

OSCE CREATES SPECIAL GROUP TO WORK ON GEORGIA-RELATED ISSUES

EKA PKHOVELISHVILI

OSCE Security and Cooperation meeting was held in Austria, which was attended by Georgia's Defence Minister Tinatin Khidasheli. The main issues of the forum were the regional security challenges and the necessity for modernization of the European security architecture. Tinatin Khidasheli drew attention to violation of international commitments taken by Russia and occupation of Georgian territories.

Georgia's Defence Minister Tinatin Khidasheli has met with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannieri within the framework of her visit to Austria. The issues of deepening cooperation between Georgia and OSCE were discussed during the meeting. The conversation also referred to regional security. The parties discussed the situation in Georgia's occupied regions and administrative borders.

The issues of demilitarization was one of the topics of the meeting that is successfully conducted by the OSCE's support in Georgia. In her speech Tinatin Khidasheli spoke about the importance of cooperation with the OSCE and international community support.

"Lamberto Zannieri is a long-time friend of Georgia. He often arrives in Georgia and trying OSCE to be the instrument in the

country, especially after Russian blocked missions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Obviously, it is necessary to be more active during the forum to return organization in Georgia. This is not easy, however, I think that the most important is when all the international organizations – OSCE, NATO, the Council of Europe are clearly trying to assist the country in this very difficult period," – Georgia's Defence Minister pointed out.

The Defence Minister said that such meetings contribute to the exchange of opinions and discussions about the security challenges. These issues are crucially important for Georgia's statehood.

"We discussed not only the issues of cooperation between Georgia and OSCE and ongoing projects in the Ministry of Defense of Georgia, but also a wide range of topics about the security situation in the country and in the region generally. A special group will be set up at the OSCE secretariat, which will discuss Georgia-related issues on a regular basis and this will remain top of the organization's agenda," – Lamberto Zannieri said.

At the extraordinary plenary session, the Defence Minister responded to the speech of Russia's ambassador and noted

practically nobody supported the Russian representatives.

"The speech of Russia's ambassador was not unexpected. It is usual practice and the part of the same scenario. This is a reason why it is an important such kind of forums. It is not conflict resolution and it does not automatically provide territorial integrity of our country, but the international support that Georgia has, is the only guarantee that our country will have better future and we are moving toward this way with the civilized world." – said Tinatin Khidasheli.

At the end of the last century, after the Russia's aggression against Georgia and when the military actions were stopped in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, OSCE is constantly trying to solve the conflicts in Georgia. Despite the fact that after the aggression of Russia in August 2008, it vetoed the OSCE mission in occupied territory, there still is the necessity for organization to be engaged in actions concerning the conflict resolution process. One of the confirmation of this was the meeting of Tinatin Khidasheli with OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannieri, where the main focus was on the situation in the occupied territories.

Conflict resolution in Georgia



is important for OSCE in order to protect the interests of European energy security and stabilize functioning of the South Caucasus energy corridor running through. This will increase Georgia's stability and improve its socio-economic development. It is important for Georgia in international community to be the idea that large part of the country is illegally occupied by Russia and it still actively continue the process of "borderization".

Within the framework of the security forum, the Defence Minister of Georgia has once again pointed out that the block of the OSCE mission by Russia in the occupied territories is a significant impediment of the conflict

resolution process. International organization was established in order to strengthen peace and cooperation, and not to support any of the actors in the conflict. The international community should strongly support its good will for the political success of united Georgia. Constantly going against the world opinion is unbelievable, and none of the state can do it. Russia is not the exception as well.

Official Kremlin, sooner or later, will have to take into account the world's opinion. Therefore, the interest of the international organizations concerning with Georgia's problems is of vital importance for countries peaceful development.

TAMAR BERUCHASHVILI HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS AN AMBASSADOR TO GREAT BRITAIN

Tamar Beruchashvili, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs will start her diplomatic service in the United Kingdom from March 1. Before her departure, she held a meeting with the Defence Minister of Georgia, Tina Khidasheli.

The main topic of discussion was the cooperation with the Great Britain in the field of defense and the relationships in different directions. Special attention was paid to the military education in the United Kingdom.

"We have quite a large package in the UK relations. Our Military

has a possibility to receive education at the best schools of Britain. We cooperate in the framework of the NATO-Georgia joint package. A plan for bilateral relations was approved two weeks ago," said Khidasheli.

Beruchashvili summed up the topics discussed: "UK-Georgia relations in the defense sector is characterized by dynamism. Britain is one of the most distinct and active supporter of Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. Today's meeting with the Minister of Defense mainly focused on the priorities of the Georgia-British military cooperation; We

also touched on the future plans, which relates to the issue of education, staff training, more military's involvement in the joint projects, which will be carried out; As well as the high and medium level visits, which has to be conducive to the development of our bilateral cooperation in the military sphere."

At the end of the meeting the Defence Minister wished Beruchashvili success on this responsible job and noted that the British-Georgian relations will gain even more when it has a higher ranking diplomat as an ambassador.



MIKHEIL JANELIDZE TO REASSURE GERMANY ON GEORGIAN MAP

GIORGI CHAPIDZE

Georgian foreign minister Mikheil Janelidze paid an official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany last week. During the visit Janelidze met with his German colleague Frank-Walter Steinmeier and other German officials representing Bundestag and country's ministries. Germany is the biggest country of the EU holding the most seats of the European Parliament and is one of the most influential member of the NATO as it has a decisive leverage over the Alliance's politics. Germany has led the opposition to a Georgian Membership Action Plan (MAP) and the country's integration in the military alliance while Berlin welcomes Georgian determination to pivot toward European institutions. Close cooperation with the Germany is the key factor for Georgia's integration in western political organizations. Since the success of Georgian western route is heavily dependent on how Germany evaluates Georgian government's progress, latest official visit is crucially important.

The two parties discussed a wide range of bilateral cooperation with a special focus on Georgia's integration in the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Janelidze have pointed out the significance of Germany's support for Georgian foreign policy aspirations. Georgian minister stated that the discussion also included positive tendencies regarding to the increased economic cooperation between the states. Frank-Walter Steinmeier specified that Georgia pursues its European integration path very fruitfully. German foreign minister referred to the

reforms executed by Georgian government that strengthened democracy and political climate in the country. Steinmeier expressed that Germany is willing to support Georgia in terms of finalizing visa liberalization procedures with the EU. Two parties also acknowledged that making German entrepreneurs and businessmen more interested in investing in Georgia is one of the foremost priorities for deepening cooperation together with the bilateral partnership in cultural and educational issues.

Official visit included Janelidze's meeting with Bundestag's representatives. According to the member of CDU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany) Thomas Feist, Georgia's euro integration process continues to be very progressive especially due to the reason of several crucial reforms in the sphere of justice and mutual efforts both from the EU and Georgian government. Feist believes that two countries should widen bilateral ties to help make Georgian integration in the western organizations reality.

As the head of the Bundestag's delegation Axell Fisher stated, supporting Georgia to become closer to the EU is in Germany's interest as well. Germany is looking forward to bring eastern European states near to the institutions' standards. Besides, Janelidze held meeting in influential German research center SWP (German Institute for International and Security Affairs). Georgian minister delivered speech about the country's current international challenges, democratic development, Euro-

pean and Euro-Atlantic integration and regional cooperation. One of the main point of the dialog was free trade regime that resulted in increased trade exchange between the represented international actors. Janelidze reiterated that Georgia is important hub for intercontinental shipments of goods and holds geostrategic location that can benefit both the European Union and Asian states. Meeting also included the discussion about the expectations for approaching Warsaw summit. The head of the Bundestag's EU affairs' committee also declared that Germany evaluates Georgia's determination to acquire the EU's standards very highly. Germany is pleased with Georgia's efforts and will continue to support it. It goes without saying that Germany is Georgia's one of the most important partner and the visit was aimed at renewal of the cooperation but will it help to bring a change in the core problem Georgia has with Germany?

Besides very staunch relations and passionate declarations Germany is still prudent to support MAP for Georgia. Germany's stance is important consideration for other states that affects Georgia's integration in the NATO. But when it comes to the relations with the EU Germany openly expresses that Georgia should be the member state.

It can be assumed that the main premise of Germany's unwillingness to grant Membership Action Plan to Georgia stems from the reason that German political establishment is well-aware of Russian interests in the South Caucasus and Berlin is



known for its close ties with the Russian Federation. Therefore, they choose to be more protective and prudent until the geopolitical climate changes in the region. Another consideration is that Gazprom supplies Germany with natural gas resources with the Nordstream (North European Gas Pipeline). Because of this very reason one may speculate that Germany is not willing to gamble with the Kremlin. These explanations may be called "Russian veto" but behind Germany's denial supposedly stand more realistic considerations such as Georgian frozen conflicts and the lack of technical or political preparedness. At the initial stage of the Georgian statehood in 1990s when the country regained its independence Germany was one of the first nations recognizing Georgia's sovereignty and also provided some assistance to get international support of western monetary institutions. This support illustrates how personal factor affects the countries' relations.

Georgia's first president Shevardnadze is credited to have played a key role in the unification process of Germany as the Soviet foreign minister. Therefore, Germany tended to be more supportive for small Caucasian state. In later years Georgian government and mainly the ministry of foreign affairs is blamed for not having influential ambassador in the German Federation who would help to establish more favorable outlook on Georgia's integration in the NATO in Germany. Personal factors obviously have some influence in relations with the Germany.

Germany is willing to support Georgian integration in the EU like other big or small European states that is not exceptional case but Georgia fails to make German authorities to be more positively predisposed about Georgia's NATO path. Georgian government should work more actively to win Germany's support. Unless Berlin gives a green light to Georgia integration in the NATO seems to be futuristic hope.

GOODBYE, NOT FAREWELL: RECEPTION HELD FOR OUTGOING FRENCH AMBASSADOR

Ambassador of France to Georgia H.E. Renaud Salins held a farewell reception at the French School of Caucasus. French Ambassador underlined the great success of the reforms, which was implemented in recent years. Renaud Salins reiterated France's firm support for Georgia's European integration. French Ambassador is going to stay in Georgia for some time. Who will replace him on that

post is yet unknown.

Acting Foreign Minister David Dondua thanked the ambassador for his contribution in promoting bilateral relation between the two countries and gave a memorable gift.

