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## IDFI's report says the government of Georgia spent €200 million on procurement of hotel and hospital services



► Institute for Development of Freedom of Information.

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

**I**nstitute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) has released a report on the coronavirus related state procurements. The report presents the statistical data, the systemic problems, and suspicious procurements between the March 21st and November 15<sup>th</sup> period.

According to IDFI, the government spent €200 million on the procurement of hotel and hospital services, between March 21 and November 15. Georgian National Tourism Administration spent over €78 million on procurement of goods and services required for the implementation of mandatory quarantine. Based on the Government of Georgia's decree of

6 November, an additional €35 million financial resources were allocated to Georgian National Tourism Administration, which in addition to the amount already spent exceeds €100 million. The additional funds are dedicated to mobilizing the COVID hotels and facilitating the procurement of services related to this process.

The report shows that between July and November, for a purpose of mobilizing additional beds at the hospitals, the Social Service Agency requested an agreement for receiving €98.5 million from the State Procurement Agency. Social Service Agency allocated a sum of €625,537 to support medical personnel in quarantine/field conditions. There was also €300,000 allocated during November alone with the same purposes.

According to IDFI, unlike the examples from neighboring countries, in Georgia, COVID-related procurements are not separately listed in the electronic procurement system, thus, are not properly analyzed. The report reads that The Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs do not publish simplified procurement agreements to the electronic system, including procurements related to COVID-19.

"The analyzed data has shown that the largest share of the funds is spent on COVID hotels and mobilization of hospitals. The procurement of some of the services related to Covid-19 have returned to the format of electronic tenders, which should be welcome, although the number of such cases is not high," reads the report. IDFI believes that the key challenge for the monitoring of procurements is the lack of data availability in an open and processable format. The study has revealed that data on COVID-related procurements are either scattered across the system and are difficult to identify and collect, or are not uploaded to the system at all.

IDFI recommends The State Procurement Agency to guarantee the publication of the information in the electronic system in an open and processable format. IDFI recommends the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ensure publication of simplified procurement agreements per law.

According to IDFI, the data was collected from the SPM (simplified procurement agreements with the agency) module and the electronic tender module of the State Procurement Agency.



► "Between March 21 and November 15, the Georgian National Tourism Administration spent over €78 million on the procurement of the goods and services required for the implementation of mandatory quarantine," read the report.

# Export train to China passes on Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway for the first time



► In the past two years, the flow of transport cargo has only gone from China; now, it will be possible to ship via the middle corridor from Europe to China as well.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

**B**aku - Tbilisi - Cargo transportation to China on the Kars railway was carried out for the first time - on December 8, late in the evening, a train arrived in Georgia, departing from the Turkish city of Istanbul on December 4.

“This event is unprecedented, because until now, through the middle transport corridor, the

cargo was directed from China to Europe,” - said the Ministry of Economy.

The train, which will arrive in China’s Xi’an Province via the Middle Railway Corridor (which includes the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway crossing), will cover 8,693 kilometers in 12 days.

Baku - Tbilisi - Kars is a new railway route through Georgia, which is the logistical part of the corridor that connects Europe

and Asia. This railway line has been operating in test mode since 2017.

In January-October 2020, the number of containers shipped via the middle corridor amounted to 2343 TEU, which is 35.1% more than in the same period of 2019 (1734 TEU). 1260 TEU were transported in January-October 2020, which is 371.9% more than in the same period of 2019 (267 TEU)

The corridor over Georgia is distinguished not only by the

advantages caused by the geographical location but also by the developed infrastructure and institutional system accompanied by simplified and digitized customs and border crossing procedures.

At the same time, work has begun on the issues of digitization of transport systems within the country (including ports) and the transport corridor. Added to this is the potential for diversification of the supply chain

in Georgia, which is reflected in the existence of sea, land, and rail links with neighboring countries.

“The above-mentioned projects and activities are important to increase the competitiveness of the transport corridors to Georgia,” the ministry said.

According to the Minister, the mentioned corridor will increase the possibility of exporting products exported from Georgia to China, especially wine.



► Baku-Tbilisi-Kars is a railway route that passes through Georgia and is the logistical part of the corridor that connects Europe and Asia.

## Human rights are at the heart of any post-COVID recovery

EU MARKS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY BY SIGNING NEW USD 3-MILLION JOINT PROJECT WITH UNDP AND OHCHR

TBILISI. 9 December 2020 – Amid concerns that the COVID-19 crisis is deepening inequality and jeopardizing the prospects of vulnerable and marginalised groups, the European Union (EU) joined forces today with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to launch a EUR 2.5

million (USD 3 million) programme to promote and protect human rights in Georgia.

The three-year initiative “Human Rights for All” was signed to mark International Human Rights Day. The programme will be implemented by the two UN agencies in close coordination with the national human rights institutions and legislative, executive and judicial authorities, as well as civil society and communities.

