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Renovated Kutaisi International Airport opens



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Sanctions and measures without deprivation of liberty grow in Europe in 2020



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BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Following a visit to Tbilisi last week, the co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) for the monitoring of Georgia, Titus Corlăţean and Claude Kern, have made a statement, where they welcome the political agreement mediated by European Council President Charles Michel that was signed by the majority of political forces in Georgia.

According to the statement published by the Council of Europe, the full implementation of the agreement could signify a considerable step forward in the country's democratic consolidation. "All political parties should therefore join efforts to implement this agreement, and those that have not done so should sign it without delay," stated the two co-rapporteurs.

According to the statement, they emphasized the importance of having an impartial and genuinely independent judiciary that is fully trusted by the Georgian people. While welcoming the considerable progress made with reforming the judiciary, the rapporteurs called on the government to ensure that the evaluation of the third and fourth waves of judicial reform is based on an inclusive process, with the engagement of all relevant parties, including civic society. They also underlined that the evaluation process is a great opportunity to address the remaining unfulfilled recommendations of the Venice Commission concerning the judiciary, "especially as regards the High Council of Justice, whose functioning and low level of public trust remain an obstacle for a genuinely independent judiciary and a very serious point of concern."

The co-rapporteurs called on the Parlia-

PACE Georgia monitors welcome April 18 agreement and call on political forces to fully implement it



► "We urge all political forces and stakeholders to place the national interest, and the country's Euro-Atlantic integration project, above the interest and strategies of their parties and personalities," underlined the co-rapporteurs of the PACE for the monitoring of Georgia, Titus Corlăţean and Claude Kern.

ment of Georgia to ensure that the selection process of non-judge members to the High Council of Justice is inclusive, transparent, consensual, and merit-based. Regarding the selection process, the rapporteurs welcomed that practically all recommendations of the Venice Commission have now been adopted by the Georgian parliament, however, they were unhappy that the selection process began before the adoption of these amendments.

The statement reads that the co-rap-

porteurs also expressed their concern at the recent controversial amendments to the Law on Administrative Offenses. The rapporteurs recommended drafting a completely new Law on Administrative Offenses, in close consultation with the Venice Commission.

The rapporteurs expressed their deep concern over the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. They welcomed the efforts of the Georgian govern-

ment to ease the situation and expressed regret that such efforts were hampered by restrictions imposed on the free movement of citizens and international organizations by the de facto authorities. The co-rapporteurs call on the de facto 'authorities', and the Russian Federation as the country exercising effective control, to lift these restrictions immediately.

According to the statement, the co-rapporteurs plan to visit Georgia again following the local elections.



► The co-rapporteurs plan to visit Georgia again after the local elections to submit to the Parliamentary Assembly their report on Georgia's fulfillment of its commitments to the Council of Europe.

Final Event of the EU Judiciary Support Project

The EU4Justice “Judiciary Support Project” is holding its final event. One of the priorities of the cooperation between Georgia and the European Union resides in the justice sector. The EU has been continuously assisting to bring Georgia’s justice system closer to the best international standards and to increase its accessibility, efficiency, independence and accountability through variety of instruments. The EU Mediation Agreement signed on 19th of April, aims to carry out “ambitious” and “broad” reforms through an “inclusive” process.

The guests of the Project’s Final Event were greeted by H.E. the EU Ambassador to Georgia, Carl Hartzell, the Chairperson of the High Council of Justice and Chief Justice Nino Kadagidze, and Team Leader of the Ju-

diary Support Project, Justice Renate Winter. Representatives of legislative, executive and judicial branches, civil society and media attended the event.

Over the past year, the Project has focused its efforts on the implementation of the 3rd and 4th waves of judicial reforms. The aim was to increase transparency of the High Council of Justice and of the Office of the Independent Inspector, to refine the procedures and to improve the standard of reasoning.

In the framework of the final event, three sessions encompassed the issues of multicentric and organizational structure of the judicial self-governance, reasoning and accessibility of decisions; issues of judicial discipline; cooperation in the field of EU Law and Restorative Justice. The global pandemic

prompted the Project Team to concentrate on tabling down of reports, comparative legal studies and recommendations. However, beyond the analytical work and research, the Project team offered beneficiaries a number of practical trainings, meetings and discussions.

Upholding the highest standards of independence, ethics and integrity continues to be a key priority for EU’s further support to judiciary in Georgia. It is essential that the selection and promotion of judges within the common court system is merit-based and in line with the best international standards. Further reform of the High Council of Justice remains on top of the agenda, including in terms of legal reasoning of judicial appointments.

Overall, the Project delivered around 185 capacity building

activities (trainings, workshops, conferences, international congress), 8 study visits and 7 summer and winter schools. This is a non-exhaustive list of events organized by the Project Team over a period of four and a half years (October 2016 to June 2021). During this period, the Project, together with its international partners, actively collaborated with the High Council of Justice, the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, the Parliament, the High School of Justice, the Common Courts, the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecutor General’s Office and the representatives of the civil society.

Key highlight of Project’s achievement include: adoption of comprehensive Judicial Reform Strategy; development of the 4th wave judicial reform recommendations; building network of the analytical units

within the courts; preparation and presentation of annual analytical and generalization reports to increase public awareness and accountability; comprehensive IT audit of the judiciary; launching of user friendly web portal for Tbilisi City Court; development of electronic case-management system of the Constitutional Court and its website; introducing modern HR management instruments for courts managers; numerous trainings for judges and court staff on the applications of ECHR case law and the EU law; launching of the School of Justice for court staff; support of Constitutional Court Summer Schools; training and awareness raising activities to expand application of restorative justice practices; supporting Ministry of Justice in expansion of the criminal mediation program for adults.

