be encouraged. Existing problems paved the way for preparing the

special project and corresponding package of legislative changes with respect to land registration. In particular, by now only 25% of the Georgian land properties are registered which is a very amount. The main purpose of the changes is to simplify and encourage the land registration process. While working on the project barriers to land registration were detected and special legislative changes were introduced to eradicate them, in particular: a single standard for a metric plan will be developed, cartographers involved in the project will be taking a retraining course; it will help citizens to acquire a certificate of ownership and state owners to solve disputes.

# GEORGE MELUA'S THEOSOPHICAL VISION IN ART

NINI MACHAVARIANI **EXCLUSIVE**

Artist George Melua's personal exhibition will be held at Mikheil Tumanishvili Film Actors Theatre between 12-24 April. Up to 50 acrylic paintings medium created in Georgia and the USA will be presented at the exhibition.

The venue is rather spacious and cheerful, hence, on the right side of the room, viewers will have an opportunity to see the interesting "series of pictures" that are based on the artist's collected poems and are created in line with lunar mystification and certain theosophical statements which, to some extent, feature a poetical embodiment; On the left side there will be abstract paintings of larger sizes.

"My zodiac sign is Cancer, thus my ruling planet is the Moon. These poems were written during the hardest period of my life – when I was living in the USA, in the cold and heat, the moon was my only friend, which found its place in my paintings," the artist pointed out.

George Melua believes in the existence of parallel worlds, which is reflected in the painter's art. You can clearly see the combined signs of two parallel worlds. He started painting spontaneously, during his years in emigration. He could never have imagined himself as a painter, but he was associated with the society of painters both in America and Georgia – this is what encouraged him to create something new and interesting.

Lots of painters lived in Sa-

vannah, where George Melua worked. Due to the beautiful scenery of Savannah painters from different states gathered here to paint landscapes of this great place. George Melua pointed out that "many artists were inspired by the beautiful views of Savannah".

The Georgian artist recalls his visit to a friend, where he saw the kind of clay dishes painted with gold ink that he for a long time had been looking for. Afterwards, he also bought a clay vase, decorated it with golden rims and then painted it. When showing his work to others, no one would believe that a self-taught artist had done the work so professionally.

"It was right after painting that vase, that I grew more willing to create something else. A friend of mine bought me paint and brushes, saying: "Now it's yours, go ahead and paint". At that time his words sounded absurd to me, but in a couple of days when I was left alone, I started painting," George Melua remarks.

The first painting is a landscape of the city of Savannah which was absolutely spontaneously and unexpectedly created.

The reason why he decided on holding his first exhibition was to buy a camera. He participated in the Susan Crouch's spring exhibition where out of all paintings presented by 200 painters George Melua's painting won.

"This was an unforgettable day for me. I remember Ms Susan Crouch, the president of the

exhibition space, come up to me saying that I was the winner. I would never imagine that my painting would be chosen out of so many painters. This success motivated me a lot and I have not stopped painting ever since then," the painter pointed out.

He is not very keen on selling his own paintings. He was invited to a trade fair at the US Embassy once he arrived in Georgia. He did not want his paintings to get sold so much that he intentionally priced them too high. None of the paintings were sold and the artist went back home happy. It should be remarked that George Melua's paintings are characterized by scrupulous accuracy and delicacy. He is very keen on things and you even come across miniature works by various sculptors in his house; he has an antique American torch that he bought while living in America, renewed it and brought it to his motherland.

His working space is in one of the corners of the living room – that explains the small size of some of his paintings. Mr George Melua and his wife are, in the immediate future, planning to purchase an art studio, but so far they do not know the details.

In his free time, George Melua pays a visit to exhibition spaces three times a week and gets familiarized with the works of other artists.

"I have friends who are artists. They appreciate me as a painter and as an individual. Society, and most importantly, I need to



show my works to them. I want to open my heart to them so that they can see the spiritual values that lie deep down inside me. This will be the biggest challenge for me," claimed the artist.

He believes that each and every painter can do their bit in art and leave their trace, hence, he promises to hold many interesting trade fairs in the future. One is planned to be held in May.