"These four years was very important in the Georgian-French relations. Especially intense was the last year. It was impossible to reach these consequences without active and effective partici-

pation of the Ambassador. It is the first time when we got the French leadership on the NATO package. It is very important that big European countries, such as France and the United States will become one of the leading countries of our success with NATO," said Khidasheli. Except the politicians, the diplomatic corps accredited in Georgia attended the event. Renaud Salins has served in Georgia since 2012.



NEW POLL REVEALS RUSSIANS' INCREASED NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WEST

GURAM PTSKIALADZE

Recent polls by Levada Center revealed that 81 percent of citizens of Russia believe that their country's military forces are entirely capable of protecting them against any military threat from other nations. Notably, the number of people giving a high mark for its militaries increased by 21 percent in comparison with the poll conducted in 2014 (Consequently, it consisted 60 percent). In contrast, 11 percent of respondents marked out that Russian military strength is not a guarantor of defending from all the potential dangers. 8 percent pointed out that the question is too tough to answer.

Furthermore, people who think that a possibility of foreign invasion is real augmented to 65 percent, whereas the previous poll showed 56 percent to ponder so (28% - there is no such a threat, 7 - refused to answer). 40 percent said that their military strength should upsurge, 42% think there is no such necessity.

In addition to these questions, Levada Center asked Russian upon United States. As it ap-

peared, 81 percent of respondents have a negative attitude toward the US. Taking into consideration what was the datum of this question in last year (44 percent), there we have a huge gap between two polls' outcomes. Not many Russians have an affiliation toward European Union - 71 percent of respondents tended to loath EU (last year's was 34).

54 percent of respondents alleged Russia was correct when it anticipated hostile actions on the part of the NATO bloc, whereas 36 percent said such method was wrong. At the same time, 51 percent of Russians said NATO shouldn't fear their country and 39 percent said such fear would be justified.

Besides, 75 percent of Russians said that their country should do more to improve the relations with the West and 70 percent favor extra efforts to progress relations with Ukraine. At the same time, most Russians (65 percent) said the country should continue implementing independent policies. Those who said Russia needs to find a compromise

that would lead to the lifting of mutual sanctions comprised just 26 percent. Some 58 percent of those polled answered that they didn't expect any improvement in Russia-West relations anytime soon, noting that their country should learn to live in new economic conditions.

As we can see, Russians' attitude changed in last years. The number of people who voted against Western organizations or who balloted that their military forces is unbeatable, enlarged at some point. Just catching a glimpse at the poll is enough to conclude that, on the one hand, most Russians are confident and satisfied with their military strength and more and more people showed their fondness toward militarism and abhorrence toward the West has mounted.

As it is obvious, the poll revealed that Russians' attitude changed in contrast with the last poll. So, why so many Russians regard their army so almighty? Why do they think that a foreign threat increased or why do they have so negative attitude toward

the west? We should seek the answers firstly in recently occurred events in Ukraine that have had a huge impact on the relations between the West and Russia. After having conquered the Crimean peninsula and conducted violent acts in Eastern Ukraine, the two sides' relationships have largely degenerated. Pondering what to do against Russia, the West found out the choice - economic sanctions that is still into the force. Leaving Ukrainian case aside, the West and Russia have other apples of discord. The fact that the west fails vis-à-vis Russia to make it rethink its foreign policy, allows more Russians to believe their military power is head and shoulders above others.

From Russian people's point of view, their country gained control over the Crimean peninsula without a great effort. Being the west unable to stop Russia's evident aggression and economic sanctions seems to be nothing but inability to cope with Russia with military forces and they think that the West is afraid of Russia's military strength and they have no choice but to impose economic sanctions. It sharpened Russians' negative position on the West believing it is unfair to impose sanction for them. Achieving success in Ukraine's case, it made most Russians assume that their country would do everything it wished for and the West (especially the US), despite having great military power, is toothless when it comes to facing Russia as an enemy.

Raised negative attitudes stem from above mentioned events to a distinct extent. In last two dec-

ades, more and more Russians fueled some dislikes vis-à-vis the West, but recent movements led to a greater negativity toward the West (NATO, EU and the US). Most Russians see these actors as opponents or, rather, enemies for their country striving for diminishing Russia's power. Imposing economic sanctions stirs up their aversion toward the West. Besides, we should mention the Kremlin propaganda via its televisions and other sources of media. The Kremlin propagandist machine works well. They forecast news as Russian government wants and tries to reflect the reality as if Russia acts in a right way in Ukraine, the West wants Russia to be diminished and weakened. It has a great influence on how Russians see their country in international system.

Of course, the reality is not as Russians see it since the country's military power has many weaknesses, it is not as developed technologically as some other countries'. But, actually, Russian population does not take into consideration the real military situation. Their answers, apparently, are not based upon the military potentials of great powers, but they gauge Russia's military power relied on media propaganda and the Kremlin officials. As the relations between the West and Russia does not seem to be improved soon unless several issues are solved, including economic sanctions, events in eastern Ukraine, Crimean case and etc., it is highly possible that the next poll's result might be even more perturbing.



ESTONIA'S NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATED IN TBILISI

Estonia celebrated its 98th anniversary as a free country in Tbilisi's Rose Garden Hall On February 24. Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili congratulated Estonian nation on the Independence Day and thanked Estonia for unwavering support demonstrated towards Georgia. Pursuant to Prime Minister, Georgia and Estonia are united by deep ties of friendship, close cooperation and the com-

mon vision of the future.

"Estonia is not only a friend to Georgia, but is an example in the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Cooperation in various areas, sectoral and partnership projects represent an important moving force for Georgia on its way to European and Euro-Atlantic integration." - Prime Minister states during the celebratory ceremony. Ambassador of Estonia to Georgia, His

Excellency MR. Priit Turk also discussed the importance of partnership between the states. He thanked the guests and expressed hope that cooperation between Georgia and Estonia will become even deeper. The ceremony dedicated to the Estonian Independence Day was attended by Members of the Government and Parliament, diplomats, businessmen, representatives of NGOs and international organizations.



SCHENGEN FACES COLLAPSE: HOW IT WILL AFFECT EU-GEORGIA VISA FREE TRAVEL REGIME?

NATA BITSADZE

Belgium joined the initiative to tighten the border control caused by migration crisis on Feb. 23. The government has abandoned free movement as armed guards patrol road checkpoints with France and mounted 300 officers to keep watch at rural crossing points. International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that in 2015, more than a million people immigrated to Europe. As it is known, such a large-scale migration crisis has not been seen in Europe since World War II. Migrants enter Europe in two main ways: the Mediterranean Sea and the Greece-Turkey border.

IOM spokesman said that only a cardinal change of the situation in Syria can stop the flow of migrants. The organization predicts that in 2016, 1 million refugees will arrive in Europe.

Georgian experts actively discuss this issue, especially in light of the coming visa-free travel regime to Europe this summer. Dean of the Institute of Public Affairs, Bakur Kvashilava, says that this is not the first time that the EU has not had a common opinion. But the current crisis is different on the grounds that it has direct affect to the EU population. Therefore, it is difficult for the government to leave the decision on this issue only in the political sphere.

“Increasing trends and attitudes, even in Britain, are whether it is appropriate or not to stay in the EU and this is a threat to the

EU’s common policy. Naturally, this is a very difficult challenge for the EU,” Kvashalava said.

Independent Experts Club President, Soso Tsiskarishvili, said countries that have suspended their membership in the Schengen zone will be a less available for our country.

“It is a fact that today the European countries that belong to the Schengen zone can not solve this problem alone, because it is caused not by a member of the EU but also by the first Islamic state as well as terrorist groups. Do not be surprised if they took advantage and the countless people in the stream, which penetrated Europe, sent its activists and agitate of the European society is completely legal,” Tsiskarishvili said.

Tsiskarishvili has an initiative on how to solve this problem. As he said, the main solution is in the region’s unity.

“It would be better if Turkey and Greece would set up a joint initiative to create a special discussion about this issue with the participation of the Black Sea. It would be a good step towards a more peaceful future. I do not think that this was the great difficulty to Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, to relate with this format,” Tsiskarishvili said.

Foreign media, REUTERS writes an article based on Bertelsmann Foundation survey and says that the EU could forfeit break up of Schengen zone 1.4 trillion euros in 10 years. Ac-

ording to the study, the EU’s border control defies increase of import prices by 3 percent, for 2016 to 2025, that fact will forfeit 235 billion euros in Germany and in France -244. This fact will have a negative impact on China and the United States.

Georgia’s ambassador to the EU, Natalie Sabanadze, does not exclude that the crisis on migration in Europe, maybe has a negative effect on the visa liberalization process in Georgia.

“We have to consider that the crisis of migration is difficult challenge by the EU. Against this background, it is difficult to make such a decision. So maybe there will be some factors that exist independent from us and that could have a negative impact, but I’m optimistic,” Sabanadze said.

Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, said the European Commission supports of Georgia’s visa liberalization process, although some countries have some concerns with regard to the migration crisis. For this purpose, Kvirikashvili had an official visit in the Czech Republic and Prague and he tried to dispel doubts of foreign colleagues.

“There are concerns about the migrant crisis in the Netherlands, France and Germany. The Interior and Justice Ministries are cooperating closely with foreign counterparts in order to make it clear that Georgia’s visa liberation process is not connected to the migration crisis,” Kvirikashvili said.

Georgia already has a resolution of the European Commission, according to which the country has faithfully fulfilled imposed obligations, but the next stage of the political nature. The decision about the liberalization process should adopt the European Parliament and the European Council together. For to make a positive decision Georgia needs the consent of 28 member states while in Europe the migration crisis increases the risk, that any country can use the veto. After that, the visa liberalization process will be postponed again for Georgia.

In spite of this issue, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Fule believes that Georgia has a progress and the visa liberalization process will depend on the country’s homework.

“I hope that the migration crisis will not affect on the excellent work done by Georgia and the citizens will be able to freely travel in the Schengen zone,” he said.

This position is shared by the international relations expert, Mr. Sharashidze as well. According to him, if the government is going to do some anti-democratic measures this will be a serious threat to the country’s visa liberalization process.

“The biggest threat to the visa liberalization process will be created if the government violates the principles of democracy. In this case, we never enter into the Schengen zone,” he said.

Development of the Fund’s foreign policy chief, George Rukhadze said, that it becomes the politically unpopular theme to grant visa-free travel for Georgia and Ukraine. As Rukhadze says, on the other hand Georgia has successfully fulfilled all the requirements of the European Commission and the country deserves visa-free travel to the Schengen zone of technical view.

“Receiving a visa liberalization this summer depends on how the government will manage to convince the majority of the European Parliament and the EU leaders to take a political decision on time.