Renovated Kutaisi International Airport opens



► The expansion project of the airport started in November 2017 with an investment of €10 million.

By KHATIA BZHALAVA

Kutaisi International Airport opened yesterday after renovation works. The old and new terminals have been merged, and now the airport is six times bigger than before, capable to serve 2.5 million passengers annually and 1,200 passengers simultaneously. Due to the expansion of the airport, the total area increased from 4, 800 to 30,000 square meters. The opening ceremony was at-



► The renovated airport allows service for 2.5 million passengers annually and 1,200 passengers at the same time.

tended by Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Irakli Karseladze, Georgian Economy Minister Natia Turnava, and local government officials. According to Turnava, the number of airlines that operated at Kutaisi International Airport before the pandemic has almost been restored. According to the PM, Kutaisi International airport is “one of the most growing, developing and successful projects.”

The renovated airport now has seven gates, a green roof, and a terrace. The number of registration counters has increased from 10 to 18, including two baggage drop-offs, where passengers will be able to hand over their luggage if registered online. The area for commercial activities has been increased from 200 to 2,000 square meters. The airport will employ about 1,200 people.

In addition to the modern design, Kutaisi International Airport is equipped with the latest technologies, including a fully automated baggage sorting system, designed by the Polish company DIMARK specifically for Kutaisi International Airport.

The renovation process which cost \$35 million started in November 2017. The airport expansion project employed more than 500 people, and more than 100 leading Georgian and foreign companies were involved. Kutaisi Airport is the second-largest international airport in Georgia, with an average annual growth of 35%.

THURSDAY	JUNE 10
Day	Showers High: 26°C
Night	Cloudy Low: 16°C
FRIDAY	JUNE 11
Day	Partly cloudy High: 27°C
Night	Cloudy Low: 16°C

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Sanctions and measures without deprivation of liberty grow in Europe in 2020

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The number of persons subject to sanctions and measures which keep offenders in the community and do not deprive them of liberty grew by 3% in Europe from 2019 to 2020, according to the 2020 SPACE II annual survey, carried out for the Council of Europe by the University of Lausanne.

This growth – from 1,456,192 in 2019 to 1,500,547 persons in 2020 - is reflected by the data provided by 29 probation agencies that use the person as a counting unit (some administrations use other indicators such as the number of cases or files). It continues a trend of expansion across Europe of community sanctions and measures such as electronic monitoring, community service, home arrest, treatments, semi-liberty, and conditional release.

Considering the 38 probation administrations which provided data for both 2019 and 2020 this trend is confirmed: in more than half (22) there was an increase. 10 of them registered significant increases and 8 administrations experienced significant decreases.

Georgia is among the countries covered by the report. Its probation administration was among the 46 out of 52 in Europe that have answered the SPACE II questionnaire.

Across Europe, on 31 January 2020, there were 149 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants compared to 103 inmates in prison per 100,000 inhabitants across Europe. As of 31 January, 2020 Georgia reported 20,883 probationers and 9,806 prisoners. With its probation rate of 562 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants of the country, Georgia was among the probation administrations with the highest probation rates, along with Poland (643 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants), Turkey (627), and Lithuania (568).

On 31 January 2020, there were across Europe 149 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants compared to 103 inmates in prison per 100,000 inhabitants. It is noteworthy that the administrations with the lowest rates correspond to 2 countries that started to use community sanctions and measures in the last decade: North Macedonia (6 probationers per 100,000 inhabitants) and Serbia (35), followed by Switzerland (47), Norway (49), Finland (54) and Bulgaria (56).

In 34 out of the 40 prison and probation administrations that provided data, the probation population rate was higher than the prison population rate. The exceptions were North Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland, Norway, Bulgaria, and Azer-



► Community sanctions and measures without deprivation of liberty include electronic monitoring, community service, home arrest, semi-liberty, etc.

baijan, where the incarceration rate was higher than the rate of probationers per 100,000 inhabitants.

When analysing the ratio between probation and prison populations, 8 countries showed low rates both in prison and probation (Switzerland, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Slovenia, Croatia, Monaco, and Cyprus).

Georgia, Lithuania, and Turkey were in the opposite situation: they had remarkably high prison and probation rates –

both above the European median -, which could be an indicator that community sanctions and measures are being used not as alternatives to imprisonment but as supplementary sanctions. This could also be applicable to a number of countries with high probation population rates and relatively high prison population rates (Czech Republic, Slovakia, France, UK, Latvia, Republic of Moldova, Portugal, Estonia, Romania, and Poland).

On average, 11% of proba-

tioners were female, more than double the proportion of women among the prison population (5%) in the 33 agencies which provided data on prisoners and probationers.

Foreigners accounted for 6.7% of probationers, a smaller proportion than among the prison population (17%) in the 22 agencies which provided data on foreign prisoners and probationers.

“This difference is at least partially due to the fact that it is more difficult for a foreign

citizen to meet the conditions required to be placed under probation supervision, often because of the lack of a stable address in the country. It is also plausible to assume that some foreign inmates are deported after serving their prison sentences and are not given the possibility of being placed under probation,” said the Head of the SPACE research team, Professor Marcelo Aebi, from the School of Criminal Sciences of University of Lausanne, Switzerland.



► Probation rate in Georgia was higher than its prison population rate (264 prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants).