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POLITICS

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By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

 ${f R}$ epresentatives of the civil movement Aleko Elisashvili and Levan Ioseliani, a non-judicial member of the Council of Justice and one of the founders of the Movement for the People, Ana Dolidze and independent MP Levan Koberidze formed the 'New Platform' and confirmed their commitment by the Memorandum of Understanding.

According to the memorandum, the New Platform is a union that gives new opportunities to the people and the country in a polarized environment between the two opposing political forces: As Dolidze said in her speech, clean, country-minded party members should unite with others and mobilize forces to create a new agenda. "Our task is to create a different platform for discussion, which will become a new healthy alternative to today's polarized atmosphere, and will bring together patriotic, conscientious and caring citizens of similar values around us." said Dolidze, adding that they believe in the possibility of creating a new agenda by uniting their efforts that will serve as a base for building successful and free Georgia. According to Elisashvili, the leader of the Civil Movement, it is not ruled out that New Platform will form into a serious 'political statement.' He said that the registration of the political party has been started by the leaders of the Civil

Aleko Elisashvili, Ana Dolidze and Levan Koberidze create a new platform



• Leaders of a new political platform. Photo: IPN



▶ NGOs say if Ana Dolidze is going to be involved in politics, she should resign.

Movement. "However, we will see what it the 2013 legislative amendment removed

will look like and what form it will take in members of parliament from the High Council of Justice, replacing them with academics and professionals who were barred from membership in political unions and political activities. "The implementation of such activities is a precondition for the termination of the authority of a member of the High Council of Justice. The purpose of the law is to protect and maintain the political neutrality of the judiciary." the statement said. NGOs say, since Dolidze's appointment as a member of the High Council of Justice, she has been actively involved in identifying problems in the judiciary, finding ways to solve them and informing the public. They also underlined the special importance of the work she has done during the composition of the Supreme Court and the legal framework to improve the selection process.

agencies has the authority to remove Dolidze from the post of the High Council of Justice.

Nazi Janezashvili, another a nonjudicial member of the High Council of Justice, demanded that her colleague, Dolidze, explains who is funding her organization and why? Janezashvili wrote on the social network Facebook that if Dolidze resigns today, she has already violated the law. In the post, she made an extensive explanation of the conflict of interest and listed 3 main limitations, which, in her estimation, does not allow Dolidze to carry out political activities.

She also responded to the new political platform: "After that, are there still questions about Dolidze's political activities? I repeat, the law prohibits non-judicial members of the High Council of Justice from engaging in political activities! When you criticize others for lack of transparency, publicity, honesty, you should have a moral right to do so and you should not be a violator of the law," Janezashvili wrote. Dolidze founded the civil movement 'For the People' on May 21. She said the aim of the movement was to create a new political reality with 'clean hands'. On the same day, she posted a 'manifesto for the people' on her official Facebook page and later spoke to the media about the organization's visions and future plans. Dolidze later responded to calls from seven NGOs, saying she would decide to step down when she decides on political activities. "As long as I am a member of the Council of Justice and carry out public activities, I think my vote in this council is very important for the country and as I have been talking for several weeks, as soon as I decide to engage in political activity I will make this decision," she said.

general, and we do not rule out that our stand here will turn into a political team," Elisashvili explained.

He said that at this stage, the political force closest to the views of the New Platform is Lelo and consultations are underway with it.

Note that this week the civil sector called on Dolidze to resign if she intends to engage in politics.

7 non-governmental organizations consider that the status of a non-judicial member of the High Council of Justice is incompatible with the implementation of political goals. The statement of the civil sector is related to the activities of Dolidze's civil organization For the People.

After the Georgian Dream came to power, the signatory organizations actively supported the issue of depoliticizing the High Council of Justice. To this end,

At the same time, none of the state

German ambassador explains the German Prosecutor's Office's comment regarding the murder of Zelimkhan Khangoshvili

THE GEORGIAN GOVERNMENT BELONGED TO THE DECEASED ZELIMKHAN KHANGOSHVILI AND NOT TO THE PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE ITSELF.

By Anastasia Sokhadze

ccording to the Ambassador A ccording to the Annoassauth of Germany to Georgia, the prosecutor's office used a wording that was not optimal and could have been better. The German Prosecutor's Office tried to quote the victim while describing the Georgian government.