In addition, the face of such appearances in Georgia will not make the different face, that should European legislators think that Georgia soured the road of EU,” Rukhadze said.

Finally, Georgia’s EU integration and visa liberalization, do not depend only to the state policy, but also determined by outside factors. It does not matter, how successful is a country’s work of the recommendations of the European Union, the structure and democracy development, migration crisis is still one of the main future challenges of the country and can affect to the European integration process.

It is important to implement the right policies and not to violate democracy in the country, as well as the fact, that the country should prepare to meet with the flow of migrants.



PRIVATE OR STATE OWNERSHIP: MPs DISCUSS LAND REGISTRATION BILL

Parliament debates on agricultural land registration bill. The issue was raised by the members of the government who launched this legislative initiative. According to the proposed bill, if a person has no document to prove lawful ownership of the land, this land becomes a state property. However, because of shortcomings, it was decided that the Government will handle the bill. At the same time, the issue is being discussed within the opposition parties. Fractions agree that it is a difficult issue and needs timely response.

UNM officials said they will

soon file an alternative bill. "The draft law presented by the government raised the threat that farmers lose land. In Kakheti region such cases are many. The peasants that have been already in unbearable situation, remain without income at all," the party says. As for the political center Girchi's initiative, it has been reviewed on February 26 at the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee meeting, but this too was rejected by MPs.

Zurab Japaridze presented general principles of the bill to his colleagues and claimed that if the state wants quick and relatively

painless solution to agricultural land legalization and property rights' problems, we have to take decisive steps to create the appropriate legislative framework. If the owner confirms ownership of the land, then the state will not have any ownership registered on its account.

It should be noted that the proposed bill on the basis of the ownership title to the land will not be registered if the document, which will be in favor of the registration of property rights and rule etc. MP explained registration procedures in detail and all the issues that may be en-

countered in the process of land registration.

"The process is completely public, and if anyone, including the state will have a claim and the land is not registered, the case will move to the court," said Japaridze. As Chairman of the Committee, Eka Beselia said, the issue is really very difficult, complex and sensitive, and it really needs legal regulation. She mentioned that government bill becomes refined with new approaches to the solution of the issue. The bill is presented to this committee, mainly to discuss in regard the human rights to the



extent where owner's legal rights are protected, how reasonable are the deadlines for settlement of a dispute between the parties, etc. At the session, the Committee presents proposals and comments on the report, which will be submitted to the leading committee.



Business Lunch

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25 GEL

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MENU

Monday

Soup of The Day
Green Seasonal Salad
Chicken Schnitzel
Creamy Raspberry Cake



Tuesday

Soup of The Day
Mexican Salad
Pizza Margarita
Lemon Cheesecake

Wednesday

Soup of The Day
Greek Salad
Tiflis Burger
Puffitserole



Thursday

Soup of The Day
Green Salad
Pasta Carbonara
Cherry and Chocolate Cheesecake

Friday

Soup of The Day
Tomato & Cucumber Salad
Pork Shashlik
Vanilla Icecream

3, Gorgasali str. 0105, Tbilisi, Georgia

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN GEORGIA

IRAKLI PAVLENISHVILI

The sentencing of Gigi Ugulava, an opposition activist and former Mayor of the capital, Tbilisi to four-and-a-half years prevented justice from being done, said Amnesty International. In its annual global report the organization highlighted an unprecedented assault on freedoms across the world. Evidence of this crackdown is seen in Georgia too with legal battles around the pro-opposition TV channel Rustavi 2, allegations of political pressure on the judiciary and selective justice.

The report also criticized police that prevented or limited peaceful gatherings and that the ill-treatment by law enforcement officials remained slow and ineffective, while a proposal for an independent investigative mechanism was put forward but not yet legislated on.

Amnesty International also indicated 26% devaluation of the national currency against the US dollar that affected numerous families who had taken out loans in earlier years, and increased economic vulnerability for many.

World-wide Human Rights organization is concerned about

the movement in and out of the breakaway territories Abkhazia and South Ossetia that remained restricted. Tensions heightened when, on 10 July, border posts were unilaterally moved several hundred metres outward from South Ossetia. Several civilians were reportedly detained and fined for “illegally” entering into South Ossetia across a largely undemarcated de facto border.

In October, the Prosecutor of the ICC visited Georgia, shortly after requesting that the ICC authorize an investigation into the situation during the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008.

The International Day against

Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) proceeded peacefully in Tbilisi in a discreet location on 17 May. The authorities had refused to guarantee the event’s safety unless it was held at a specific location without any prior public announcement. On 12 May, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in *Identoba and Others v. Georgia* that the police’s failure to protect participants of the 2012 IDAHOT march constituted discrimination and restricted participants’ freedom of assembly. On 7 August, Tbilisi City Court convicted a man of arson and battery and sentenced him to four years in pris-

on for physically assaulting one transgender woman and burning the flat of another whom he had killed. However, the Court ruled that the killing was an act of self-defence and acquitted him of the relevant charge.

On 23 October, Tbilisi City Court acquitted four men charged with attacking the 2013 IDAHOT rally in Tbilisi due to “insufficient evidence” despite the men reportedly being identifiable on video and photo footage of the event. A fifth man, also identifiable in the footage, had been acquitted earlier. Dozens of men had taken part in the attack but none were convicted.

Local human rights organizations reported new cases of ill-treatment by law enforcement officials. The investigation of alleged abuses by members of the General Inspection of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was slow and ineffective. A draft model of an independent investigative mechanism for the investigation of criminal offences committed by law enforcement officials was jointly proposed by the human rights Ombudsman and some NGOs.

However, the law required to establish the mechanism was not considered until the end of the year.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



MATTHEW BRYZA DISCUSSES GEORGIA’S SECURITY CHALLENGES

Matthew Bryza Discusses Georgia’s Security Challenges

On February 25, 2016 the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) and Atlantic Council of Georgia organized a panel discussion “Shaping Policy Responses to Complex Challenges”.

The speakers of the panel discussion included Matthew Bryza, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Ivlian Haindrava, Deputy Secretary, National Security Council and David Sikharulidze, Chair, Atlantic Council of Georgia. The discussion was moderated by Kakha Gogolashvili, Director of the Centre of EU Studies, GFSIS.

The participants discussed the policy responses to the political and economic security challenges that Georgia faces. The speakers also emphasized the necessity of holistic approach from

the government and civil society towards addressing the main security threats. Matthew Bryza gave comments to the media representatives. Apparently, he had no doubt of the current government’s foreign policy course, but he’d like to see more emphasis on long-term strategy and that the officials had to take action according to this strategy. “The current government, as well as the Georgian Dream coalition is made up of people with different opinions. GD team consists of patriots and they want the best for their country, but the long-term political strategy oriented vision is overshadowed by the short-term economic interests, which since 2008 has maintained stability in Georgia,” he said. The presentation was followed by an ardent discussion. The audience at the event represented academic, think-tank, expert and international communities.



WITNESSES TO BE INTERROGATED AT NEW COURT BUILDING

TAMAR UMPRIANI

The grand opening of the new court building was held by the chairman of the Supreme Court. Going forward, witnesses will be questioned in the presence of a master judge.

The process of approving the bill was cancelled several times by parliament, and on Feb. 20, it was finally set in motion. Some citizens refused to collaborate with the investigation or be questioned. However, if police have a valid argument that a witness has information that will help the case to be investigated faster and more effectively, the prosecutor has the right to examine the witness in court. Interrogation will be held behind closed doors, attended only by the witness, the judge and the prosecution's side. As Nino Gvenetadze, the chairman of the Supreme Court, says, the master judge will attend but won't take part in the examination. If there is any attempt of physical or psychological violence against witness by police agents, though, he will take legal provisions.

"We made a decision to hold interrogations behind closed doors," Gvenetadze said. "Any information the court gets from witnesses is important for the case and we should protect its safety until the court session

ends. Our duty is to guarantee witness' safety and the efficiency of the process. As for the system employees, we are holding special trainings to raise their professionalism and ensure their fruitful work. By re-training, they will be ready to work with the new regulations."

New regulation of the law was represented to the parliament by the Justice Department in 2009. It took several years, including discussing the sides of regulations and cancelling its approving date. The reasons of delaying approval was said to be due to financial problems and unpreparedness for changes. Until now, the investigation was referenced on the 1998 year procedural provision, which implies that witness examination is held by a detective and a litigant and doesn't have the right to attend process. If a citizen refuses collaboration with the investigation, according to the law, he will be punished as well.

Representatives of the public sector are talking about legal deficiencies of the new law. As they say, after several years of discussing and changing the details of the law, parliament still set it in motion the way they wanted. Also, the changes will be instituted on only some kinds

of crime. Intentional murder, attempted suicide and terrorism aren't included in the new regulations.

Giorgi Pantsulaia, a member of Georgia's lawyers association, talked to The Observer and shared his opinion about the news. By his words, expectations of some crimes in the law can be explained by its innovation for the country's criminal code.

"For a while, the new law will be kind of tested on severe crime, so after being convinced it works without delaying – maybe in 2017-18 – other serious crimes will be included in the law, too" Pantsulaia said.

The bill has opponents within the National Party, too, says Davit Darchiashvili.

"The cases where witnesses are threatened by criminals aren't included in the new law. It says police have the right to force witnesses to go to court for examination, and the other side's lawyer or litigant doesn't have the right to attend the process. By this way, the principle of competitive process is violated."

NGOs are criticizing this part of the law as well. They think violation of competitive principle is a big drawback of the law. During the investigation, the litigant doesn't have the right



to legally apply for witness examination. This means the police and defendant's side have the advantage of winning the case. The law doesn't guarantee the same rights for both sides.

"If a witness refuses, a lawyer doesn't have any right to ask him questions according to any legal ways," said Pantsulaia, who overall noted that his thoughts on the law are positive. "Often, a lawyer has the opportunity to talk to the witness the first time on the court, which shortens the chance of winning the case. On the other hand, the defendant's side has the support of old and new laws at same time."

The same kind of rules of witness interrogation successfully work in developed countries, like

the U.K. and France. Because of the developing democracy in Georgia, settling this kind of tendency is very important and useful for the country's integration with the developed world. By the canards, there are cases when witnesses are threatened or are victims of physical and psychological violence from police offers, who use these techniques to get only desired information from them.

According to the new law, witness' rights will be absolutely protected while they are interrogated in the court. Experience will be useful for the country to stimulate its democratic processes and settle the standard of protecting international human rights.

