

OPINION & ANALYSIS

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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

In the frame of the GRETA project, EU Sweden and Austria launched supporting the Local Development Initiative (LDI), in the sector of organic agriculture to create economic opportunities for farmers, farmer groups, cooperatives, processing units as well as other actors along various organic value chains.

GRETA, a four-year (2019-2020) project of Sustainable Mountain Tourism & Organic Agriculture, focuses on the support of Georgian small and medium enterprises to professionalise and scale up. The action will also facilitate an improvement of the business environment and the creation of new income opportunities in the two growth sectors: mountain tourism and organic agriculture. The €6.8 million project is co-funded by the EU (€3 million) and the two EU member states Sweden (€2.8 million) and Austria (€1 million).

The initiative is targeted at applicants of Mestia, Lentekhi, Tsageri, Oni, Ambrolauri, Sachkhere, Chiatura and Tkibuli municipalities, including the farmers, farming families, farmer formal/informal groups, sole entrepreneurs, family agricultural business holders, cooperatives and farmer groups. Individuals/units from the organic agriculture sector, who are based outside of those municipalities but purchase their organic product from the region can also participate in the Local Development Initiative.

Georgia to receive €1.16 million from EU, Sweden and Austria for agriculture development



► Georgia and the EU.

The size of the LDI support per applicant or group of applicants shall be between €5 000 and €150 000 with the co-financing share at minimum 10% of the total budget.

As the ambassador of EU to Georgia, Carl Hartzell stated, financial assistance aimed at recovering economic situation in Georgia, is one of the priorities of EU, added that the country owns great potential of organic agriculture, yet, due to the lack of access to the agricultural inputs, credits, markets and information, the opportunities remain underutilised. As he said 'supporting Local Development Initiative is a timely step to overcome the challenges.'

"We believe that joining forces gives better results, this is the very reason the EU, Sweden and Austria have united resources to support smallholder farmers

and small-scale processors, especially from high mountain rural areas," the ambassador of Sweden to Georgia, Ulrik Tidestrom remarked. He also stated he's glad that despite the existing situation, the project GRETA keeps operating successfully and contributes to the economic development of mountainous regions as well as creates new working alternatives.

As the ambassador of Austria to Georgia pointed out, agriculture is a significant sector for Austria in cooperation with Georgia, and as it is visible, agriculture is becoming more and more important in the middle of this crisis. He also remarked that creating co-financing opportunities, sharing experience, and providing smallholder farmers and small-scale processors with agricultural input supplies and equipment are one of the most important actions for economic revival, nowadays.

To participate in the event, the pre-

sented idea/project should fulfill one of the criteria given below. A binding declaration must be given that organic farming practices will be used and that organic certification is the goal of the enterprise or of the group; Smallholder farmers (individuals) seeking to start, diversify or expand into organic production and that enter into a binding declaration towards organic certification;

Farmer groups that have a formal cooperative type of organization or who have a proven history of cooperation and want to become certified organic; Individual marketing enterprises that have a proven record of selling organic products or that wish to move into the organic produce market;

Organic farming input suppliers (that supply organic seeds or planting materials, organically certified natural pesticides, composting materials, organic feed, etc.).



► GRETA, a four-year (2019-2020) project of Sustainable Mountain Tourism & Organic Agriculture, focuses on the support of Georgian small and medium enterprises to professionalise and scale-up.

PM chairs another coordination council meeting

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

On April 29th, another Inter-agency coordination council meeting led by the Prime Minister was held. The MPs reviewed the process of the first stage of opening the economy and lifting the restriction and consulted further lightening of the regulations, which will be implemented according to the development of the pandemic. The Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Healthcare provided the council with information on the monitoring of the process of compliance with the recommendations and safety regulations of the Ministry of Healthcare in enterprises. According to the ministries, the factories are being inspected actively. Dozens of enterprises, which have satisfied the regulations will continue to operate. During the work process, they will go through periodic inspections and the factories where flaws have been detected were given additional time for eliminating the shortcomings.

The Social and Economic Anti-Crisis Plan unveiled by the Government of Georgia was discussed as well. Each sectoral ministry



► The MPs

holds detailed presentations of the current week within the framework of the plan. After the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs will provide the public with detailed information on the provision of targeted social assistance.

