

President Zourabichvili Reflects on Failed Attempt to Unite Opposition Parties

By Liza Mchedlidze

President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili addressed the failure of her initiative to unite the Lelo and For Georgia parties at the briefing. "This attempt was necessary. Trying means it's never guaranteed, you have to take some risks; and I took the risk, it didn't work out," Zourabichvili said.

The President did not discuss the specific details of the negotiations but noted that certain circumstances prevented the process from reaching an agreement.

"The two main culprits in all this are, on the one hand, a political culture that has not yet been established, a culture of seeking compromises, because it is still seen as a weakness – if you give in; how much you give up, who gives up more. That now means someone is weaker and it is clear that it is difficult to overcome this in the pre-election period.

The second culprit in all of this is something that eats at us all – mistrust, suspicion, fueled by all sorts of conspiracy theories.

And it affects everyone, it affects me, it affects everyone. Therefore, it is very difficult to get rid of all this; this environment greatly hinders the search for the necessary concessions, the



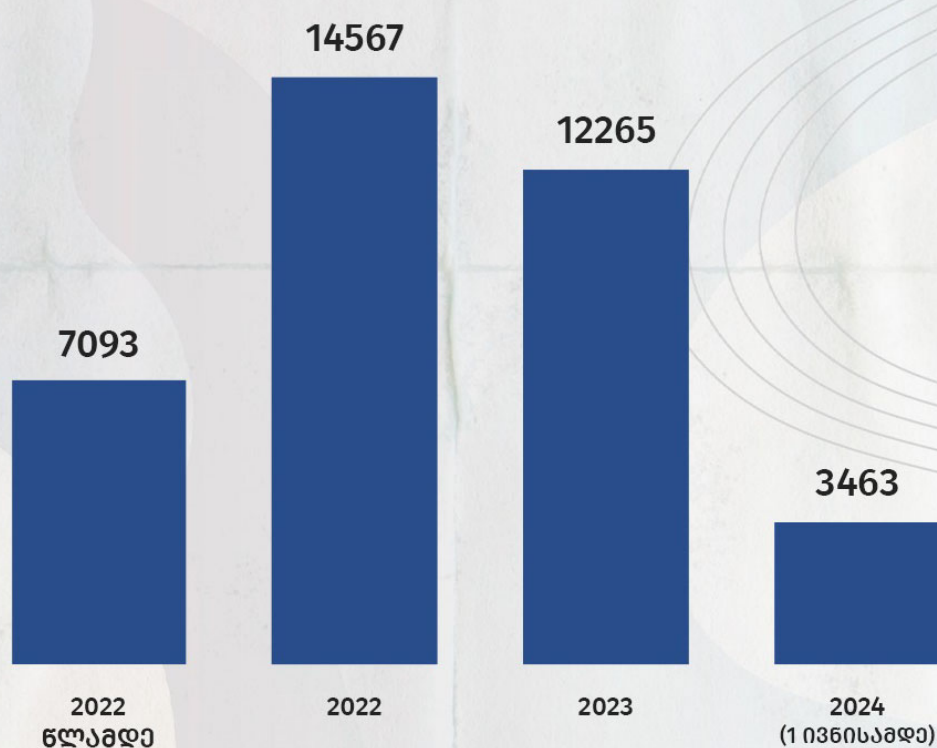
necessary agreement that creates the final outcome of the negotiations," she explained.

President Zourabichvili stressed the need for significant changes following the upcoming elections. She called for the four signatory opposition coalitions to repeal all recently passed anti-democratic laws by the ruling Georgian Dream party. Additionally, she advocated for pardoning those who were fined or detained during protests and proposed the formation of a short-term technocratic government, potentially serving for one year, to reset the political system and ensure a fair democratic contest.

Zourabichvili reiterated the existential importance of the upcoming elections, urging full voter mobilization. She emphasized that the focus should not be on which specific opposition party to support, but on Georgia's European future.

The President also criticized the Georgian Dream party, stating that its true nature is becoming clearer "day after day." She said that the ruling party is "no longer pro-Russian but simply Russian," running its campaign on fear, threats, and revenge rather than offering a credible vision for the country's future.