George Melua was born in 1957. He attended the faculty of History and Philology and the faculty of Journalism. He is the author of two collected poems and several popular science

books. He used to edit and publish his own newspaper, as well as owning his own radio programme. The Georgian painter is a member of Landings Art Association in Georgia, USA. It is notable that he became a winner of the Merrill Lynch Spring Art Show 2009, and won a "People's Choice Awards" at the Plantation Club Gallery in Savannah. He has also participated in group exhibitions both in America and Georgia, and has, for instance, recently held exhibitions at Art-Café Tiflis Branch and Nikoloz-Baratashvili House Museum among others.

## GURANDA ANCHABADZE'S EXHIBITION "SHOW ME YOUR FACE"

Baia Gallery presents its latest exhibition "Show Me the Face". This is the first exhibition of the joint photo project by the Baia Gallery and Guranda Anchabadze. Guranda lives and works in London, UK.

Contemporary Georgian artists provide the subjects for Guranda's photo projects. The aim of the author is to display a series of works over the next 2 years featuring Georgian artists. This consists of 4 exhibitions presented at the Baia Gallery during 2016-2017. Following the completion of the exhi-

bitions a catalogue of the works will be published.

The first exhibition: "Show Me the Face" presents 20 artists. The focus of the project is the interpretation of an artists' personal image. The photo sessions were completed in the summer of 2014 and 2015. Guranda shot more than 400 images... 32 of which have been chosen for the exhibition.

As part of the process, compelling documentary material about the artists and contemporary Georgian art will be created.



# WORLD-FAMOUS CELEBRITIES TO VISIT GEORGIA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A NEW PROJECT

A large-scale project “Check in Georgia” initiated and supported by the Georgian government will be launched in April, 2016.

A press conference regarding the project was held by the Vice Prime Minister of Georgia, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Dimitri Kumsishvili, Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia Mikheil Giorgadze, Deputy Minister of Culture Kakha Kandelaki and head of Georgian National Tourism Administration Giorgi Chogovadze.

“Check in Georgia” includes a large-scale series of cultural events that will be held in Tbilisi and regions of Georgia. The project will turn into a tradition and year after year it will gain more and more importance. “Check in Georgia” is organized by the Culture Development Investment Fund.

“It is very important to continually hold interesting events to generate publicity for Georgia and turn it into a more attractive tourist destination,” said Dimitri Kumsishvili, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development said at the press conference.

The Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia Mikheil Giorgadze said that events planned within the framework of the project are not going to be concentrated only in the capital, they will spread in over 19 cities across the country. He claims that singers of such level of fame paying a visit to Georgia

means that, both in terms of infrastructure and human resources, the country is ready to welcome such celebrities.

“Naturally, Georgian singers will actively participate in this project. On the whole, this initiative will contribute to generating positive publicity for Georgia as well as establishing its positive image on a worldwide scale and increasing the internal and external streams of tourists,” Mikheil Giorgadze pointed out.

The purpose of the project is to turn Georgia into a cultural center, attract a large number of tourists, support entrepreneurship through this way and eventually, create additional jobs and increase household income not only in Tbilisi but also in regions.

This year the large-scale cultural events will start in April and continue until the end of the year. The participants of the concerts planned within the framework of the project “Check in Georgia” are: Eros Ramazzotti (24th April, Tbilisi), Robbie Williams (27th May, Tbilisi), “Maroon 5” (7th June, Batumi), and José Carreras (18th June, Kutaisi).

“Check in Georgia” includes concerts held in 19 Georgian cities with the participation of Georgian and foreign artists, 35 festivals – theatre festivals, film festivals, music festivals, animated film festival, contemporary art festivals, choreographic festivals, fashion weeks and photo festivals among others.

Execution of “Check in Georgia” will make the events dedi-

cated to Georgia Independence Day more diversified.

In addition, within the framework of the project it is planned to arrange a music venue in the city of Batumi which will be equipped with contemporary sound apparatus, lighting, stage, security service and all other services that are essential for holding a proper concert.

“This is an unprecedented offer by the government to all producers, singers and instrumentalists in the country to use the venue free of charge, plan events, decide on ticket prices themselves and get some income,” claims the Ministry of Culture.