At the session, MPs also discussed the situation of grocery and medical supply in the country, which is being coordinated by Environmental Protection and Agriculture Minister Levan Davitashvili. As he said there is no problem in terms of grocery

supply and it is being refilled regularly without deterrence. In addition, it was pointed out that 52 tons of cargo intended for the healthcare sector arrived in Georgia from China at dawn of March 29th, including 40,000 PCR tests, 20,000 antibody tests, as well as personal protective equipment - overalls, gloves, gowns, shoe covers, thermometers, protective goggles, and other medical items.

It was also noted that the process of bringing Georgian citizens back from foreign countries continues. According to Foreign Affairs Minister Davit Zalkaliani, 8 563 citizens



► As Environmental Protection and Agriculture Minister Levan Davitashvili noted, grocery and medical stocks are efficient and are being filled regularly.

have already returned to their homeland on special flights that were carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization, while 17 072 of Georgia's citizens received assistance on-site from Georgian diplomatic representatives. Upcoming flights will be carried out in accordance with the following schedule, as determined by the Coordination Council:

April 30th: Madrid-Tbilisi
May 1st: Vienna-Tbilisi
May 2nd: Prague-Batumi
May 5th: Athens-Tbilisi
May 7th: Amsterdam-Tbilisi
May 9th: Berlin-Tbilisi

At the council meeting, MPs also discussed the epidemiological situation. With the newest data, there are 517 confirmed coronavirus cases in Georgia with 168 recoveries and 6 deaths. Currently, 5,153 persons are in quarantine and 549 persons are hospitalised under medical observation. The Inter-agency Coordination Council continues to hold regular meetings under the leadership of the prime minister in order to take coordinated steps. The Parliament of Georgia, headed by Chairman Archil Talakvadze, and the Administration of the President are actively involved in the council's work.

GYLA presents report on 'forms of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment and prevention'

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) held an online presentation of the report 'Forms of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and Prevention' on 29th of April, 2020.

As stated in the statement made by GYLA, 10 criminal matters filed by GYLA in 2019 were analyzed for the purposes of the report. The specific form of ill-treatment, the subject/s implementing it, the issue of recognizing a person as a victim, the problem of making a summary decision on the case were assessed.

The report also analyzes the Georgian legislation, the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, public information requested from various agencies, the results of a survey of lawyers working on ill-treatment and 2 convicts of penitentiary institutions.

According to the GYLA statement, there have been no systematic cases of torture and ill-treatment in recent years, but it still prevails as a problem that law enforcers still commit similar crimes. As in previous years, it remains a challenge for law enforcement agencies to properly document such facts, conduct investigations within a reasonable time, and recognize victims of ill-treatment as victims.

The positive step was the creation of the State Inspector's Office and its implementation, however, the adoption of the law on the State Inspector, according to which the inspector has a limited mandate, 'cannot be positively assessed.'

The key findings revealed by the study results were multiple. Analysis of the cases in GYLA's case showed that in 2019, the form of torture/ill-treatment by law enforcement officers was mainly beatings, however, there are cases of psychological violence, in one case - forced abortion and in one case - rape.

GYLA study reads, that one of the victims in the case of GYLA and a prisoner in a peni-



► There have been no systematic cases of torture and ill-treatment in recent years, but it is still a problem for law enforcement to commit similar crimes.

tentiary institution said during the interrogation that they had attempted suicide after putting pressure on them, 'which indicates the severity of the psychological consequences of torture/ill-treatment.'

According to the report, investigation of cases of torture/ill-treatment in GYLA proceedings, despite their severity, in most cases (60%) begins with Article 333 of the Criminal Code. The investigation of most cases of alleged ill-treatment has been initiated by the Prosecutor's Office under Article 333 of the

Criminal Code, abuse of power (91%).

The rate of granting victim status to victims in cases of ill-treatment is still quite low, in particular, only 2 out of 10 cases in GYLA proceedings are known to be victims and none of the cases in the GYLA proceedings, where the investigation is underway under Article 333 of the Criminal Code, has been filed.

The decision of the prosecutor to refuse to recognize the victim in connection with 7 cases has been appealed in court. Of the

appealed decisions, the court upheld only 1 appeal.

According to the statistics (first 9 months of 2019) of the investigations launched by the Prosecutor's Office under Article 333, Part 3 of the Criminal Code, the rate of criminal prosecution is very low. In the investigations initiated by the Prosecutor's Office under Article 333, Part 3, Subparagraph B of the Criminal Code of Georgia, which consists of exceeding official authority via violence or using weapons, the criminal proceedings were instituted against only 3 persons, which is only 1.6% of the cases.

At the presentation it was emphasized that based on the findings, relevant recommendations have been prepared for relevant government agencies.

The report was prepared in the framework of the EU-supported project Fighting Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia, which GYLA has been implementing since February 2018 together with the Center for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture (GCRT).

THURSDAY APRIL 30

Day Party cloudy
High: 22°C

Night Partly cloudy
Low: 11°C

FRIDAY MAY 1

Day Mostly cloudy
High: 24°C

Night Rain
Low: 13°C

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NBG temporary supervision plan for COVID-19

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

To mitigate the negative economic impact of the COVID-19 epidemic and encourage the country's economy, the National Bank of Georgia (NBG) is moving to a temporary model of banking regulation, which will reduce the existing capital and liquidity requirements for banks to free up additional financial resources for commercial banks. As a result, an additional \$ 1.6 billion of capital will be released into the banking system.

According to the NBG statement, the temporary supervisory plan that has been developed by the central bank fully complies with the recommendations of the IMF, the European Central Bank and other leading financial institutions.

The country's banking sector has sufficient capital and liquidity buffers that have been gradually accumulated through the consistent supervision of the NBG. Also, the amount of inactive loans in the whole portfolio is low and in recent years the banking sector has been stable.

The statement reads that as a result of the policies of the NBG and the government, the dollarization of foreign currency loans to individuals has been reduced, "thus reducing our population's vulnerability to exchange rate fluctuations."

Given the introduction of a responsible lending framework, today's challenges are facing less and more adequate debt.

The NBG's action plan involves the use of banking sector capital and liquidity buffers in times of financial stress. This means reducing existing capital and liquidity requirements that will allow the banking sector to neutralize potential losses through these buffers and continue normal business operations and lending to the real economy.

Under the Supervisory Plan, commercial banks will alleviate capital requirements, including the abolition of the Capital Conservation Buffer (2.5% risk-weighted assets) and a portion of the Pillar 2 buffer (2/3 of the non-hedged credit risk buffer).

The GEL 1.6 billion of capital will be released, which can be used to offset potential losses or to lend the economy. Overall, the banking sector

has a capital buffer of GEL 4 billion above the minimum requirements, which, if needed, can be fully released. The decision comes with one condition: the banks should not apply for the proceeds of it to issue management bonuses and dividends to shareholders. Also, with the aforementioned amount, banks should not finance repurchase operations of their own shares on the stock exchange.

However, despite the fact that there is no liquidity problem in the sector at this stage, the NBG expresses full readiness to provide the economy with the necessary liquidity resources. To this end, the NBG has an adequate amount of foreign currency reserves, which is expected to add to the expected foreign currency inflows from international



► According to the information, released by the NBG, 7 of its employees from one structural unit that had been isolated for 2 weeks already, tested positive for COVID-19.



► Kadagidze: "If we handle this crisis well, we can offer the world Georgia as a paradise for living and doing business."

financial institutions in the short-term. And the national currency will be delivered as needed in the form and amount the economy requires.

It is noteworthy that the NBG has significantly softened the supervisory requirements because of the offer made by commercial banks regarding the lightening of loan repayment grace period, to ensure the maximum flexibility for banks in deferment of liabilities.

NBG also announces that if the economic shock caused by COVID-19 were more severe with a significant increase in overdue loans in the

banking system, the central bank would employ other tools at its disposal and take more resolute measures to secure financial stability.

Former NBG President Giorgi Kadagidze responded to the ongoing crisis, portraying the opportunities for poor countries on social media.