ALEKSI PETRIASHVILI FOUND SHOT AND WOUNDED AT THE CEMETERY

Former Minister of European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Aleks Petriashvili was physically assaulted and shot in both legs at Saburtalo district on February 26.

According to the preliminary report of the attack, Aleks Petriashvili was with his three friends at the cemetery of a former diplomat Levan Mikeladze.

The notification was given to Emergency Response Center "112" by a citizen living in a nearby apartment building.

Tbilisi Police Department started investigation in accordance with Article 117 of the Criminal Code, which means a deliberate and serious damage. Police appeals to eyewitness to cooperate with law enforcement authorities in a timely manne. Petriashvili's health condition is stable.

"Buka was at Levan Mikeladze's grave when he was attacked. He has three bullets in his body and surgery continues. I cannot say anything, except that we ask the police to investigate

this horrific attack," said the Free Democrats, deputy chairman Nino Gogvadze.

Aleks Petriashvili teammates' did not talk about the details of the incidents.



THE SPANISH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION VISITS GEORGIA

The Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation José Manuel García-Margallo paid an official visit to Georgia on February 27-29. He met with Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili, Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Parliament Speaker and Foreign Minister

Mikhail Janelidze. Also he held the meeting with the Patriarch of Georgia, his Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II.

The Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation expressed his honor to the memory of fallen soldiers and laid a wreath at the memorial of heroes unity.

MASSIVE PROTEST CONTINUES AGAINST PANORAMA TBILISI CONSTRUCTION

SALOME KHVEDELIDZE

The union of civil movements and organizations jointly held a march against the “Tbilisi Panorama” project on Feb. 27. Thousands of citizens also joined the protest that took place at Pushkin Square.

The main demand of the organizers is to appoint a meeting with the Prime Minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, and discuss the current issue. It should be noted that it was not the first protest against “Panorama Tbilisi” construction; it was in the center of public attention a few times in 2015. The social network spreads the petition and the signatories share the opinion on the matter of the project: constructing of the huge complex, business trade centers which will be connected to each other by cableways and lifts, will do harm to a historical part of Tbilisi. They say the alternative to the existing plan is to find another place for the complex. The petition was signed by 16 organizations: Guerrilla Gardening, Tbilisi Forum for Architecture, Green Fist, Green Alternative, Frontline Georgia, My City, Tiflis Hamkari and others.

Co-investment Fund held the presentation of the grand project in Tbilisi Marriott, in March 2014. “Panorama Tbilisi” covers four spots – Erekle the Second’s Square, Freedom Square (the former Central Union building), surrounding territories of Sololaki Hills and Sololaki Gardens. Representatives of Old City Development state that the project will bring prosperity to the capital, as it will employ thousands of

people, give us the opportunity to host international large-scale conferences and attract big number of tourist. It is known that the value of the project is one billion three hundred million dollars.

Main opponents of Co-investment Fund and its leading investor Ivanishvili are art historians, environmentalists and city planners. The main counterargument of the art historian Tamar Amashukeli and the city planner Zurab Bakradze is that the implementation of the project will ruin the authenticity and appearance of the Old City and roughly invade in historic district. Secretary General of Georgian National Committee of International Council on Monuments and Sites ICOMOS, Nato Tsintsabidze argues that there was governmental resolution in 1985 on improvement of protection zones of historical Tbilisi, which reflects extension of the cultural heritage concept and a new vision on how important environmental surroundings/cultural landscape are. According to the document, three protection zones appear: the protection zone which includes basically Sololaki and part of the left bank of the river; development regulation zone, or so-called buffer part and landscape protection zone, which includes Tabor mountain, Tsavkisi, Mtamsminda and Turtle lake park. In 2009, when the land-use plan was developed, it ignored the last zone. The cultural heritage is mentioned, however, there is no mention of Old Tbilisi, as a legacy to pro-

tect. Some experts note, that the plan has flaws, and some of them go further saying the change of protection zone is law violation, because according to our constitution, the change can only be made by the Prime Minister and the government.

“In 1995, Georgia presented historical part of the city to the World Heritage list according to 1985 resolution,” Tsintsabidze said during Green Forum of the City meeting Feb. 21. In 2001, UNESCO evaluated uniqueness of Tbilisi’s cultural heritage and it is in the preliminary list along with the world’s 11 other sites. The organization also declared that process will come to an end when Georgia will obtain management system for above-mentioned site. UNESCO’s decision can be of three kinds: the application is admitted; rejection, which means there will be no further debates on it; and the delay. UNESCO recommended re-applying when the system exists, but no further steps were taken concerning this matter. Moreover, experts say that if “Panorama Tbilisi” is constructed, Tbilisi automatically will be taken out off the World Heritage list of the candidates.

Additionally, the construction of the complex will lead to the issue with transportation in the city center. Authors of the project say that it will include underground parking, which will be designed for 1,800 cars (Erekle II Square - 500, Freedom Square - 300, Sololaki Hills and Gardens- 500-500); the parking will solve the

problem of busy roads and traffic jam. Opinions on this issue are divided - Liberty Square and Erekle II are the spots where the project may fail to respond to demand. In addition, parking is not something that can necessarily solve a problem with the flow of cars in the neighborhoods, considering the scale of the project’s buildings. As of today, the number of registered cars in Georgia is over 1 million and when compared with statistics of 2007-08, it can be said that the number has doubled. About 50 percent of those cars are gathered in Tbilisi. One of the most important problems that Tbilisi faces today is busy streets and traffics – the city does not have enough public transport and its popularization/promotion is not happening.

Environmentalists believe that the project is unacceptable not only because of the invasion to the historic district, but also because of the environmental damage. Carbon dioxide emissions are connected to transport exhausts, which in high concentration is present in busy streets of Sololaki.

It must be said that international community seems to be against “Panorama Tbilisi.” In September, the British cultural heritage and international leading organizations sent a letter to the government and recommended the closure of the project within the mentioned area. “Tbilisi, one of the most comprehensive and historical capitals, is under threat to be destroyed in the form of dominant, large-scale architectural

project, “Panorama Tbilisi,” We ask you to take steps to ensure that the proposal is rejected and historic sites of Tbilisi are protected,” says the letter, signed by Monuments Fund UK, Europe Nostra, the Global Heritage Fund, Joint Committee of National Amenity Societies, and other well-known organizations. They also see the need for strict zoning laws and heights.

The difficulty to reach a consensus is due to the fact that there are two groups with different interests: on the one hand, investors and on the other the city’s population. Beside the necessary documentation signed by Tbilisi City Assembly, Tbilisi City Hall and the Ministry of Economy, representatives of the Fund talk about uniqueness of this part of the city, which will make their hotels and the complex itself more attractive. According to their opponents, the value of Old Tbilisi should not be sacrificed to the interests of private business. The complex that will be visible from all parts of Tbilisi, will damage the cityscape. When speaking of alternative options, the most popular is the territory near Tbilisi reservoir, which would be another attraction hub for other businessmen as well. The city is developing fragmentally - there is no unified capital development plan, which would move the biggest and the most important objects out of the center to its peripheries and would eventually end up creating more than just one busy, business center.



GEORGIA'S POPULATION TO DROP FURTHER

GURANDA DZAMELASHVILI

The demographic situation in Georgia will significantly get worse through 2017-18, according to a study published Feb. 22 by the Institution for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI).

IDFI has been conducting the research since May 2015. Organization representatives say that they have been studying the European Union countries examples of large family support programs, official data of various ministries, agencies and the National Statistics Office of Georgia, presumptions of the United Nations' reports, and experts on demographic issues.

"In 2017-18, the birth rate in Georgia will be significantly reduced. This presumption is supported by the opinion that the

risks, as it will help only approximately 30 percent of newborns and does not provide a range of assistance like in many EU countries," Avalishvili said.

The president of Demographic Development Foundation, Tamar Chiburdanidze, has responded to the IDFI survey.

"The demographic crisis starts in Georgia in the 2017 year, and if nothing changes, the crisis will reach its peak by 2030," Chiburdanidze said. "The United Nations predicted in 2010 the demographic catastrophe in Georgia would take hold by 2050, but the crisis is going to start next year." To Chiburdanidze, the birth rate reduction is inevitable.

Chiburdanidze points out, "If nothing is changed, the crisis will be reach its peak by 2025-

"The death rate exceeds the birth rate in six regions of Georgia. Starting in June 2014, the country launched a demographic policy to fund third and further childbirths. However, the initiative works only in six regions and with a monthly amount of financial support of 150 GEL, and in the mountains, 200 GEL. As a result, it is supposed to reduce the imbalance in the population."

As Chiburdanidze says, the regional demographic policy has already achieved some positive results. From June 1, 2014, through December 2015, the support has been received by 5,283 beneficiaries. However, the birth rate is still lower than the death rate in these six regions.

According to United Nations studies and preliminary results of the population census in 2014, the number of citizens of Georgia decreased by 14.7 percent compares to the 2002 census results (4,371,535 people), and now the total population consists of 3,729,635 people. A United Nations Population Fund Research in 2010 survey predicted Georgia by 2050 will face a demographic catastrophe and the country's population will decrease even further to 1,170,000 citizens. But on the other hand, International Monitors predicts that population will be around 4,400,000 by 2030.

There are many discussions about Georgia's poor demographic condition and the low birth rate. Different opinions have been heard from demographers and non-governmental



organizations as well as representatives of the government.

The chairman of the Population Research Center and Demographer Irina Badurashvili says she doubts the population will decline as much as predicted.

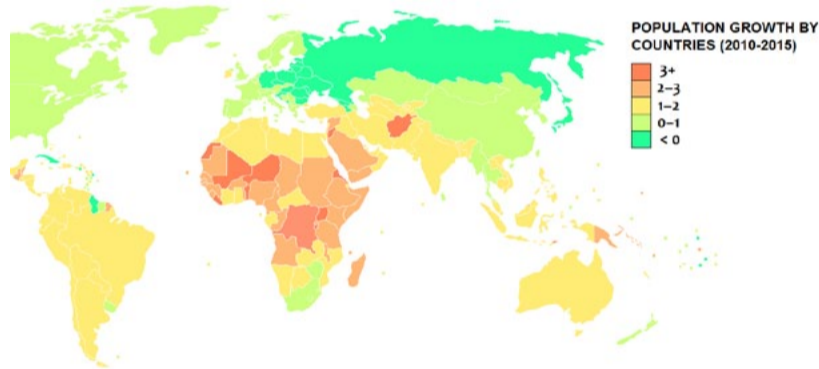
"If you consider that research was properly conducted in 2014 and the population was recorded correctly, then this means that the population in 2002 was wrong, because in the last 12 years, it's impossible to have such a large reduction of the population. The main reason for reducing the population is the immigration process. It's a contentious issue, how much worse these numbers could get in the future," Badurashvili said. Demographers are suspicious of the opinion that the birth rate is low in Georgia.