In the context of the project, along with the abovementioned events, different activities, such as wine and cheese festivals and festivals promoting other agricultural products as well as trade fairs for local products are planned to be held. The eco-tourism discipline will also be integrated in the project such as bike tours, camping trips and special tours around Georgia’s protected areas. These ideas make the project “Check in Georgia” more interesting and diversified for our citizens and guests.

The organizers of the project think that “Check in Georgia” will significantly contribute to the popularization of Georgia, generating more publicity for it as a tourist and cultural center and establishing its international image. Accordingly, Georgia will take a worthy place on the world calendar.



## Managers in art and culture will be taking General English Language Courses free of charge



The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia together with the British Council in Georgia announce admission of managers in art and culture (for theatres, exhibition venues, in the field of cinematography, art organizations within state and private bodies) to General English Language courses.

The programme is being executed and financed by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and the British Council in Georgia.

The duration of the course is May through December, 2016. The lectures

will be given in the training center at the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia.

Those willing to take part in the programme should keep in mind that their minimal competence in the English Language must be lower than Pre-Intermediate; also, it is essential to devote six hours a week to attending the English language lessons. The British Council certificates will be awarded only to those who will have attended at least 90% of the course. The lessons will be held three times a week – from 18:30 to 20:30 on Mondays, Wednesdays and

Fridays. Participants will also have to do homework and attend events organized by the British Council;

There are three stages to the selection process: at the first stage, participants will be selected based on their CV and motivation letter; at the second stage, the applicants’ English language level will be assessed based on the results shown on the British Council Aptis Test; Eventually a group of 12 participants with the same level of English will be formed;

The deadline for sending in the applications is 18:00, 17th April, 2016. The number of places is limited.

# 19-YEAR TRADITION OF PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION IN GEORGIA

MARI TABATADZE

**EXCLUSIVE**

On April 6, it became known who will be representing Georgia at the international Public Speaking Competition in Great Britain, in which the best orators from the 64 member countries of the English Speaking Union (ESU) will be participating. The jury elected a second-year student of Political Sciences at Tbilisi State University (TSU) Guga Sukhiashvili, as the winner of the competition held in Tbilisi, thus, he is to be the one to travel to London in May.

In the interview given to OBSERVER, he pointed out that at this time he is preparing for the International Final to be held in London and hopes to honorably represent both him and Georgia. It is noteworthy that Guga participated in the competition last year too and even qualified for the Final, but he was unable to win at the time.

He remarks that the competition was fierce both last year and this year, however he expresses his satisfaction and adds “I am happy about the interest shown for the competition in Georgia. Hopefully, the interest will increase year by year”.

Like the first place winner Guga Sukhiashvili, Irakli Korkia, third-year student of International Relations at Free University, participated in the competition for the second time. He became

the third place winner last year and second-place winner this year. As Korkia pointed out in the interview with OBSERVER, the ultimate goal remains unachieved but he supposes that from a long-term perspective, he has gained a lot of experience that is of value to him.

Apart from this, he considers last years’ experience to be the reason for his progress. “I knew the style in which other contestants would give their speech, they often opt for elated and pathetic talks, and thus, I presented my topic in a different way”.

In addition, Irakli Korkia singles out one more important feature in the process of getting closer to the main prize: “I tried to breach the barrier that exists between the participant and spectators/jury. My aim was not mere story-telling, but rather to find out novelties together with the audience and from time to time put myself in the position of a spectator”. This is the feature he considers to be the means for gaining a competitive advantage.

In general, he thinks that “this competition is a great stimulus for young adults to try their strengths, improve themselves, achieve success through work, see an actual result and experience all the benefits the competition brings”.

While it is true that Irakli

Korkia is not going to be able to participate in international competition in London, he holds a DAAD and Chinese Government Scholarship within the framework of which in August he is traveling to Germany for one month, and from September he will be taking Chinese language courses in China for a year.

As for the third place winner Eter Tchumburidze, she is a student of business administration at Free University. As she pointed out in the interview with OBSERVER she is very fond of such projects, always tries to take part and considers them to be an important source of opportunities.