According to him, the world trader order is changing and developed countries will seek to diversify from China and move businesses; given that "Georgia has all the prerequisites (strategic location, tax scarcity, etc.)," regional cities will be a good fit for relocating factories

that previously operated from China, creating a great source of employment.

He also suggested adding to the huge fiscal stimulus of the leading countries and attracting financial resources that were previously unavailable.

"Taking advantage of these funds and pursuing our own economic development also opens up new opportunities for countries like us. (Upgraded railways and airports, roads, ports, internet everywhere, etc.)."

Kadagidze also emphasized that for many service providers, geographic location

will become less important and by offering the right marketing, proper tax system and adequate legal environment, Georgia can become a very attractive place.

He also views this crisis as the unprecedented opportunity in the direction of e-government. "If so far there have been many restrictions (including international obligations), now is the best time to reform."

He reviews the cases of Estonia and Singapore, claiming that such reform will reduce costs and increase efficiency, which will directly impact investment attraction.

Kote Marjanishvili – *Country of Liquid Sun*

Kote Marjanishvili was a great and erudite artist with a wide-range thinking. The plays he staged in Georgia, Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania show his talent and the artistic value of his creations.

Marjanishvili was born in 1872 in the village of Kvareli. His father, Aleksandre Marjanishvili, was the elder son of Andria Marjanishvili and Anna Bibilashvili. His mother, Solomon Chavchavadze's daughter Elisabed (Liza), was 22 years younger than his father. Together, they had nine children, three of whom died in childhood. Afterwards, four daughters were born to the Marjanishvili family: Nino, Mariam and Tamar. Tamar was Kote's best loved sister for the two of them looked very much alike as if "both halves of the same apple." Kote Marjanishvili was his parents' eighth child.

Aleksandre Marjanishvili fought in the Russian-Turkish War in 1876. During the attack on Batumi, he was wounded in the neck and throat. Ultimately, his injuries proved to be fatal with treatment unsuccessful. Kote Marjanishvili was only four years old when his father died. The widowed Elisabed, afraid of Lezghins' attacks, moved from Kvareli to Tbilisi where she took little Kote to the First Tbilisi Gymnasium for Princes. Public figures and prominent representatives of Georgian theatre-including Akaki Tsereteli, Aleksandre Kazbegi, Giorgi Tsereteli: Sergey, Kote, Efemia and Ivane Meskhi (the mother of famous Meskhi family, Magdalina, was Kote Marjanishvili's aunt), Ivane Machabeli, Dimitri Kipiani, Petre Umikashvili, Avksenty Tsagareli, Vaso Abashidze, Lado Aleksi-Meskhishvili, Mako Safarova-Abashidze and others-often visited the Marjanishvili family. Living in the city required big expenses from the family. Although the children, especially Kote, worshiped their tender, merciful and kind mother, Liza had to return to Kvareli, taking Mariam and Tamar with her and leaving Kote, Vladimir and Sopio in Tbilisi. According to information, Kote was accommodated at the boarding school of the Gymnasium whilst Liza rented a small apartment for her other children who stayed behind in Tbilisi.

Elisabed Chavchavadze died at the age of 36 in 1887 when Kote Marjanishvili was fifteen years old. Elisabed's elder sister, Ekaterine, and her husband, David Abdushelishvili, undertook to bring up the orphans. They managed to hide this misfortune from Kote for a long time but upon learning the news of his mother's death, he abandoned his studies and returned to Kvareli. He was so devastated by the loss that he even tried to commit a suicide aiming a gun at his heart, the



► Kote Marjanishvili

weapon misfired and he survived but one of his fingers was permanently damaged.

In Kvareli, Kote occupied himself on the farm. He took care of the vineyards, made wine and distilled vodka. As he had subscriptions for books and magazines, he was able to self-study and self-educate. In the evenings, he was often visited by famous families and discussed arts and literature with Kote expressing his idea to conducting performances. It was in Kvareli, in fact, in the enormous wine cellar inside Soloman Chavchavadze's house, that his first performances were staged with the participation of his brothers and sisters who would come for holidays, and his relatives. The audience comprised his cousins and people from the village.