"An analysis that had been carried out last year by the United Nations Population Fund has stated that the overall birth rate in Georgia in recent years is 2.0- 2.1. This is not so low," Badurashvili noted.

It should also be mentioned that

if the United Nations Research Foundation predicts such a devastating reduction of the birth rate, according to their study published in the second half of 2014, the highest in birth rate in Europe was considered in Georgia. Health and Social Affairs Committee chairman, Dmitry Khundadze, spoke about the increased birth rate in 2015 as well and announced positive statistics.

As he revealed, since 2012 the birth rate has increased from 1.6 to 2.0 in 2015. A report was published by the Department of Statistics last year. According to their studies, by Jan. 1, 2014, the birth rate had increased by 4.8 percent. In this regard, different views emerged. Some demographers saw a slight increase in the birth rate connected to free childbirth or establishment of the Demographic Development Foundation or the patriarch's initiative to baptize the third and each subsequent child. According to GeoStats, by Jan. 1, 2015, Georgia's population consisted of 3,729,500 people.



in 2017-18 years the population born in the 1990s, when the birth rate was very low in Georgia, will enter into potential marital and reproductive age," said Lavan Avalishvili, IDFI chairman.

"The government should make a strategy for the crisis period to reduce the demographic risks," he continued. "The current state program can't decrease those

2030. That's why we started to work together with the government three years ago, but the process should have started at least 10 years ago in order to achieve better results in 2017 in terms of demographics. In her view, in order to avoid the demographic crisis, large family support policies should be the government's main priority.

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE AS A BASIS FOR OPENNESS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a global standard, endorsed by multi-countries and stakeholders, to promote an open and accountable management of natural resources.

Today the relevance of EITI must be highlighted because the lack of knowledge on the sphere of natural resources and transit related issues became clear that leads to confrontation and social conflicts. For example, strikes of workers of Chiatura and Tkibuli mines, confrontations regarding the Gold mine of Sakdrisi-

Kachagiani, issues of additional gas supplies from Russia, statements of company Frontera regarding the gas resources of Georgia.

Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative guarantees access to information and creates the basis for a social dialogue between the employers and employees.

Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI) along with other civil society organizations has been actively advocating for Georgia's engagement in the Extractive Industries

Transparency Initiative. First time in 2012, SCOs prepared recommendations for the Government of Georgia, among the recommendations was - "Implementation of the Extractive and Transit Industry Transparency Initiative" and later in 2013, another set of recommendations were prepared for the Government to consider in the Open Government Georgia Action Plan which included - "Implementation of EITI in Georgia".

Implementing the EITI principles in Georgia - publishing the information about the revenues

received from the oil and gas operations and other taxes, license or permits - will change the business environment considerably. Citizens will have an opportunity to examine the revenues accumulated in budget from the oil and gas pipelines, as well as from extractive industries. Different governmental and non-governmental structures should be engaged in the project - started from the Ministry of Energy of Georgia, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable De-

velopment of Georgia, Ministry of Finance of Georgia to Georgian Railway, and all the commercial legal entities that are involved in the industry and are willing to engage in the EITI.

Benefits attained from a particular corporate legal entity can be subject to a commercial secrecy thus the information should be published with the approval of a particular commercial legal entity or by the entity itself.



TBILISI ZOO REMAINS WITH HOPE OF SOLIDARITY

GVANTSA SILIKASHVILI

Tbilisi Zoo, which was heavily damaged during the June 13 flood, isn't yet recovered. Its dwellers are also still struggling; while at one time they competed for world attention, after the disaster, hippopotamuses were freely walking in the street and bear-cubs ran scared. Slowly, they've been returning to their usual lives.

The cabinet of Georgia has actively started talking about moving the zoo. It's said that new territory of the zoo will be adjacent to the Tbilisi Sea. After eight months, there still isn't any progress about this issue.

The damaged zoo has lost its attractiveness and also visitors and the most important thing is that the zoo must resolve problems by itself. After cleaning work, Tbilisi City Hall has only once given money 95,000 lari to the zoo. It was enough for up-building of the hippopotamus cage as it can't live in an open area in winter. Besides that, money was used to enclose a new territory of the zoo.

The establishment has two sources of financing: the budget from the city hall and its own income, which is from sold tick-

ets and leases (sum is paid by owners of cafés, shops and side-shows). But, the Tbilisi city hall gave them privilege and now the zoo hasn't had this kind of profit. In return for it, the zoo didn't receive any compensation.

The director of the zoo, Zurab Gurielidze, said their income is very little, which is a result of few visitors. Gurielidze thinks that one reason for so few visitors is the lack of animals.

"Among the rescued animals are white tigers, hippopotamus, elephants and unicorn, although a vast number of the most popular animals aren't alive. In addition to this, people remember bad stories about the loss of their favorite animals. As it seems, the zoo looks in a bad condition and its little profit cannot be enough for resolving problems," Gurielidze said. With his own attempts to find revenue for it, he takes care not only of the existing but actively tries to arrange a new zoo.

With support of city hall, the new territory of the zoo received in 2011 year is being cleaned little by little. Although because of misery, moving is planned step by step. Now with supporting of

German collaboration, funding has been received for new cages to be built for four local types of animals.

"It will be modern European-style cages without barriers. It means that visitors will be able to be in contact with the animals," Gurielidze explained.

The lower part of the zoo isn't planned to be restored, while in the upper part, work goes on. Two new cages are being built for primates, including monkeys. The upper part, particularly egzotarium, wasn't damaged in consequence of the elements, and some kind of reconstructive was carried out: a new aquarium was made and an insectarium was created. Visitors can see many interesting expositions. By the end of spring, several animals will be added to the Tbilisi Zoo.

As Gurielidze says, European zoos supported them very much. They gave the zoo not only new animals, but they also paid expenses for transportation, which demands a huge sum. Among the sent animals are 24 penguins from Bristol Zoo, and they are expected in March. New cages will have new dwellers. Soon



the zoo will receive a kangaroo. The zoo is going to astonish children and adults with amazing various animals again.

Before the planned novelties will be ready, animal lovers can visit the newly opened "pauna land" in Tbilisi. Contact Zoo is located in Kolmeurneoba Square, in the shopping centre GTC. There are two sections: a jungle section with exotic animals and

reptiles, and a farm with domestic animals. Director of "pauna land" Diana Khmaladze says that connecting with animals is good and wholesome for our physical and psychological health. Visitors can caress and feed animals like pigs, rabbits, hedgehogs and ostrich. While the old zoo is being restored, the new zoo plans to take an important place in a branch of family holiday.

GUDAURI HOSTED INTERNATIONAL SKI COMPETITION

Chamber of Commerce and Industry France-Georgia (CCIFG) organized ski competition in Gudauri and Kazbegi on February 27-28.

The event was attended by the CCIFG members, members of the other Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Business Associations presented in Georgia, embassies of European countries and U.S., the World Bank, EBRD and the UN representatives.

The first place from the men's group took a diplomat Mr. Peter Danis, and the winner from the women's category became Ms. Ketikvartskhava. All six winners were awarded by the sponsors.

The awards ceremony was held in Kazbegi, afterwards they organized the charity auction. There were sold important pictures from the National Geographic, paintings from the Baia

Gallery, a ball signed by Buffon and rugby ball with Georgian players' autographs.

"The charity auction was very successful, important works of art were sold. By the decision of the organization all the money will be granted for the homeless children",- Chamber of Commerce and Industry France-Georgia Deputy Executive Director Kati Kenkishvili said to the Observer.

Minister of Justice Tea Tsulukiani delivered a speech about children living in the streets. According to her initiative, the government recently approved a bill for the Homeless Children, which makes authority to take care of them.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry France-Georgia is a non-profit organization whose mission is to foster business relationships between France and Georgia.

WROCLAW HOSTS DAYS OF ADJARA



In order to sign an memorandum on bilateral cooperation between Lower Silesia and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, Georgian delegation visits Wrocław.

To promote cooperation between Polish and Georgian busi-

ness circles the economic forum "Wrocław- Batumi 2016" held on February 26-28 tourism department of Adjara took part for the first time in the tourism exhibition held in the city of Wrocław. In the frame of the events Adjara days have taken

place. Two ensembles "Khorumi" and "Batumi" was danced during the event.

Wrocław is European Capital of Culture 2016, which raises the meaning and provides opportunities for Batumi-Wrocław cooperation.

REPEAT AFTER ME: BIG GIRLS ARE BEAUTIFUL

NINI JAPARIDZE

Several days ago I posed for a photographer at a studio. That was a special day and I felt wonderful. I was not worrying about my plus-size form and I didn't even care if somebody would say, "Oh my God, she's so big and she's wearing tight jeans."

Usually I don't care about public opinion, but when it comes to my weight, everything changes. First, I become uptight, and then my mood totally spoils. In order to understand what I mean, you have to deal with the problem – obesity.

I can tell you for sure that extra kilos can influence a life. If you live in a country like Georgia where plus-size girls aren't appreciated very much, the situation becomes more difficult. Mostly, the weight loss problems in Georgia are related to depression, low self-esteem and disrespect of your own body. The situation becomes more dramatic when it comes to clothes. Plus-size girls in Georgia have many difficulties finding clothes.

You're doing your best to find clothes you want to wear, and finally you find something that fits you, but it's not the style you like. Those girls who posed for the photo shoot yesterday for sure knew what I meant. We all were plus-size. All of us had the same problems and the same goals. These girls were not asking ugly questions, like: Why did you gain so much weight? Why haven't you lost your weight before? What does your boyfriend think about your weight? Does he want to break up with you? Are you sure he likes you the way you are? Questions like that don't motivate a person. It's so pitiful that some people don't think about consequences. They don't realize that sometimes even a word can be decisive: It can make you happy or kill you. People are saying to each other so many useless words, when the simplest magic words exist: "You can do this."

Everybody knows that it's so easy to gain weight. Sometimes,

I have a sense like it's playing a hide-and-seek game. We realize that we are big only when we see the result; the process is often disregarded. In the beginning, we are warring about two kilos, then it rises to 10, and finally an initial number endlessly doubles and doubles. People who gain weight often become confused and depressed. They have no idea how to fight a problem they were not familiar with before.

In the middle of a lot of problems, you are trying to find the way out. You are saying that you gained your weight for a specific reason, but people say that no reason is strong enough for it. Despite that, you still try to prove your truth implying that for those who tend to have weight problems, each thing can be a reason. Including: depression, personal issues, problems with health, financial crisis, family, children, etc. on't think that if you successfully fought any of these problems, they can't become the reason for gaining weight for

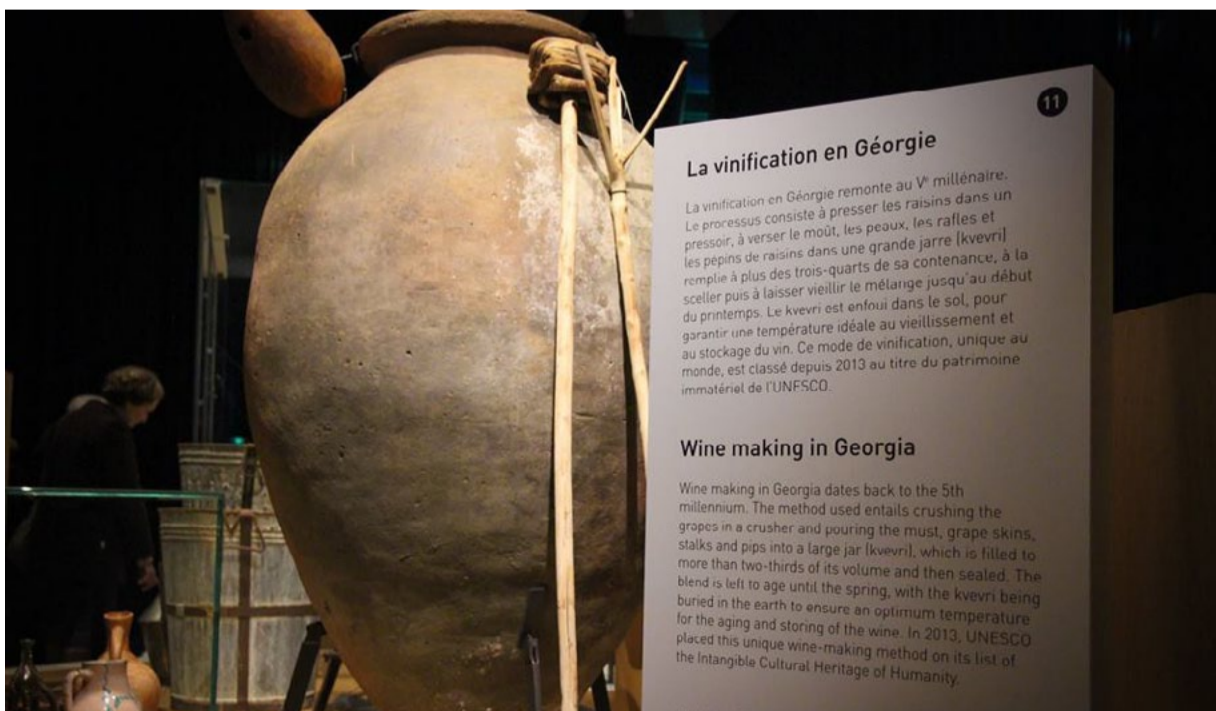
others. Before you decide to be critical toward "big girls," try to make somebody happier. Give people motivation and instead of asking an ugly question, say that big girls are precious.

Those who attended this photo shoot, including me, were experienced in both losing and gaining the weight, so they never asked the questions that could be humiliating. We could understand each other even only with words. Apparently that happened because all of us were plus-size girls; we all had the same problems and the same goals. All of us knew what was wrong and what was not. We knew that in order to lose weight, its necessary to eat less, get rid of candy and junk food, exercise more and be active, but in order to start another diet, the most important thing is needed, and this is the motivation. Frankly speaking, the main purpose of why we went to the photo shoot was the motivation. Everything started with a project launched by Georgian Maga-

zine City, which announced the competition for "Big Girls." The project spread throughout social media and was called Lose your Weight with City and become the face of City. As I was the biggest girl in my friend circle, I immediately decided to apply. I uploaded the picture, wrote a long text saying how bad it was to be a big girl and why I needed to become skinny.

During the last several years, I was sure that being fat was the most terrible thing in any person's life, but when I went to the photo shoot, I realized that I was wrong. Despite having already made my decision that I do not want to become the person I was a couple years ago, I realized that big girls can be beautiful, even their forms, which are so special, and fat can be precious. Big girls have a lot of advantages. Their eyes shine in a different way, they are never critical, they are happy and warm. If you stop looking at them with critical eyes you will find it out for yourself.

GEORGIAN WINE EXHIBITION HAS OPENED IN MARSEILLE



Georgian wine corner has opened at the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilizations in Marseille. Exhibitions displays agricultural development stages from ancient times. Georgian corner is presented with the traditional wine vessels and attributes of Marani- Pitcher, Sartskhi, Orshimo, historical

artifacts and other important information, as well. At the opening ceremony the president of Museum and the Vice-Mayor of Marseille Jean-Francois Chougnnet talked about the importance of Georgian representation at the museum. It was noted that Georgia is one of the oldest centers of the wine industry,

where the wine making tradition counts a thousand years of existence and development. Georgian traditional rule to make peasant wine is unique in the world and since 2013 represents the World Cultural Heritage. The museum, which also organizes seminars, colloquiums and forums, is visited daily by up to 20 000 visitors.



CHARITY EVENT HELD TO SUPPORT BICYCLE PARKING ARRANGEMENT

"Partnership for Road Safety" organizes a charity event on February 26, at 19:30 pm, at the Rose Square. The name of the action is "Travel by bike and eat biscuits". The project aims to promote safe transport –bicycle and install parking system at Chavchavadze avenue.

"We believe that the bicycle it is necessary to create a bicycle parking place. This will help the

students who are willing to travel by bike. We hope that the pilot project, which entails the creation of bicycle parking, will also contribute to the future movements by bike",- said organizers.

In the frame of charity campaign American rusks will be sold (Price 0.50GEL) and the collected money will be spent on the project's successful implementation.

GEORGIAN NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HOLDS A CONCERT WITH GIDON KREMER

Evgeny Mikeladze National Music Center hosted Grammy-winning musician and world-renowned violinist, Gidon Kremer. The concert was held at the renovated Opera and Ballet Theatre on February 22 with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia.

Gidon Kremer expressed a desire to visit Georgia in the jubilee year of virtuoso composer, Giya Kancheli. The concert presented the National Symphony Orchestra together with Gidon Kremer conducted by Nikoloz Rachveli.

“I’m glad that I visited my favourite city, Tbilisi once again. Giya Kancheli, not only for me but for my colleagues too is an important person and composer. I love it when I play Kancheli’s music, because I am fully aware of his music in the performance of all of the emotion. I am glad that I had another opportunity to work with him,” said Gidon Kremer at the end of the concert.

Kremer is a head at the world-famous chamber orchestra,

“Kremerata Baltica”, and performs at the world’s leading concert halls today. His name is associated with many of Kancheli’s premiere performances, some of which Kancheli composed exclusively for him. Kremer performed “Sadness Angels” together with the famous cellist and violinist Giedre Dirvanauskaite. The world premiere of this work was held in 2014 in the framework of Kronberg Festival, and then at the Berlin Philharmonic. The concert, which was a sort of a demonstration by Gidon Kremer, Martha Argerich, Emmanuel Pahud, Khatia Buniatishvili, Nikoloz Rachveli and other well-known musicians, condemned the violation of human rights by Russia.

Kremer also performed a new symphonic work of Kancheli “NU MU ZU”, whose world premiere took place in Brussels on November 5, 2015. Kremer, together with young altist Giorgi Tsagareli, performed “TWILIGHT”, which premiered in Salzburg in 2005.

Violinist Gidon Kremer is an important person in the history of 20th century. He was born in Riga, started playing when he was 4-year-old, and at the age of 16 he was awarded the first awards of the Republic of Latvia. In 1969, he began studying at the Moscow Conservatory. Kremer is a winner of many competitions: Paganini named International Violin Competition in Genoa and in Montreal in 1969, as well as the Tchaikovsky Competition in 1970. The musician left the Soviet Union in 1980. In 1981 he founded the Chamber Music Festival in Austria, Lokenhaus, which until 2011 was the head intact. In 2001, the violinist, together with his orchestra “Kremerata Baltica” won a Grammy for the album “After Mozart”.

“Over the last 30 years, I travel a lot to perform in different cities. I’ve worked a lot on stage and with different people. I always tried to be sincere with friends and music, be faithful and act as the conscience whis-



pered. I know that first of all, I love him, not only music, but also the life and my relatives,” said the musician.

Kremer never speaks on his successful performances or projects; he believes that positive change should be noted by the society. He likes to make surprises and admits that there have been many times when he was in love. Often think about many things simultaneously, and this is why he does not pay proper at-

tention to the important issues sometimes, which he regrets. He has a dream to get calm but even in his dreams he can rarely find it.

The violinist has released more than 120 albums. Twenty-five of those albums he recorded with orchestra “Kremerata Baltica”. Gidon Kremer plays with a Nicola Amati violin, created in 1641. He is the author of three books, where his artistic opinions are collected.

GEORGIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM HOSTS SOLO EXHIBITION OF AZERBAIJANI ARTIST

Georgian National Museum Dimitri Shevardnadze National Gallery invites you at the opening of the solo exhibition of prominent Azerbaijani artist Farhad Khalilov. Opening event will take place on 1st of March at 7 p.m.

Farhad Khalilov is a distinguished representative of the contemporary art. In his creative career he managed to create his own artistic style, which was free from the Soviet ideology and was demonstrating his personality from the different perspective. The exposition will showcase his canvas executed in different genres.

The author’s works were exhibited at the numerous museums and galleries including The Saatchi Gallery in London, Gallery of Berlin City Administration, Central House of the Artists in Moscow, The State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, The State Museum Center of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and La Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris. Khalilov has exhibit in over 40 group

exhibitions worldwide.

His work is held in public collections in the State Museums of Russia, Azerbaijan, the Ukraine, Lithuania, Germany, China and in the reserves of the International Confederation of Artists’ Union, Azerbaijan.

It is included in private collections in Azerbaijan, the USA, Mexico, and in European collections, in Germany, Poland and France.

Since 1987 Farhad Khalilov is a Chairperson of the Artists’ Union of Azerbaijan and award winning artist whose works are sold at the Sotheby’s and Phillips de Pury Contemporary Art Auctions.

Following exhibition is once again highlighting deep and long-lasting relations between Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, The Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, the National Art Museum of Azerbaijan and the Georgian National Museum.



GEORGIAN MOVIES LEFT WITHOUT ANY NOMINATION AT BERLINALE AND OSCARS

Sandro Sanaia, a son of famous TV host Giorgi Sanaia is a 2nd year student at Tbilisi State University faculty of Journalism. In conversation with *Observer* Sandro claims that the movie is his hobby and he plans to organize a public screening followed with a discussion, which he will guide himself.

“To become a film critic is not easy. It would be very naive and arrogant from my side to claim that I am a movie critic; I’m just interested in cinematography and enrich knowledge on a daily basis. In addition, it is necessary to know the literature, art, music, and, in general, most of the fields of the arts, because it is the universe of what is called the film,” said Sanaia.

According to the young film critic the 66th Berlinale festival, whose jury was Meryl Streep, was very interesting. The winner became the Italian film “Fire Water”, but two other movies could also become a winner such as “Alone in Berlin” or even “Death in Sarajevo”.

This year, like last year in Berlin Georgian films have not been presented. However, this year Georgia celebrates 11 years of cooperation with the Berlinale this year and at Berlinale Co-production Market Georgian delegation presented a new component of the governmental programme “Shoot in Georgia” and

the introduction of the new Cash Rebate system in the country is an important development for the Georgian film sector.

In total, about 15 Georgian films have participated in Berlinale so far. In 2013, for the first time after a long pause, 2 Georgian films took part in Berlinale: Nana Ekvimishvili’s and Simon Gross’ “In Bloom” and Zaza Rusadze’s “A Fold in My Blanket”. Both Georgian films were very successful in Berlin. Next year, Levan Koghuashvili’s “Blind Dates” and Tinatin Kajrishvili’s “Brides” participated in various sections of the festival.

The first Georgian film in Berlin was Giorgi Shengelaya’s “Trip of a Young Composer”. The film participated in the main competition of Berlinale in 1986 and was awarded Silver Bear. In 1992 Berlinale hosted Mikheil Kalatozishvili’s “The Chosen One”, whereas in 1993 Temur Babluani’s “Son of the Sleepless” was awarded Silver Bear for Best Direction.

In Sandro Sanaia’s opinion, modern Georgian films are divided into three stages: the Soviet period, a time when movie experienced censorship, but, nevertheless, we had such great directors, such as: Tengiz Abuladze, Paradjanov and so on.

“At this time our film, in my opinion, was at its peak.” “Repentance”, “Crazy”, “The Wishing

Tree”, “Falcon”, the list goes on endlessly, fortunately. Humor, as well as, the tragedy - both qualitatively and transmitted through the films of any social layer (but then all of a social class considered), familiar and easy to understand “, - said Sandro.

Sanaia thinks that the post-Soviet period put a mark on the public, especially on creative people. They filmed social poverty that was adequate to that period hence the problem, clichés and complexes gets the beginning from that time which has not been liberated.

“Sex and tragedy themes sells well, this is not a novelty in the art, that’s why we take the tragic films and films in which we see a naked Ms. Begashvili, but I should admit that we have many talented filmmakers such as Levan Tutberidze, Zaza Urushadze and Giorgi Ovashvili”, - said Sandro. Tutberidze’s new film “Moira”, Ovashvili’s “Corn Island” and Urushadze’s “Tangerines” - these films, as young film critic said will be added to the Georgian Film Classics in a few years time. Moreover, the “Tangerines” had a chance to take the Oscar for best foreign-language Film nomination in 2015. But in 2016, unfortunately, none of the Georgian film gained nominations. “Moira” had a chance, but could not hit.

Sandro also discussed Geor-



gian soap operas issue and noted that “My Wife’s Friends” and “Tiflis”.

Two of the most popular TV series nowadays, because first is based on Georgian stereotypes and false traditions, the other is historical in nature and actors performance and technical functionality is on high quality.

“We have a very good generation of directors and actors and therefore more funding should be allocated to the Georgian film industry, so it keeps evolving, however, on the one hand, the

audience should be active, as it sounds, without the audience there is no movie”, - said Sandro.

Sanaia expressed his grief that young people do not show much desire to attend the screenings, while in the last 16 years has been held annually the biggest cultural event in what is called the Tbilisi International Film Festival. At the festival one can see latest films and attend master classes at very low price. However, as it turns out more adults enjoy this opportunity in Georgia, than today’s youth.

CHABUKIANI CHOREOGRAPHIC FESTIVAL WILL BE HELD IN TBILISI

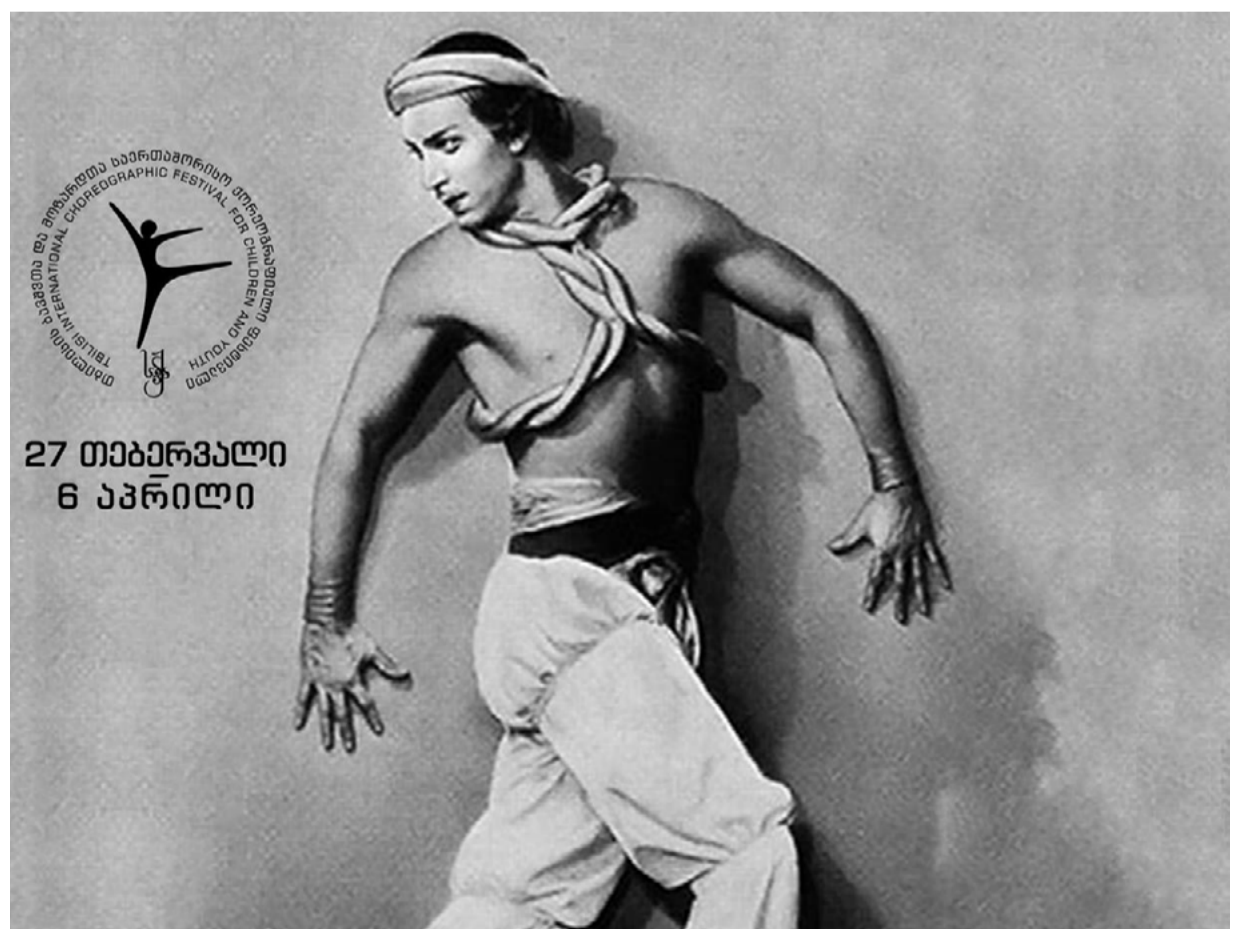
With support of the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia, from February 27 to April 6, Vakhtang Chabukiani children and adults III International Dance Festival will be held. The event will be opened on February 27 at the Chabukiani Museum, where there will be academic conference, as well as dance and musical numbers.

In March, the well-known choreographers will conduct master classes for students. During the event, foreign guests will be able

to visit the expositions of various museums, excursions in the capital and its surroundings are also planned.

Ensembles and solo artists from Azerbaijan, Turkey, and other countries will visit Georgia.

The festival aims to raise the level of all the public and private dance studio and school children, gathering teachers living abroad and foreign teachers to share expertise, as well as to promote Vakhtang Chabukiani creative work.



THE PURPOSE OF ADDING A NEW SUBJECT AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE PROCESS

MARI TABATADZE

“Me and Society” is the name of a new school subject that is planned to be taught at every public and private school in Georgia in the coming years. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, a new course is the basic of social sciences and combines the disciplines of history, geography and civics.

The Ministry of Education and Science aims social sciences to be involved in the learning grid from the primary school, and that is why pupils will study this subject in the third and fourth grades.

As for the content, within the subject in the list there are themes: my family; school environment; friends; the environment in which I live. The special emphasis is being put on issues such as pupils’ rights and responsibilities, safety rules, healthy lifestyle, tolerance, etc. Accordingly, as the Ministry of Education and Science mentions, the goal of the subject is to develop the pupil’s responsibility and to give them a caring, wide and in-depth approach to the different issues. As a result, it is expected that a pupil will be more aware of their surrounding environment and will become an active citizen.

It should also be noted that similar issues are still discussed by the pupils during the lessons of civic education and the hours of tutorials, too. However, there is

meant to be basic and secondary levels. As for the primary grades, as a new subject initiators say, it is characterized by a deficiency. So, they do not think that it is a new matter and consider it as a preparatory stage. From the initiators’ point of view, when the higher classes begin studying the subject, the students find it difficult to move their attitudes in actions. According to them, the monitoring of the learning process showed the need of these dispersed issues to become one discipline and be taught from elementary classes. As for the planned teaching methods, they include role-playing games and learning by doing for the primary levels. Both of them enable schoolchildren to understand situations better and to perceive them clearly.

How much is it needed to add the above-mentioned subject in the primary school, and what are the problems they may come across during the process? These are the main issues that are worth discussing. This process, in turn, implies a deeper studying of the objectives and ways of achieving them.

After looking through the purpose and directions of the subject, at first glance it seems that it repeats the main functions of the tutorial classes. Both of them are oriented to promote the socialization process of the schoolchildren. Also, it aims to encourage personal, moral, physical, cogni-

tive and cultural development of every schoolchild. Therefore, a new subject is treated as a duplicate of the first, as for granting it the status of a subject, and is measured as a formality.

Especially important is the question of what should be a specialization of a person who will teach a new subject. As is mentioned above, the subject is from the group of social sciences, besides, it should be taught at the primary level of education. Therefore, the selection process of teachers is quite difficult because apart from the content of the subject, the age of pupils is also significant. In addition, among other undoubtedly important issues there is a definition of keywords, such as community, family, dignity, etc.

While speaking about the teachers, one of the most important issues is their transition from one level to another and the exam which they will have to pass. The issue has required some attention because the teacher’s salary is planned to be tied with his/her status, according to the scheme.

Moreover, in order to define the timetable of a new subject, working hours should be reduced to any other item in the same group. On the one hand, it is likely to create a certain kind of problem connected with the outcomes set before. And this is feasible due to the lack of time. On the other hand, if working hours are planned to be added

for a new subject at the primary level, this is not an easy task, considering the age of the pupils and its characteristics.

For the purpose of teaching the subject, another important issue is to create a new textbook and the compilation of the standards. And, of course, it needs additional monetary resources. So, for the part of the public, who thinks that the functions of a new subject are equal to the functions of an existing one (civics) and those who do not see the need of the subject for the primary level may consider it irrational.

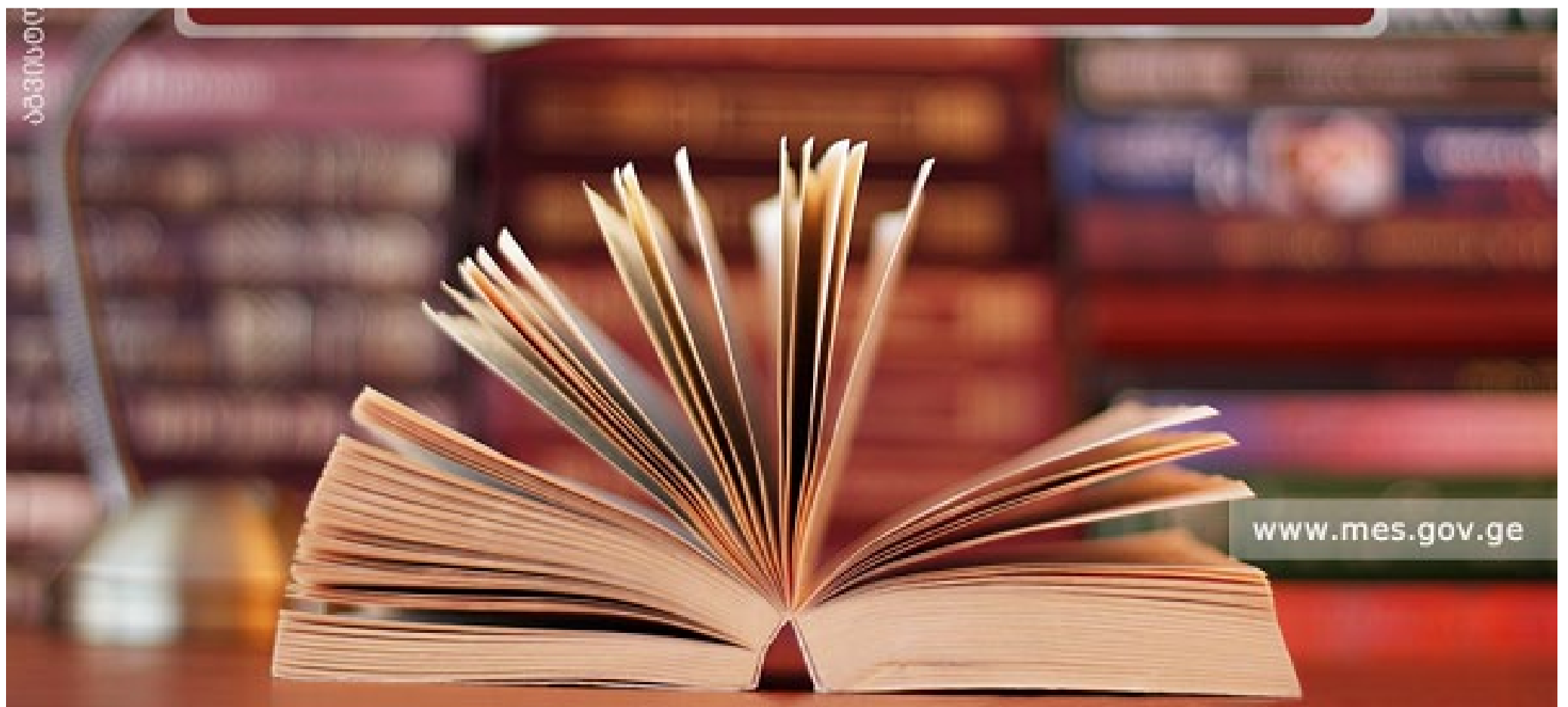
During the teaching process, program piloting is no less a complex issue. In order to generalize the results, it is undoubtedly necessary to define clearly where and which schools will be involved in the process. It is important to select the same type of schools that have similar characteristics in order to create the basis for a generalization of the results. That is the essence of the piloting process and, without the definitively defined characteristics, speaking about generalization is totally impossible.

Despite the fact that the subject “Me and society,” in essence, is not unknown to the Georgian Education System, it still represents an innovation on the one hand and, of course, problems still exist with regard to its implementation. The most significant is that the existence of discussions should not be linked to any con-



fusion and misunderstanding. An extensive discussion on the subject, as it is known, was attended by parents, psychologists and experts. Also, schools, higher education institutions and non-governmental organizations were involved in the process. According to the Ministry of Education, the discussion about the issue is not over yet, nor educational resources – the textbook is printed and work on the standard is still continuing.

Shortly, the process of reviewing the issue requires considerable effort on the teachers’ training, sufficient school resources and proper training methods. Thus, naturally, a new subject will become possible to be taught at schools after the standard is approved, the textbooks are created and the teachers are trained. So, as long as there is no manual, and it is quite impossible to see the full picture, we should be more careful to draw conclusions. And, of course, only more public awareness may be issued as a recommendation.



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FC DINAMO WINS A LOCAL DERBY IN TBILISI

VAKO KIPIANI

Dinamo wins a local derby in Tbilisi

The national championship held the second round of meetings. "Tskhinvali" hosted Merani of Martvili and played a draw 1:1. In the 17th minute, Tskhinvali opened the score; two minutes later, Martvilians equalized. In the remaining time of the match, nothing has changed. Since the resumption of the season, Merani "gained 4 points in two rounds, and they are struggling to stay in the top league," therefore each point has crucial importance for Martvilians.

Torpedo of Kutaisi defeated Zugdidi by 2:0. The score was opened after 35 minutes by Giorgi Kimadze. In the last minute of the second half, Kapanadze scored the second goal and Torpedo got three points in total. Samtredia got three points too, which defeated Sapovnela by 3:0. Samtredia went ahead with two goals in the first 30 minutes.

Budu Zivzivadze opened the score in the 9th minute; the second goal went in the 28th minute by Markozashvili. The final point gained Jikia on 83 minutes scored. Without a goal, the match ended in a draw between Guria and Kobuleti "Shukura."

Highest number of balls had a match in Sachkhere. Chikhura defeated Saburtalo by 5:0. In the first half, Chikhura players gained 3 goals against its opponent; in the second half, they invaded opponent's door twice and scored the first victory of the season celebrated. Bolnisi, Sioni defeated Poti Kolkheti by 3:1. The first goal went at 27 minutes of the game by Dimitry Tatanashvili, in the second half Goginashvili increased advantage with two balls difference. Kolkheti scored on 73rd minute, but Tatanashvili made a goal in last minute and Sioni won.

Interesting meeting was between Tbilisi Dinamo and Gori

Dila, the match ended in a draw 2:2. The teams showed spectacular football. Martsvaladze once again proved to be a high-class forward. Gori residents were losing twice, but both times managed to score Martsvaladze.

At local derby in Tbilisi, Dinamo defeated Locomotive by

Dinamo 2:1. The first half ended 0:0. The second half Locomotive opened the score with a corner kick, Dinamo defenders managed to take the ball out of the penalty area, but there, Revaz Chiteishvili met the ball and powered the shot in one of the most beautiful goals of the season. After 5

minutes, Dinamo made a draw with a penalty kick by Alexander Iashvili. Otar Kiteishvili scored the winning goal. At 69 minutes, Dinamo managed to score. Overall, Dynamo scored and is a frontrunner with a 7-point difference with Gori Dila. Third place takes Tskhinvali.



WEEKLY SPORT NEWS

Football

FC Spartak Moscow held friendly match against Aris Limassol and defeated with rival 9: 0. Giorgi Melkadze and Jano Ananidze played in the Spartak team. Melkadze made three assists that led to the goals, while Jano together with Melkadze made Ze Luis to score, who took the lead with five goals.



The Extraordinary FIFA Congress (their words, not ours) in Zurich, where Gianni Infantino was elected as president of the world's governing body of soccer.

Rostov FC brought Georgian newcomer Nika Kacharava in his team at the Russian championship Kacharava signed the

contract with Russian Premier League team Rostov during the winter transfer period and held a few test matches, but has not scored.

Rugby

Georgian National Rugby Team defeated Spain by 38: 7. In the second round our team won all three matches and earned bonus points. At this stage, Georgian team has 34 points and is ahead



of second-placed Romania with five points. The next match our team will play against Russia on March 12.

Basketball

Georgian basketball team captain Zaza Pachulia wins NBA's next match of the regular cham-

pionship to Denver Nuggets. Dallas Mavericks defeated the opponent in overtime with the score 122: 116.

Zaza was playing in starting five, but only for 8:11 minutes. He left the pitch without point. Pachulia minced a shot, only one rebound and two steals are on his account.