რუსეთის მოქალაქეების მიერ კომპანიების რეგისტრაცია წლების მიხედვით



IDFI: Number of Russian-Owned Companies in Georgia Reaches Record High

By Liza Mchedlidze

According to the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), the number of companies in Georgia owned by Russian citizens is approaching a historical maximum. Citing data from Georgia's National Statistics Service, the IDFI reports that as of June 1, 2024, approximately 37,400 companies are owned by Russian nationals in Georgia, with more than 30,000 of these companies registered after 2022.

The research indicates that 20,885 of these companies have an active status. Out of Georgia's total 257,245 active companies, 8.1% are linked to Russian ownership. The sharp rise in Russian-owned businesses began after the Russia-

Ukraine war and the subsequent influx of Russian migrants into Georgia.

The IDFI highlights that many large Russian companies enter the Georgian market through offshore or intermediary entities, obscuring the true ownership of these companies. Additionally, some companies owned by dual Georgian-Russian citizens, or solely by Russian citizens, are not reflected in official statistics, complicating the identification of Russian businesses and their activities in Georgia.

A further issue arises with the registration of these companies, as many Russian LLCs and industrial enterprises list inaccurate or non-existent addresses,

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 2.7249; Euro - 3.0290; GBP - 3.6249; 100 Russian Ruble - 2.9278; Swiss Franc - 3.2088

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making it difficult to trace their actual operations.

Russian-owned companies are active across numerous sectors of the Georgian economy, includ-

ing energy, telecommunications, industry, and gaming. The report also notes that 494 of these companies are founded by individuals holding dual Georgian-Russian citizenship, of which 100 are currently active.

One example highlighted in the study is "Georgian Dream" LLC, which operates in the sound recording and music publishing sector. This company is 100% owned by Bera Ivanishvili, son of Bidzina Ivanishvili. Ac-

ording to the most recent public records from 2018, Bera Ivanishvili is listed as a dual citizen of Georgia and Russia.

Additionally, 6% of Russian-owned companies in Georgia (2,041 firms) have Georgian citizens as co-founders, while 34,857 companies have no connection to Georgian citizens, meaning they are owned entirely by Russian nationals with no dual citizenship.

The IDFI also examined the

ethnic background of Russian citizens founding companies in Georgia and found that only 4% of these businesses (1,209 companies) are owned by Russian citizens of Georgian origin.

The report concludes that 89% of the active companies are small, while only 0.5% are medium or large. The economic scale of 10.6% of these companies remains unknown, and 93% of them are registered by individual entrepreneurs.

The News in Brief

PREPARED BY MESSENGER STAFF

Ridotech Georgia Fined for Illegally Transferring User Data to Russia

On September 23, the Personal Data Protection Service of Georgia reported that Ridotech Georgia Ltd., a provider of Yandex Taxi services, illegally transferred the personal data of its Georgian users to Russia. The company was found guilty

of violating Georgia's law on personal data protection and fined GEL 4,000 (approximately USD 1,465). The Service also ordered Ridotech to stop transferring personal data to Russia.

An inquest revealed that the personal data of Yandex app users—both customers and drivers—was processed on servers in Russia, which accessed users' IP addresses. "We are dealing with the transfer (access) of IP addresses to another country," the Service stated.

Ridotech had requested permission to transfer the data to Russia prior to the inspection, but the request was denied.

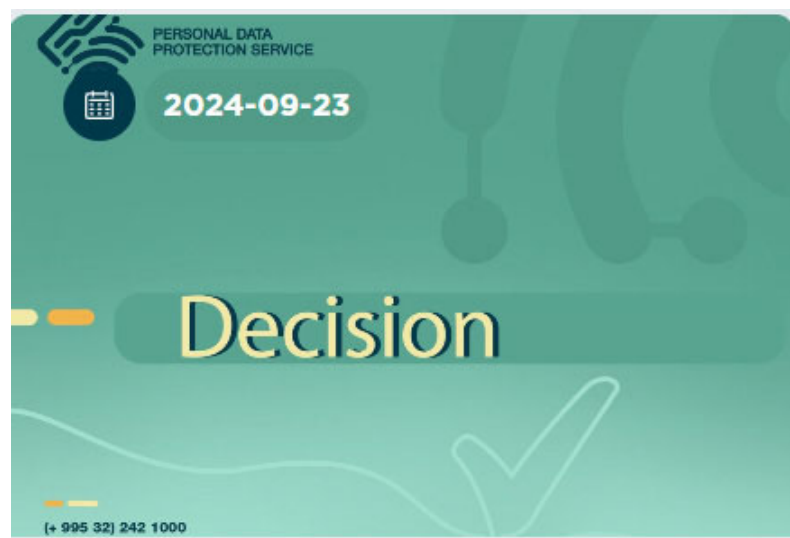
Tbilisi Mayor Kaladze: No One Can Blackmail Me with Sanctions

Facing questions from a journalist, Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze firmly rejected the idea that sanctions could pressure

him, asserting that Georgia's interests would remain uncompromised.