As Marjanishvili recalled, food was abundantly served in the wine cellar and included dried figs, apples and churchkhela. Often, upon his demand, kvevris were opened and a jug of wine was taken around the rows and served to the peasants several times. Kote, himself the stage director, actor, decorator, property man and prompter, was always called out on the stage by all in attendance after the conclusion of the performance.

So it was that Kote Marjanishvili's wine cellar obtained a sacral function. Even at present, first-year students of Theatre and Cinema University take

an oath at Marjanishvili's wine cellar in Kvareli that they will never betray their profession.

At the end of the season of 1894-1895, Marjanishvili, unsatisfied by working in the Georgian theatre, went to Russia to continue his studies and took drama courses at the Moscow School of Theatre. On his way to Moscow, he visited Lado Meskhishvili, in Kharkiv, who was in the city for medical treatment, who sent Marjanishvili to Nikolayev to see his friend who was an impresario as well as supporting actor. It was Meskhishvili's opinion that practice would be more useful for the beginner actor than a four-year programme of studies. Marjanishvili was not satisfied with working in Nikolayev and went to Moscow instead where he enrolled in lectures at the Drama School. Following this, he was invited to Tbilisi troupe for leading roles.

The summer of 1895 was the last time for Marjanishvili in his native Kvareli as his estate, which had been mortgaged many times was sold on auction that year. He spent the proceedings, amounting to several thousand roubles, for the renovation of his wardrobe because fashionable dressing was considered to be very important for actors at the time. At the same time and with the help of his friends, Marjanishvili squandered a lot of money on parties and enter-

tainment.

In 1896, Marjanishvili played the leading role in the famous play *Samshoblo* (Fatherland). In that same year, Nadezhda Zhivokina, who would be his future wife and who was invited to Tbilisi to join Shumilin's troupe after finishing Moscow Drama Courses and the Theatre School, came to Tbilisi. Marjanishvili's friends from Nikolayev, the Lepetiches, also acted in the Russian troupe and through them that Marjanishvili became acquainted with Zhivokina-who was also the granddaughter of V. Zhivokin, a famous actor at the Moscow Small Theatre-and soon married her. His relative, unsatisfied with his sudden decision, felt hurt, but Nadezhda soon established good contacts with his husband's relatives.

In 1897, Marjanishvili moved to Russia and lived there for 25 years. The cities, in whose theaters he staged his inimitable plays, were changing like a kaleidoscope. He was one of the first in the field to revive the plays of Anton Chekhov and Gorky. Together with Stanislavsky, Nemirovich-Danchenko, Mayerhold and Vakhtangov, he established the New Theatre. In 1910-1913, he staged Knut Hamsun's *In the Claws of the Life* and Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* at the Moscow Arts Theatre. The press often wrote about his Caucasian temperament which was transferred to the stage.

In 1913, Marjanishvili established the Free Theatre in Moscow. He wanted to create a Theatre-celebration which would be the realisation of his idea of a synthetic theatre. He wanted to bring up the actors who would work in opera, drama and pantomime with equal success. After having staged several plays in the Free Theatre and when he was so close to the realisation of his idea, it was disbanded. In the autumn of 1918, Marjanishvili was appointed as the Commissioner of Kiev Theatres with success after success following.

Marjanishvili came to Tbilisi in 1922. In 1928, he created a new theatre serving the cities of Kutaisi and Batumi and staged the plays *Hopla*, *We Are Alive*, *Uriel Akosta* and *Kvarkvare Tutaberi*.

In 1930, the second Georgian State Drama Theatre was opened and directed by Marjanishvili. After his death, the theatre was renamed in his honour.

The year 1933 proved to be the last for Kote Marjanishvili. He was invited to the Moscow Small Theatre to stage Schiller's *Don Carlos* but he died before the premiere. After his death, Marjanishvili's ashes were brought to Tbilisi and buried in the garden of the Opera and Ballet Theatre. Afterwards in 1964, a grateful Georgia consigned the great Georgian patron of art to Mtatsminda for his eternal rest.



► Petre Otskheli (top) and director Kote Marjanishvili (bottom) photographed with theatre representatives. Photo: Art Palace museum.