“People tend to let their power when they believe they do not have it”. As for the third place

winner’s opinion about this competition topic, she believes that people can have different ways of perception. Thus, the first thing she tried to do in her talk was to define the word “power”; then she draw attention to the innate power that every individual possesses and that needs to be developed.

For 19 years already, young adults aged 16-20 have been participating in the Public Speaking Competition which is organized annually by the ESU.

This year, the winners were chosen by the jury that included Anna Dolidze, Georgian Deputy Minister of Defense and Alexandra Hall Hall, British Ambassador to Georgia. Jury member Anna Dolidze talks about the importance of perfect knowledge of

the English language and claims that it plays a huge role in Georgia’s integration into the EU.

Thus, as a result of this year’s Public Speaking Competition one more Georgian will join the group of young adults that during 19 years have been participating in the international competition held in London. Consequently, the tradition of cultural and educational programmes provided by the ESU will continue.

The ESU is an organization that was founded in London in 1918 as a link between England and America. It aims to strengthen friendship and mutual understanding by the means of the English language. Currently, it operates in 64 countries – Georgia among them which became a member of the Union in 1998.



## A STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT VOCATIONAL INSTITUTION TO COME INTO EFFECT IN MTSKHETA

In the village of Tsinamdzhvriantkari, Mtskheta Municipality, the renovation process of the only vocational education institution in the region is about to end.

In 1883 the public figure and patron Ilia Tsinamdzhvriantkari opened an agriculture school in his domain in Tsinamdzhvriantkari at his own expense and with the help of the society. In 1993 an agriculture college was launched on the base of the school. According to the data obtained in 2006, the college focused on agricultural disciplines. In 2010 the vocational institution was abolished.

Based on the decision of the Minister

of Education and Sciences of Georgia, it has been a year since the start of full renovation of the building. Workshops and laboratories meeting modern standards are being arranged for modular education programmes. The college plans to implement such sought-after vocational programmes that will support employment and self-employment of graduates. Activities have been carried out to execute agricultural programmes. Perennials are being planted. At the same time, additional blocks of the college are being renovated in the small towns of Tianeti and Stepantsminda.

## Implementation of work-based learning approaches Announced in Georgia

Ministry of Education and Sciences of Georgia in support with the Millennium Challenge Account – Georgia (MCA-Georgia) held a presentation on April 8 regarding the new initiative of “Public-Private Partnership in Vocational Education” as a part of the vocational education reform.

In the context of the new stage in the country’s development, Tamar Sanikidze, the Georgian Minister of Education and Sciences, introduced contemporary educational opportunities, alternative models of public-private partnership and new ways of entrepreneurial development to the audience. In accordance with

this initiative, a vocational education reform will be carried out, which will create an opportunity to implement internationally accepted standards of the work-based learning approach, manage educational processes along with employers, strengthen the component of entrepreneurship practice, determine professions oriented on labor market and ensure the increased number of employed vocational graduates.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the public and private sector, stakeholders involved in vocational education, representatives of donor organizations and international and local experts.

# FC DINAMO TBILISI NOT GIVING UP ON PREMIER LEAGUE TITLE

VAKO KIPIANI

23rd round of the National Football Championship took place on April 6. FC Shukura Kobuleti hosted FC Merani Martvili on Chele Arena. The match ended in a draw 0: 0. Merani has 15th place with 14 points, while Shukura is on 8th place with 31 points. Merani competitor Sapovnela Terjola hosted Saburtalo at Zestafoni David Abashidze stadium, this match also ended in a draw 0: 0. Sapovnela also has 14 points and shares 14th, 15th places with Merani. Saburtalo won two of the last four league games and two ended with draws.

FC Samtredia continues unbeaten series. At Erosi Manjgaladze stadium Samtredia hosted FC Dinamo Batumi and won the match by 2: 0. From November 28 through April 6 Samtredia held 12 matches in the premier league with 10 win and 2 draws. Meeting with Dinamo Batumi

was opened by Budu Zivzivadze after 53 minutes, the second goal went into the game after 65 minutes, David Jikia scored. Samtredia takes second place with 50 points and is 11 points behind Dinamo Tbilisi, while it is 3 points ahead to the third-placed Dila Gori. Batumi has 36 points and is in seventh place.

Three points gained Dila Gori, which has attacked Guria in Lanchkhuti. The only goal of the game was hit by Mashukovi. Winners gained 47 points while Guria is on 13 the place with 17 points that is three points away from the Guria district „ ‘ 17 points in 13th place, just three points away from the knockout zone.

Chikhura Sachkhere hosted Tskhinvali in Ivantsminda. Sachkherians won first time by 2:1 and the final result maintained. The hosts managed to score a quick goal. Giorgi Gan-

ugrava opened the score on 5th minute, after 5 minutes from the first goal Lasha Chikvaidze increased the difference with two balls. In 9 minutes Lasha Kochladze of Tskhinvali scored the goal. The teams were not able to do more and Chikhura gained three points.

Otar Kobakhidze opened the score on 33rd minutes and 54th minutes. Raphael Chukvura was able to score. But in five minutes Otar Kobakhidze scored two goals and made Sioni lead the rankings. On 71 Lui Alerto Medina made a goal that he dedicated to Zura Japiashvili who was injured seriously.

Lokomotiv Tbilisi defeated Kolkheti Poti by 1: 0. David Chagelishvili scored the only goal. Poti finished with 23 points and took 11th place. Locomotive scored 21 points and is on 12th place.

The central match was held at



Dinamo Arena, where Dinamo Tbilisi defeated Kutaisi Torpedo by 2:1. The match was traditionally tense and spectacular. The score at the 40th minute opened Nikoloz Gelashvili, after 79 minutes, George Kukhianidze made a penalty kick tied the game. In the fourth minute of overtime Bakar Mirtskhulava uprooted

Jaba Jighauri in the penalty area, the referee signaled a penalty and was sent off the stadium. Giorgi Kvilitaia was accurate in the penalty.

Dinamo won 2:1, after 23 round, Tbilisi has 61 points and is in the first place, the torpedo gets the ninth place with 30 points

## SPORTS NEWS

### JUDO

Beka Ghviniashvili became the winner of Grand Prix, Samsun in 100 kg category. With this victory he earned 300 additional points to the Olympic Qualification Ranking and he can already proceed to the qualification zone. It is the second time Beka Ghviniashvili has won Grand Prix, Samsun. The first victory took place in 2014 in -90 kg weight category.

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Levan Matiashvili won a silver medal in +100 kg weight category. He was only defeated in the final by Teddy Riner. In the same weight category, Adam Okruashvili became a bronze medalist.

### BASKETBALL

Zaza Phachulia continues playing in the starting lineup, and the Dallas continues winning. Texans gained the fourth victory in a row in Minnesota, where they beat Timberwolves 88:78. Pachulia spent 23 minutes at the basketball court and out of three attempts he earned one point. In total Georgia center earned two points, 9 rebounds, 1 assist and 1 steal.

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The Andorra fighting for play-offs were heavily beaten in the Spanish League (Primera Division). George Shermadini team had an away match with the outsider of the League RETA bet

ranking the last and was beaten 80:83. Shermadin played for 17:11 and finished the match with 6 points and 7 rebounds.

### RUGBY

It is exactly two months left before the World Rugby Under 20 Championship. This year the tournament will be held in Manchester through 7-25 June in which, for the first time in Georgian rugby history, Junior Borjghalosnebi will be competing with 12 elite youth teams. The U-20s gained the right to participate in the tournament by winning the World Rugby Cup in Lisbon last year. Already last year it became known that in 2017 Georgia will be hosting

this tournament which ranks as the second after the Men's World Cup.

All of this is a new challenge for Georgian rugby, thus, the first step is to participate in this year's tournament where our team is going to be matching against such strong rivals as New Zealand, Ireland and Wales.

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The Big Ten Regular season of 2015-2016 is over. The last 18th round determined who would advance to the Supreme League and who would have to replay with the second place winner of the First League.

Next season one more Kutaisi club Bagrati will join the Big

Ten from the First League who won in 2015-2016 and gained the right to participate in the Supreme League.

Play-off round, first leg: Batumi will have a home match against Kochebi in Poti in the play-off round, first leg at 15:00, and Jiki will be matching against AIA in Avtchala at 16:00 on 17th April.



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