“Investing in human rights, democracy and the rule of law is essential to achieve more fair, more resilient and inclusive societies,” said EU Ambassador-Carl Hartzell. “Human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as a gender-responsive

approach, will remain at the heart of the EU’s response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“Georgia has come a long way in enacting the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” said UNDP Head Louisa Vinton. “But the pandemic has exposed cracks in society that threaten these values. Our programme responds by putting inclusion and equality at the heart of any post-COVID recovery.”

“Today we stress the imperative to build back better by making human rights central to recovery efforts,” said OHCHR Senior Adviser Vladimir Shkolnikov. “We will reach our common global goals only if we

create equal opportunities for all, address the failures exposed and exploited by COVID-19, and apply human rights standards to tackle entrenched, systematic and intergenerational inequalities, exclusion and discrimination.”

The new programme launched by the EU, UNDP and OHCHR assists Georgia in reinforcing its achievements in promoting and strengthening human rights policies and practices, and addressing the areas of concern outlined by the independent assessment (link is external) commissioned by the EU and the UN in 2019.

The programme focuses on five areas:

1. Enhancing the public bodies that are responsible for de-

veloping, monitoring and implementing human rights policies;

2. Assisting law-enforcement agencies and human rights institutions in carrying out their duties;

3. Promoting the rights of minority groups and vulnerable citizens;

4. Supporting human rights protection at the local level; and

5. Ensuring that citizens have full access to human rights information and protection mechanisms.

Human Rights for All builds on the achievements of a previous four-year partnership between the EU and the UN agencies. The new stage of the programme runs from December 2020 through October 2023.

THURSDAY DECEMBER 10

Day Cloudy

High: 4°C

Night Cloudy

Low: 1°C

FRIDAY DECEMBER 11

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 3°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 0°C

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# EU launches nine new projects in Georgia to support vocational education and labor market development

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The European Union supports vocational education and labor market development in Georgia by commencing nine new projects. According to EU to Georgia, new grant projects, which are funded by the EU's second phase of the Skills4Jobs program in Georgia, were introduced during an online event under the auspices of Skills Week Georgia. The grants have been allocated to private and public sector and civil society organisations to further enhance employment opportunities, especially in regions.

The Skills Week Georgia is an online four-day conference organized by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Georgia with the support of the EU's Skills4Jobs Technical Assistance Project. According to the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the conference offers a platform to discuss new challenges and solutions for vocational education. The conference was opened by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport – Mikheil Chkhenkeli, the Head of Cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia – Sigrid Brettel, Ambassador of Germany – Hubert Knirsch, and the Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development – Ekaterine Mikabadze.

The EU has allocated a total of €7 million to fund nine projects.

“The nine projects, with a total EU contribution of EUR 7 million (approx. GEL 27 million), will focus on ensuring that relevant skills matching services and education opportunities in



► The nine grant projects are funded by the EU's second phase of the Skills4Jobs program in Georgia.

vocational education, training and entrepreneurship are available throughout Georgia, particularly for youth, women and vulnerable populations,” reads the EU's statement.

The program has 3 key goals:

relevant skills-matching services to be accessible in selected regions of Georgia; relevant lifelong learning skills provision to be accessible in selected regions with a focus on youth; entrepreneurial learning and training opportuni-

ties to be accessible in selected regions.

Tamar Kitiashvili, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Georgia stated that Georgia thanks the

EU for the support, “Especially at this time when the coronavirus is testing Georgia's VET system to its limits.” Kitiashvili remarked that the EU's financial and technical support has been invaluable in helping Georgia to modernize its system.

“We are happy to launch the new grant projects as part of the second phase of the EU's Skills4Jobs 5-year program in Georgia. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to support Georgia in its efforts to improve professional skills, enhance entrepreneurship, and adapt the labor and employment strategies to the current needs. With the start of these new projects we contribute directly to the improvement of the employability of women, men, youth, and vulnerable people in Tbilisi and regions of Georgia,” Catalin Gherman, Deputy Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Georgia stated.

The 2nd phase of the EU's Skills4Jobs programme was launched in 2018 to increase the employment of women, men, youth, and vulnerable people in Tbilisi and other regions of Georgia. The total budget of the program is €48,85 million (approximately ₾190 million).



The European Union for Georgia Skills4Jobs

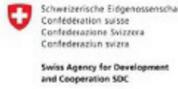


საქართველოს განათლების, მეცნიერების, კულტურისა და სპორტის სამინისტრო

## პროფესიული განათლების კვირა

## SKILLS WEEK GEORGIA

ონლაინ კონფერენცია - 7-10 დეკემბერი 2020  
ONLINE CONFERENCE – 7-10 DECEMBER 2020





► The Skills Week Georgia is an online four-day conference organized by the Ministry of Education with the support of the EU's Skills4Jobs Technical Assistance Project.