"When Khangoshvili explained why he was in Germany, he said that he was against the so-called pro-Russian government of Georgia. It's unfortunate that it seemed as if we characterized the political orientation of the Georgian government, it was not our intention," stated Knirsch.

The German Federal Prosecutor's Office has charged the Georgian citizen with the murder of Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, also known as Tornike Kavtarashvili. The statement made by the Prosecutor's Office claims that the accused committed the crime on the orders of the Russian authorities.

According to the prosecutor's office, the Russian authorities have ordered Khangoshvili to be liquidated.

"The assassination attempt



Hubert Knirsch denies characterizing the political orientation of the Georgian Government.

was preceded by the victim's oppositional attitude towards the Russian state, the governments of the Chechen and Ingush republics, as well as the pro-Russian government of Georgia," the statement said.

The text also states that Khangoshvili fought on the side of the Chechen separatists against the Federal Army, and in 2008 in South Ossetia he gathered a group of warriors with Russia.

Zelimkhan Khangoshvili was

killed in Germany on August 23rd, 2019. His murderer was soon arrested and was eventually proven to be a citizen of Russia.

The statement of the prosecutor's office does not say the name of the accused in the murder and only mentions Vadim K. According to the journalistic investigation carried out by Bellingcat in December 2019, the name of the murderer is Vadim Krasikov, who arrived in Germany with a passport issued in the name of Vadim Sokolov.

According to the text of the German investigation agency, Vadim Krasikov first left Moscow for Paris on August 17th and then moved to Warsaw on August 20th. From Poland he left for Berlin on an unknown route on June 22nd. To enter the Schengen area, he used Vadim Sokolov's passport issued by the Russian Immigration Service in Bryansk on July 18th, 2019.

On August 23rd, in one of the parks in Berlin, Vadim Krasikov followed Zelimkhan Khangoshvili with a bicycle, and when he approached, he fired a Glock 26 weapon. According to the prosecu-

tor's office, Khangoshvili fell to the ground, the accused also fell off the bicycle, but soon approached Khangoshvili and shot him twice in the head. Khangoshvili died on the spot.

The Russian government denies any involvement in Khangoshvili's liquidation. At the same time, Russian President Vladimir Putin called him a 'militant' and said he was guilty of blowing up the Moscow metro. According to him, Russia demanded the extradition of Khangoshvili from Germany and Germany refused it.



Zelimkhan Khangoshvili was killed by one of the citizens of Russia.

Sanctions and measures without deprivation of liberty increasingly used in Europe: new survey

TWENTY EUROPEAN PRISON ADMINISTRATIONS RELEASED 118.000 INMATES AS A MEASURE

TO PREVENT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE LOCKDOWN

C trasbourg, 18.06.2020 – Eu-**D** ropean states are increasingly resorting to sanctions and measures which keep offenders in the community without deprivation of liberty, according to the 2019 SPACE II annual survey, carried out for the Council of Europe by the University of Lausanne. (Please see also the Key Findings)

On 31 January 2019 there were around 2 million people in Europe subject to these alternatives to imprisonment such as electronic monitoring, community service, home arrest, treatments, semi-liberty or conditional release. From 2018 to 2019, the probation population grew by 7.9%, from 1,547,572 to 1,699,676



people in the 28 probation agencies that provided this data for both years, whilst their overall

probation population rate grew from 137.8 to 139.6 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants. The SPACE II survey was published together with a special SPACE I report on Prisoners in Europe in Pandemic Times. This report includes an evaluation of the short-term impact of the CO-VID-19 pandemic on European prison populations up to 15 April 2020, a period which roughly coincides with the first month of Twenty out of 43 prison administrations reported having sures to prevent COVID-19. In-

released inmates to prevent the spread of COVID-19, applying various measures such as amnesties, early and provisional releases and other alternatives to deprivation of liberty. On av- which reported overcrowding on

lockdown

released 5% of their population (over 118,000 inmates). Excluding countries with less

than 500,000 inhabitants, those which released the highest proportions of prisoners were Turkey (35%; 102,944 inmates), Cyprus (16%; 121), Slovenia (16%; 230), Portugal (15%; 1,874), Norway (13%; 401), Ireland (12%; 476), Italy (9.4%; 5,739) and Spain (7.4%; 4,356). France released 14% of its prison population (10,188 inmates) but this includes all releases (for example those of inmates arriving at the end of their prison sentence) and not only those related to meacluding these persons would lead to over 128,000 inmates released in Europe since the beginning of the pandemic.

Four prison administrations erage, these 43 administrations 1 January 2020 had significantly

reduced their prison density by 15 April (Cyprus, Italy, France and Slovenia), whilst Sweden, the only country not to apply a lockdown of its population, joined the group of countries with overcrowded prisons.

Ten of the administrations with a prison density of more than 100 inmates per 100 places on 1 January continued to be overcrowded on 15 April: Turkey, Romania, Greece, Hungary, Cyprus, Italy, France, Serbia, Czech Republic and Austria; although Turkey reduced its prison population drastically in May.

Higher probation than imprisonment rates

According to the SPACE II survey, on 31 January 2019 there were across Europe 155 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants compared to 105 inmates in prisons per 100,000 inhabitants. The overall high rate of proba-

tioners in Europe shows that community measures and sanctions are increasingly used across the continent: in 32 out of the 40 countries (or administrative entities), the probation population rate was higher than the prison population rate.

On average, in Europe, there were 165 probationers for every 100 inmates. Only a few administrations - Serbia, Azerbaijan, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Norway, Russia and the State Administration of Spain - had lower probation population rates than prison population rates. The highest probation population rates were reported by Poland (646 persons per 100,000 inhabitants), Turkey (591), Georgia (541) and Lithuania (523).

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NBG publishes conclusion on 2020 draft budget

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

he National Bank of Georgia ▲ (NBG) has published its assessment of the adjustment of the 2020 budget. According to the document, the new debts, which the Georgian government plans to borrow, will not pose a risk to the country's financial stability and the debt will be maintained at a sustainable level.

According to the draft law submitted to the Parliament of Georgia, the state budget revenues will be set at €10.303 million, of which **C**8.979 million will be on tax revenues and \bigstar 1.323 million will be on non-tax revenues. State budget tax revenues are down 7.1% compared to the 2019 same index.

According to the submitted project, the state budget expenditures amount to C14,811 million, of which @11,586 million for current expenditures and €3,225 million for capital expenditures and net loans.

State budget expenditures increase by **₾**2,449 million compared to 2019. The increase affected current expenditures ($\mathfrak{C}2,515$ million), while capital expenditures and net lending decreased by **₾**66 million.

The combined budget deficit is projected at 8.5% of GDP in 2020, compared to 2.0% in 2019. NBG says that against the background of a significant reduction in economic activity as a result of the pandemic, a temporary increase in the budget deficit is justified, on the one hand, to finance health and increased social needs and, on the other hand, to support the economic



▶ In 2020, the Georgian government plans to get a record ₾7.2 billion in foreign debt. For comparison, in 2019, Georgia took on a new foreign debt of C1.386 billion.

recovery process. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that the increase in the budget deficit should not occur to the extent that it creates the risks of additional pressure on inflation and threatens macroeconomic stability

According to the NBG assessment, the draft budget is balanced - on the one hand, it responds to the task of supporting the reduced joint demand, on the other hand, this increase in the consolidated budget deficit is temporary, this option is gradually declining in the coming years and will return to a stable level (3%) by 2023.

of the 2020 budget, given the fiscal consolidation in subsequent years, does not pose a risk of inflationary pressures, National Bank states. "In addition, it should be noted that the main part of the increased deficit will be financed by additional financial resources mobilized from

As a result, the high deficit

international donor organizations," reads the document.

As a result, international reserves will increase, allowing the NBG to carry out foreign exchange interventions as needed and thus avoid potential additional pressure on the exchange rate and inflation resulting from the increased budget deficit.

The main source of funding for the budget deficit is the increase in liabilities.

The project envisages the mobilization of €1,850 million through the issuance of government securities, which

is ∉901 million more than last year. Foreign liabilities increase by £5,199 million. As a result, the government debt to GDP ratio increases by 13.2 percentage points in 2020 to 54.4%. Despite rapid growth, government debt to GDP is still below 60%.

"Assuming that GDP growth will average 5% in the coming years and the budget deficit will fall below 3% in the medium term, this increase in debt does not pose a risk of debt sustainability in the medium term,' the National Bank said in a statement



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Over time, the Council of Europe has called on its member states to use imprisonment as a measure of last resort and to apply alternatives to deprivation of liberty as often as possible. The aim is to favour the integration of offenders into society and thus reduce recidivism, prevent overcrowding, improve the operation of prisons, and promote a huprisoners However there seems to be a risk that their extended use may lead to "probation overcrowding" in the future. "There are signs that some probation agencies seem to be using community sanctions and measures as supplementary sanctions and not as measures replacing imprisonment. As a consequence, a growing number of persons are being placed under supervision by the criminal law system, in prison or on probation", said the Head of the SPACE team, Professor Marcelo Aebi, from the School of Criminal Sciences of University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

In 2019, foreigners accounted for 8% of probationers, a smaller proportion than among the prison population (14%).

On average, 10% of probationers were female compared to 6% among the prison population. In every country, with the exception of Serbia and Greece, the proportion of women was higher on probation than in prison, probably because probation is used for less serious offences, and women are seldom involved in violent crimes which usually lead to a prison sentence.

Adding the total number of probationers (1,969,204) to mane and efficient treatment of the total number of inmates (1.530.442), on 31 January 2019. 3.5 million people were imprisoned or under the supervision of probation agencies in Europe, this being a low estimate of the European "correctional population" since it refers only to those countries which provided data.

The countries with the highest correctional population rates - above the European median of 267 inmates and probationers per 100,000 inhabitants - were Turkey (920), Poland (836), Lithuania (755) and Russia (737). Countries with the lowest rates were Finland (103), Norway (106), Iceland (113) and Switzerland (131). * * *

Conducted every year for the Council of Europe by the University of Lausanne, the SPACE sur-

vey provides an overview of the use of custodial (SPACE I) and community (SPACE II) sanctions and measures in the Council of Europe member states. Notes:

- Unless otherwise indicated. the data are expressed in median values, which are more reliable than average figures as they are less sensitive to extreme figures.
- The 2019 SPACE II survey contains data from the probation agencies of Council of Europe member states except for Albania, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova and San Marino. The data on probation population on 31 January 2019 refer only to the 32 probation services which use the person
- as a counting unit. The report Prisoners in Europe in Pandemic Times considers the impact of measures to prevent COVID-19 until 15 April, with the noteworthy exception of Turkey that indicated the releases of inmates until 4 May. In addition, the number of releases reported by France include all kinds of releases and not only those aimed to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

2020 opinion polls show strong support for EU in Georgia

U FINANCED POLL SHOWS 69% OF PEOPLE IN GEORGIA TRUST THE EU, 77% FEEL RELATIONS ARE GOOD.

The EU has financed 2020 opinion polls in Georgia through its 'EU NEIGHBOURS east' project. The survey took place between February and March 2020 (before the COVID-19 crisis) and is based upon faceto-face interviews among a representative sample of 1.000 people throughout the country.

The annual survey is now into its fifth year, with the first wave having been carried out in 2016.

Similar surveys were also carried out five other Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia. Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Results from the six countries are presented in national reports and a consolidated regional overview report.

Here below are the key findings in Georgia – more details may be found in the factsheets and report at the links indicated below

MAIN FINDINGS

• 77% of Georgians feel rela-

tions with the European Union are good.

- 69% of people in Georgia trust the EU, the most of any international organisation while only 28% trust the Eurasian Economic Union.
- 49% of Georgians have a positive image of the European Union (EU). Only 7% of Georgians have a negative view of the EU.
- 71% of Georgians are aware of the EU's financial support to the country, and 69% of them consider the support to be effective. LINKS
- Georgia report & factsheets 2020: ENG: https://www. euneighbours.eu/en/east/ stay-informed/publications/ opinion-survey-2020-georgia Regional overview 2020 (all EaP countries, English
- only): ENG: https://www. euneighbours.eu/en/east/ stay-informed/publications/ opinion-survey-2020-regional-overview