He emphasized that Georgia will not be used for the benefit of

the country and people. The interests of Georgia are not given up. We will not allow anyone to use our country to pursue their own interests or drag us into the



external forces. "No one can blackmail me with sanctions when it comes to the interest of

troubles that are unfortunately happening in Ukraine," Kaladze added.

EU4Culture showcases achievements at concluding festival in Georgia

On 21 September, the EU4Culture Network Festival 'City Stories, Diverse Voices – Action' concluded the four-year EU-funded EU4Culture project in Georgia.

This two-day celebration brought together diverse artists, cultural professionals, and audiences at Art House Gori to showcase the project's results and role in Georgia's cultural and creative sectors.

More than 25 Georgian artists, along with artists from Ar-

menia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Ukraine, participated in the festival. The lineup included exhibi-



tions, audiovisual performances, dance shows, public talks, workshops, masterclasses, and film screenings, offering a rich and diverse artistic experience.

"The existence of the

EU4Culture project represents a meaningful step toward Georgia's closer integration with

the European Union, as it fosters cultural dialogue and cooperation between Georgia, the Eastern Partnership countries, and the EU," said Pawel Herczynski, EU Ambassador to Georgia.

"Looking ahead, we believe the work that we have done here will have a lasting impact. We are confident that Georgian arts, culture, and creative industries

are ready to take their rightful place on the European stage."

Over the past four years, EU4Culture activities in Georgia have included cultural development strategies, mobility grants, cultural and cross-Innovation projects, and capacity-building for cultural professionals.

For the first time in Georgia, with the support of the project, the cities of Zugdidi, Poti, and Kutaisi have dedicated cultural development strategies. These strategies offer a clear roadmap for their cultural growth and position these cities as key players in Georgia's creative landscape.

Nearly 70 Georgian artists and cultural professionals received mobility grants, enabling them to connect with international networks, exchange ideas,

and realise creative projects on a global stage.

Four innovative cultural projects were carried out in regional areas, fostering creativity and collaboration across Georgia.

Up to 60 public officials and cultural professionals from regional cities across Georgia participated in specialised training programmes that focused on key topics such as cultural enterprise, internationalisation, and the use of cultural indicators. These efforts have strengthened their professional skills and improved the execution of local cultural strategies.

With a budget of 7.85 million, EU4Culture is a four-year project funded by the European Union to support the culture and creative sector with a particular focus on non-capital cities and towns in the Eastern Partnership Countries. The project is implemented by Goethe-Institut (Lead), Czech Centers, Danish Cultural Institute, and Institut Français de Géorgie.

(euneighbourseast.eu)

Weather

Tuesday, September 24

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 26°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 15°C

Wednesday, September 25

Day Clear
High: 27°C

Night Partly Cloudy
Low: 16°C

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“Night Serenades” – Brazilian and Czech music evenings

On September 17, an evening of Brazilian music took place in the Tbilisi State Conservatoire Grand Hall. The concert featured young, renowned Georgian soloists Lizi Ramishvili (cello), Mariam Roinishvili (soprano) and Giorgi Oikashvili (clarinet), with the Festival

Base Orchestra GEORGIAN VIRTUOSI led by first violinist Lela Mtchedlidze. The program included works by Brazilian composers such as Alberto Nepomuceno’s String Quartet No. 3 “Brasileiro,” Heitor Villa-Lobos’ Five Songs, Chiquinha Gonzaga’s “Corta

Jaca,” Zequinha de Abreu’s “Tico-Tico no Fubá,” and many others. “Night Serenades” continued with a Czech music concert on September 18 in the Recital Hall of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. In celebration of the 200th anniversary of Bedrich Smetana, Giorgi

Shaverzashvili (piano, Georgia) and Giorgi Khaindrava (violin, Georgia) performed works by Bedrich Smetana and Antonín Dvorák. In the concert were participated special guests: Ema Nesnidalova (violin, Czechia), Sara Nesnidalova (piano, Czechia) and Tomas Tulacek (violin, Czechia).



